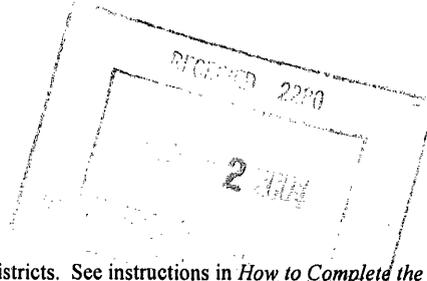


**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If 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. 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 Grand Forks Mercantile Building 1898  
other names/site number 32GF729

**2. Location**

street & number 112-118 North Third Street N/A  not for publication  
city or town Grand Forks N/A  vicinity  
state North Dakota code ND county Grand Forks code 035 zip code 58203

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title *Merlan E. Paaverud, Jr.* 6-01-04  
Merlan E. Paaverud, Jr. Date  
State Historic Preservation Officer (North Dakota)

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

- I, hereby certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper *Edson W. Beall* Date of Action 7/14/04

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

Category of Property

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

(Check as many boxes as apply)

(Check only one box)

Contributing Noncontributing

- X private
public-local
public-State
public-Federal

- X building(s)
district
site
structure
object

Table with 3 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing, and Resource Type (buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total). Values: 1, 0, 0, 0, 1, 0.

Name of related multiple property listing

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

Downtown Grand Forks MRA

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: warehouse
department store
DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant
HEALTH CARE
DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th & early 20th Century Movements:
Commercial

foundation CONCRETE
walls BRICK
roof RUBBER
other STEEL

Narrative Description

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

**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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1898-1919

**Significant Dates**

1898, 1905, 1919, 1921

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

**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 a grave.
- D** a cemetery
- E** a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

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

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

**Primary location of additional data:**

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name of repository:

\_\_\_\_\_

Grand Forks Mercantile Company Building 1898  
Name of Property

Grand Forks, ND  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** less than one

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	14	646990	5309998	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

See continuation sheet.

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Peg O'Leary, Coordinator  
organization Grand Forks Historic Preservation Commission date January 14, 2004  
street & number 1405 First Avenue N. telephone 701-772-8756  
city or town Grand Forks state ND zip code 58201

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

#### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

## Property Owner

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

name \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number See Continuation Sheet telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

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### Grand Forks Mercantile Company Building 1898 Grand Forks County, ND

#### Description

The Grand Forks Mercantile Co. (1898) is a brick commercial block structure. It's located on block 17, lots 3, 7, 8, 9 and the north half of 4 in the Original Townsite, in the middle of a commercial block of buildings similar in size, scale, mass and materials. Rectangular in plan, with a flat roof, the ground floor is public (originally retail grocer and warehousing, now a restaurant and offices), and the upper stories were warehouse space and apartments (now all apartments). The building is three stories tall, arranged in a classical "column" format with base (ground story), shaft (second and third stories), and capital (the corbelled cornice). Measuring 125 feet on the street front by 100 feet deep, the front (west) elevation faces North Third Street and is set back the width of the sidewalk; the rear (east) wall overlooks the Red River of the North and the railroad tracks; a platform (now removed) at one time projected out to a spur line of the Northern Pacific Railroad. The south wall adjoins the Dacotah Hotel's north wall for about 35 feet leaving approximately 65 feet free-standing; the north wall adjoins 124 North Third Street (a building listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982 as the Grand Forks Mercantile Co.) and is not visible.

Though built in 1898 as one building, the north 75 feet of the building were originally used as warehouse space on all levels and separated from the south part by a brick wall on the first and second levels. The wall now extends to the roof and divides the building into two separately owned sections. The south 50 feet are storefront with apartments above. The north 75 feet contain a ground floor restaurant and upper story apartments.

The building is a relatively typical late 19<sup>th</sup> century brick commercial block, using a higher quality brick on the front façade than on the other sides. The use of a timber, rather than a steel frame, but with exposed steel "decorative" beams shows the 19<sup>th</sup> century respect for and uncertainty about new modern materials. The large storefront windows were created for display, to draw in pedestrian traffic.

There is no architect of record but the style of the building and year it was built indicate that it could have been the work of John W. Ross, of Grand Forks, whose practice spanned the years 1880 to 1914. The 1981 Multiple Resource Nomination states, "The confirmed extant brick building in the resource area designed by Ross is the Grand Forks Woolen Mill (#21), which is similar in design and proportion to Aaker's Business College on N. Third St., Hook and Ladder #1 (#23), and the Wright Block (#30). These buildings are brick faced brick construction, two or

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

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### Grand Forks Mercantile Company Building 1898 Grand Forks County, ND

#### Description (continued)

three stories high, and share a common design feature: the upper stories are divided into recessed bays separated by plain brick piers. The recessed bays terminate in corbelled brick bands or corbelled brick dentils. They are well proportioned, uncluttered, and exhibit a distinct horizontal emphasis. These buildings span the years 1895-1907 and all may well have been designed by Ross.”<sup>1</sup> The GFMCB 1898 is brick-faced timber construction, but the rest of these attributes apply to the building.

The front facade of the building is composed of a red, hard-pressed brick from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada laid in a running bond. The brick also forms the decorative components: vertical pilasters that divide the bays of the building, a thin horizontal string course between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> stories, and the corbelled cornice that caps the building. The first floor store front is divided into four sections by three original cast iron support columns and a fifth section to the south is indicated by an original stone pilaster rising from the ground to align with a brick pilaster beginning at the second story. This last section on the south denotes the location of the original retail outlet and has divided plate glass windows, in a manner reminiscent of the original transom over display windows, above a cream brick lower window panel. The central entry to the upper-level apartments is in the original entry location; two storefront entries, one on either side of the central entry, have been added to accommodate two commercial activities at the street level. These latter are recessed in a quarter-hexagon footprint that is reminiscent of storefront entrances typical of the construction period.

The most significant decorative element on the facade is the corbelled brick cornice consisting of a decorative soldier course bordered by projecting stretchers. Above this “frieze,” projecting “brackets” support an eight-course corbelled cornice with a short parapet wall above, meeting the height of the other Grand Forks Mercantile Company building at 124 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> St. The cornice connects seven, two-story bays. The end bays are one window wide; interior bays are three windows wide. The bays are separated by pilasters extending from just above the storefront to the decorative brick work of the cornice; the end pilasters and one interior pilaster align with red sandstone pilasters, made of rough cut blocks, on the ground story.

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<sup>1</sup> Roberts & Roberts, 1981

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

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### Grand Forks Mercantile Company Building 1898 Grand Forks County, ND

#### Description (continued)

The storefront of the original warehouse section on the north end of the building is constructed of large-paned glass, framed in wood, above a tongue and groove lower window panel; wooden doors have been installed in original openings. A sympathetic rehabilitation of the northern storefront occurred in 1998. An earlier change, probably in the 1970s, had pushed the storefront five feet back from the sidewalk, utilized contemporary materials, and boxed in the cast iron support beams; in 1998 the storefront was brought out to its original footprint during rehabilitation efforts based upon historic photographs (ca. 1910) of the building. Three original cast iron columns were exposed during the 1998 renovation. The columns are 14 feet high, spanning the distance from the ground to the second story. Cast as one unit, each rusticated column has a rectangular plinth, a base, shaft, capital and abacus. The shaft is decorated with a shallow pyramid design on the lower half and a fish-scale design on the upper half. These two parts are separated by a raised decorative element that somewhat resembles a belt buckle. (See photograph #5). The capital is designed to resemble an ogee-shaped corbel.

Upper story fenestration in the north portion of the building consists of wood-frame, one-over-one, double-hung windows filling the original openings; these replaced inappropriate glass block and brick which had been used to close the openings in the 1970s. This work was completed in 2001 utilizing historic tax credits with their attendant oversight. Stone sills project beneath each second- and third-story window, and the lintels are segmented brick jack arches. A thin string course of brick divides the second and third stories within the bays.

During World War II the north portion of the building was gutted by a fire which left only the exterior load-bearing brick walls standing. The brick fire wall installed in 1898 to protect the retail store and upper level apartments worked and this area was not damaged by the fire. Following the war, the interior of the damaged portion was rebuilt to three stories with a full basement; these are supported by steel post and beam with a foundation of poured concrete. Four plastered steel columns are evident on each floor; these support all the floors and the roof. The interior floors are five-inch-thick poured concrete. The first floor interior ceiling height is sixteen feet, with a mezzanine area near the rear of the building. The basement, second and third floors have ceiling heights of approximately eight feet. There is a stairway on the north wall and a freight elevator and loading dock in the northwest corner of the building. 1946 architectural drawings for the interior reconstruction show the freight elevator and stairway on the south wall

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

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### Grand Forks Mercantile Company Building 1898 Grand Forks County, ND

#### Description (continued)

of the north section. Myron Denbrook, partner of the 1946 architect, suggests that this was a change that occurred during construction in 1946.

#### Historic Development

While no original plans for the building can be found, the first footprint appears in the 1901 Sanborn Insurance Map (attached) and shows eight wooden posts supporting the interior floors of the north portion and three wooden posts (extant) supporting the south portion. The building had wood floors throughout. The map also indicates that the wall between the two sections of the building exists only on the first and second floors, the third floor being open throughout.

The 1906 Sanborn Map shows the 4' high, T-shaped platform extending from the building to the railroad spur line. It also notes that the north wall, adjacent to 122-124 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> St., is bricked with 4" brick on the GFMCB side. The wall between the north and south portions of the building still extends only through the second floor.

The 1916 Sanborn Map is the first to note a cold storage unit occupying approximately half of the rear of the first floor of the south portion of the building. The only other change from previous maps is that "iron" posts are indicated near the front of the south portion of the building. This may refer to the sculpted iron posts in the storefront which can be seen today on the north portion of the building.

The 1927 Sanborn Map (attached) has been overlaid through 1948 and the entire footprint of the building has been overlaid. It is not possible to tell when the various layers were added, however, it is known that the north portion of the building was gutted by fire during World War II. The exterior walls remained standing and the interior was rebuilt after the war. The map shows that wood posts remain in the south portion of the building, but that the north portion has steel joist construction, concrete floors and roof, protected steel columns, and metal lath and plaster ceilings. During the period between 1927 and 1948, a one-story building (extant) was added to the rear of the south portion of the building. It is also significant that the map does not show windows that previously existed in the wall between the two portions of the building and that the notation indicating that the wall extended only through the second floor is also gone. It

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5

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### Grand Forks Mercantile Company Building 1898 Grand Forks County, ND

#### Description (continued)

seems likely that the reconstruction following the fire resulted in total separation of the two portions of the building and has, in addition, led to separate ownership of the two sections.

#### Integrity

Character-defining features of the Grand Forks Mercantile Company 1898 building include the use of brick for structure and decoration, the regular bay organization of the upper stories, the upper stories' double-hung windows, and the ground floor's commercial/public orientation. All of the ornament on the brick facade is built into and of the construction itself, reflecting a 19<sup>th</sup> century sensibility that ornament be integral to, not in addition to, the building.

The front elevation of the building retains all of its original brick and stone work, including the sandstone pilasters which extend from the ground to the second story brickwork, all in excellent condition. The rear elevation is also original masonry. A remnant of a cable can be seen, which would have tethered the trolley car cable to the building in the early twentieth century. The removal of glass block and brick in the upper story windows has restored the clean lines and character engendered by the 1:1 double-hung windows which originally overlooked the street and the river at the rear.

The current storefront retains the two-part, nearly floor-to-ceiling windows, a kick plate beneath, and, on the south side, the original brick fascia. The recent rehabilitation uncovered decorative cast iron columns original to the building. Also on the south side, awnings matching the historic profile have been installed. While the proportions of the north side storefront do not match the historic storefront, the glass front restored the historic relationship of the building to the street.

The south portion of the building retains its original wood post and beam construction as noted on the 1948 overlay on the 1927 Sanborn Insurance Map. Fifteen (15) apartments in the upper levels of this portion of the building, date to 1898. The layout of the hallways and apartments is unchanged, and these apartments retain much of their original materials. Coved ceilings, original trim molding and hardwood floors, arched doorways, transoms, period floor tiles in bathrooms, original medicine cabinets, kitchen cabinets, pantries, built-in ironing boards, three-panel doors with original hardware and glass knobs, raised bathroom floors to accommodate plumbing, and many original early light fixtures, all provide a sense of apartment living at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>

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Section number 7 Page 6

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### Grand Forks Mercantile Company Building 1898 Grand Forks County, ND

#### Description (continued)

century. Dropped ceilings, which had been added in the 1970s, are being removed and plaster repaired to return the rooms to their original height and spaciousness. Most apartments have one bedroom with a living room, bath, and kitchen; some have a second, smaller bedroom that may have been a nursery but now often serves as an office. Original wood one-over-one double-hung upper-story windows in this section were replaced with bronzed anodized aluminum one-over-one double-hung windows in 1997-98.<sup>2</sup>

The north portion of the building contains a restaurant on the street level which retains the 16' high ceilings and open feeling of the original warehouse and office spaces. The upper floors have been divided into large apartments, a common adaptive reuse of warehouse space.

With the majority of its materials intact, preserving the feeling of the wholesale district, and recent rehabilitation work remedying "urban renewal" era changes to the building, the integrity of the GFMCB is high. The building is a fine representative of the wholesale district in downtown Grand Forks and its public face, its mass, and its style speak to the importance of that time and the aspirations of those people.

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<sup>2</sup> John Satrom Interview, January, 2004

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

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### Grand Forks Mercantile Company Building 1898 Grand Forks County, ND

#### Statement of Significance

The Grand Forks Mercantile Company Building 1898 (hereinafter GFMCB 1898) is being nominated to the National Register as part of the Downtown Grand Forks Multiple Resource Area (1982). The GFMCB 1898 is significant in the commercial history of Grand Forks as the home of two major North Dakota wholesalers, The Grand Forks Mercantile Company and later, Nash Brothers. The MRA nomination identifies the period of significance as “between the late 1870s and the early 1930s.”<sup>3</sup> This period of growth and prosperity can be largely attributed to Grand Forks’ location: on the Red River of the North, at the crossroads of two rail systems, and in the heart of excellent agricultural land. Early wholesale businesses dominated the north end of the city’s business district and the GFMCB 1898 was built at the height of multi-state wholesaling by a company acknowledged by many to be the leading grocery wholesaler in the city (the Mercantile Company).

By 1981, the north portion of the building’s upper-story windows had been enclosed with brick and glass-block and the storefront was recessed and covered with contemporary materials (see photo #19). The building, since then restored to a more historic appearance, now maintains enough historic integrity to meet the requirements laid out in the MRA.

Part of the Original Townsite of Grand Forks, Block 17 was platted in 1876. By 1888, the GFMCB lots had passed through six owners<sup>4</sup> and no permanent structure had been built.<sup>5</sup> The first evidence of permanent occupation of the lots comes when the Nash Brothers move into “new quarters” at 112-114 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> St.<sup>6</sup> About that same time the Peerless Machine Company constructed their building at 116-120 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> St. Both buildings appear on the 1892 Sanborn Insurance Map, which shows a wholesale grocer (Nash Bros.) in 122-124 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> St., a farm machinery wholesaler (Peerless) in 116-120 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> St. and fruit and groceries (Nash Bros.) in 112-114 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> St. The first Dacotah Hotel, on the corner of Alpha and N. 3<sup>rd</sup> St., also appears on this map. The whole block filled with brick buildings between 1888 and 1892 and the Nash Brothers move-in date of 1889 would strongly suggest that these buildings were completed early in the time frame.

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<sup>3</sup> Roberts & Roberts, 1981

<sup>4</sup> Permits Index Book 1

<sup>5</sup> 1888 Sanborn Ins. Map of Grand Forks

<sup>6</sup> Gjovig, 1990, p. 15.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

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### Grand Forks Mercantile Company Building 1898 Grand Forks County, ND

#### Statement of Significance (continued)

Between 1892 and 1896, when electricity poles were erected on N. 3<sup>rd</sup> St. and before street lights were in place, the Peerless Machine Company either closed shop or moved on because an 1896 photograph clearly shows GFMC signage on the Peerless building. The 1897 Sanborn Map shows Nash Bros. Wholesale, GFMC, Nash Bros. Grocers, and the Dacotah Hotel fronting from north to south on Block 17.

The establishment of the GFMC, in 1893, demonstrated the importance of Grand Forks as a wholesale distributing center. The officers of the company were E.C. Bates, C.F. Williams, F.S. Lycan and W.A. Curry, all Grand Forks businessmen.<sup>7</sup> The MRA nomination notes, "During the 1890s and for several decades thereafter, N. Third St. was the wholesale district for the city. By 1897, the wholesale trade in Grand Forks exceeded two million dollars annually in farm machinery, dry goods, groceries, fruits, stationery, building materials, cigars, tobacco, meat, fish, and other goods." According to an account written in 1895,

The advantages of Grand Forks as a center of the wholesale trade may be briefly stated. It is far enough from St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Duluth to be independent, and yet near enough to the Great Lakes to have practically the same transportation facilities enjoyed by the Twin Cities. It has the distributing rates on the Northern Pacific and the competition of the Great Northern.<sup>8</sup>

With rail connections to the cardinal directions, Grand Forks became the focus of an exchange system between raw materials and finished goods in the lower valley.

The business of wholesale is buying goods directly from manufacturers or growers in large lots and reselling smaller lots to end retailers. GFMC's specialized facilities and network of salespeople easily facilitated a large volume of trade. With the tremendous railroad access, they were able to deliver fresh goods and supplies to their customers at costs much lower than competitors in the major cities to the east. One advantage this company had over others was that it could import large quantities of teas from the Orient and offer very cheap prices as a result of lower freight costs. The tea market was growing and grocers and general merchants from the Upper Midwest, including Montana, would look to Grand Forks for their supplies.

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<sup>7</sup> Dudley, 1897, p. 74.

<sup>8</sup> The Record (August 1895) 1(4):27.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

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### Grand Forks Mercantile Company Building 1898 Grand Forks County, ND

#### Statement of Significance (continued)

A pivotal year for this nomination is 1897, when a December fire destroyed all three buildings south of Nash Bros. Wholesale. In 1898 a \$20,000 building permit was issued to Mrs. Minnie Clifford for a new three story building on Original Townsite, Block 17, Lots 3, 7, 8, 9, and the north half of 4. The George Clifford Company owned the building until 1921 although it was occupied by GFMC for most of that time.<sup>9</sup> The building constructed under this permit is the subject of our nomination and reflects a time of high prosperity in the Grand Forks warehouse district.

An article from a contemporary publication explains the importance of the wholesale business to the growth of Grand Forks and the high esteem in which the businessmen thusly employed were held:

Grand Forks enjoys the distinction of being one of the best business towns in the west, and for that matter in the country, for the business done here in a general way, in proportion to the population, is equalled [sic] by few cities in America. This is due in a large measure to the enterprise and "push" of our business men. In none of the metropolitan cities can be found more complete stocks of goods than are carried by Grand Forks merchants. Grand Forks citizens have no occasion to go to St. Paul or Chicago to buy merchandise of any description, for while the tastes and requirements of Grand Forks citizens are doubtless as fastidious and exacting as any, yet the merchants appreciate this fact, and the best there is in the different lines of goods can be found in the mercantile establishments of Grand Forks. The splendid tributary country of prosperous communities and thriving farming population enables our business men to carry large and well selected stocks, and it is no wonder that our business men draw a large share of trade from a distance.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Permits Index Book 1

<sup>10</sup> Dudley, 1897, p. 73.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

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### Grand Forks Mercantile Company Building 1898 Grand Forks County, ND

#### Statement of Significance (continued)

The Nash Brothers' grocery endeavors eventually became the multi-national Nash Finch company based in Minneapolis, MN. The first Nash Bros. Store was started by Fred Nash in Devils Lake, ND, in 1885. His brothers, Edgar and Willis, joined him and, in 1886, they opened a store in Park River, ND. In 1887, the initial Nash Bros. store in Grand Forks was opened with Edgar and Fred in charge. According to the Grand Forks Herald, March 9, 1887, "The Nash Bros., realizing Grand Forks is bound to be a distributing centre, have determined to establish this as the headquarters for the Northwest."

In response to a fire that destroyed their Grand Forks building in 1888, the Nash Bros. sold their Devils Lake store and set up larger quarters on South Third Street. At this time the brothers also began to change from a strictly retail establishment to wholesaling and, due to failing health of one of the brothers, hired their first non-family employee: Harry B. Finch. In 1889, they moved yet again, to 112-114 North Third Street between the Dakota Hotel and the Peerless Machine Company building, which had been occupied by the Grand Forks Mercantile Company since 1883. Nash Bros., continued to occupy this space after the rebuilding which followed the 1897 fire. They also occupied the building to the north of the GFMC, thus co-locating the top two wholesalers in Grand Forks on one city block. The 1905 purchase of GFMC by Nash Brothers consolidated the major wholesalers of the time under one company. Nash Bros. continued to expand and diversify their product base and the number of 'fruit houses' they owned.

For thirty-four years, North Dakota was home for the Nash Bros. Company, and there they flourished into one of the nation's largest grocery wholesalers. By 1919, Nash Bros. consisted of 105 wholesale houses, and numerous related grocery, growing, shipping and marketing companies.<sup>11</sup>

In 1921, by which time the Nash Bros. had moved their center of operations to Minneapolis, "two major wholesale corporations were formed: The Nash Finch Company in the United States, and Nash-Simington Ltd of Canada."<sup>12</sup> Nash Finch Company continues today to be one of the nation's largest wholesalers.

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<sup>11</sup> Gjovig, 1990, p. 17

<sup>12</sup> Gjovig, 1990, p. 18

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 11

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### Grand Forks Mercantile Company Building 1898 Grand Forks County, ND

#### Statement of Significance (continued)

By 1901, the Sanborn Map shows that GFMC is occupying the entire building from 112 to 120 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> St. The warehousing facilities are in the north section and a retail grocery outlet is in the smaller south portion. In 1905, Nash Brothers purchased GFMC, which is referred to as the second house in the city. Harry Finch was made manager and also supervised the (Nash Bros.) Minot Warehouse. The Nash Organization was secure in being the first and largest wholesale house in North Dakota, and Grand Forks would remain the headquarters until 1919.<sup>13</sup>

The purchase by Nash Bros. does not bring a name change, as GFMC continues to be the occupant of record on the 1906 and subsequent Sanborn Maps. Continued growth is evidenced, in 1906, by the 4' platform which has been built from the rear of the building extending to the Northern Pacific spur line. The 1906 map also notes that GFMC is now using the second and third floors of an adjacent building (122-124 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> St.) to supplement its warehouse needs.

GFMC also added cold storage, shown in the 1916 Sanborn map.<sup>14</sup> This allowed them to hold on to perishable items longer and provided the basis for the largest and best cigar line in the state. The company's cigar sales grew substantially and became a major focus. A retail cigar outlet, occupying a small storefront in the second Dacotah Hotel just three doors south, is most often attributed to GFMC and was labeled the best cigar emporium west of Chicago. The combination of cold storage and an additional retail outlet indicate continued and increased market strength.

In 1919, Nash Brothers relocated their headquarters to Minneapolis. In 1921, the GFMC building was sold to Jerry Bacon who leased it to Montgomery Ward, a lease which was renewed in 1929 and which carries on the warehousing tradition of the original occupants. The Montgomery Ward era closes the period of significance for this building, a period during which the building was used almost exclusively for warehousing and retail grocery by the foremost Grand Forks wholesalers of the time: first GFMC and, later, GFMC in conjunction with Nash Bros. The merged company would become the largest and oldest to engage in wholesale business in the state, continuing today as Nash Finch Company.

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<sup>13</sup> Gjovig, 1990, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> 1916 Sanborn Ins. Map

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### Grand Forks Mercantile Company Building 1898 Grand Forks County, ND

#### Statement of Significance (continued)

Nearing the end of the period of wholesale dominance in Grand Forks, a survey taken in 1928-29 provides this information:

Wholesale and jobbing activities represent a highly important phase of the business life in Grand Forks and of the terminal districts. They give employment to many people and they contribute much to the well-being of the city and the area it serves. At the time of this survey there were a number of strictly wholesale concerns in the city, and in addition there were several manufacturing or retail firms which carried on some wholesale business. The wholesale activities were of considerable variety .....As a wholesale center, Grand Forks is much more important in the grocery than the dry goods lines. The city, as might be expected in a great farming area, also is important in the farm implement and petroleum lines.

Of the 39 companies classified as wholesale establishments, 23 are in the terminal districts. Of these, with the exception of the gas and oil companies, the larger and more important are about the borders of the Coach and Freight Yards Section of the Great Northern Terminal District. This section of the city, therefore, is outstanding in its wholesale activities.<sup>15</sup>

In 1929, the list of wholesale grocers still included three branches of the Nash-Finch Company, now of Minneapolis: the Grand Forks Mercantile, Nash Bros., and the Park, Grant and Corrigan Company.

The primary historical significance of this building is in relation to its warehousing and wholesaling history, which helped Grand Forks to attain early economic viability and continue to flourish in the 1890s and early 1900s.

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<sup>15</sup> Pietsch, 1934, p. 177-178.

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**Grand Forks Mercantile Company Building 1898**  
**Grand Forks County, ND**

### Bibliography

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Clarence Peterson, Peterson Construction, contractor, Nov. 6, 2003.

John Satrom, owner, 112-114 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> St., January 14, 2003.

Permits Index Book 1, Inspector's Office City Hall, Grand Forks, ND.

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### Grand Forks Mercantile Company Building 1898 Grand Forks County, ND

#### Bibliography

Sanborn Insurance Maps for Grand Forks, 1884, 1888, 1892, 1901, 1906, 1912, 1916, 1927 (updated to 1948), and 1927 (updated to 1961). On file, North Dakota Room, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

#### Verbal boundary description

The Grand Forks Mercantile Company Building 1898 is located in the original townsite of the city of Grand Forks, on block 17, lots 3, 7, 8, 9, and the north half of 4.

#### Verbal boundary justification

This is the entire parcel historically associated with the building and its owners.

#### Property Owners

Midwest Investment Company  
2030 32<sup>nd</sup> Ave. S.  
P.O. Box 5326  
Grand Forks, ND 58206-5326  
Attn: J. Satrom  
Phone: 701.746.7828

Goldwater LLC  
2850 28<sup>th</sup> Ave. S  
P.O. Box 14010  
Grand Forks, ND 58208-4010  
Attn: Kevin Ritterman  
Phone: 701.772.3101

Dakota Building Inc.  
100 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> St., Suite 200  
Grand Forks, ND 58203  
Attn: J. Satrom  
Phone: 701.746.7828

Peerless Apartments LLC  
118 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> St.  
Grand Forks, ND 58203  
Attn: Kevin Ritterman  
Phone: 701.772.3101

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**Grand Forks Mercantile Company Building 1898**  
**Grand Forks County, ND**

## Photos Log

### Additional Documentation: Current Condition Photographs

The following information applies to all black and white photographs submitted with this nomination:

Grand Forks Mercantile Company 1898

Grand Forks County, North Dakota

Photographer: Peg O'Leary, Grand Forks Historic Preservation Commission

Date of Photographs: March 22, 2004

Location of Negatives: Grand Forks Historic Preservation Commission,  
1405 First Avenue North, Grand Forks, ND 58203

Photo #	Description	Photographer facing
1	Front facade, on North Third Street	N
2	Rear facade	S
3	Front facade, on North Third Street	ESE
4	Front facade, storefront detail, north portion of building	N
5	Front facade, cast iron pier detail	E
6	Front facade, entrance detail, south portion of building	NE
7	Interior hallway, upper level, south portion of building	NE
8	Interior stair, upper level, south portion of building	N
9	Apartment A, cove ceiling detail, upper level, south portion of building	E
10	Apartment A, hall door detail, upper level, south portion of building	W
11	Apartment A, hardwood floor detail, upper level, south portion of building	W
12	Apartment B, Murphy Bed door detail (mirrored), upper level, south portion of building	W
13	Apartment A, interior doors detail, upper level, south portion of building	SW

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**Grand Forks Mercantile Company Building 1898**  
**Grand Forks County, ND**

### Photos Log (continued)

14	Apartment B, kitchen detail, upper level, south portion of building	SE
15	Apartment C, built-in ironing board detail, upper level, south portion of building	S
16	Apartment C, arched tub inset, upper level, south portion of building	NE
17	Apartment A, raised, tiled bathroom floor detail, upper level, south portion of building	SW
18	Apartment B, tiled bathroom floor detail, upper level, south portion of building	SW

### Additional Documentation: 1993 Condition Photographs

The following information applies to three color photographs submitted with this nomination:

Grand Forks Mercantile Company 1898

Grand Forks County, North Dakota

Photographer: Curt Siewert, Office of Urban Development, Grand Forks, ND

Date of Photographs: Summer, 1993

Location of Negatives: Office of Urban Development, 1405 First Avenue North,  
Grand Forks, North Dakota 58203

Photo #	Description	Photographer facing:
19	Front facade, on North Third Street, storefront detail	NNE
20	Front facade, on North Third Street	E
21	Rear facade	SW

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Grand Forks County, ND

## Maps

