645

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name   Commerce Building

other names/site number   Commercial Building

2. Location

street & number   10 East Fourth Street   ☐ not for publication N/A

city or town   St. Paul   ☐ vicinity

state   Minnesota   code   MN   county   Ramsey   code   123   zip code   55102

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Signature of certifying official Britta L. Bloomberg, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer   Date 5/17/07

State or Federal agency and bureau Minnesota Historical Society

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

Signature of certifying official/Title   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 H. Beall   Date of Action 7·3·07

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)
- ☒ private
- ☐ public-local
- ☐ public-State
- ☐ public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)
- ☒ building(s)
- ☐ district
- ☐ site
- ☐ structure
- ☐ object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structure
		objects
1		Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register
0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/Office

COMMERCE/Organizational

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/Office

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)
LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/

Commercial Style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)
foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK; TERRA COTTA; GRANITE

roof COMPOSITION

other

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.

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.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE

Period of Significance
1912-1921

Significant Dates
1912

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder
Kretz, Hermann

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property <u>less than one acre</u>

St. Paul East, Minn.
1967, Revised 1993

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

1. | 1 | 5 | | 1 | 6 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 2 | | 3 | 0 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 5 |
    Zone   Easting   Northing

2. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

3. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
    Zone   Easting   Northing

4. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

☐ See continuation sheet

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

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title   Carole S. Zellie and Amy M. Lucas

organization   Landscape Research LLC   date   3/6/07

street and number 1466 Hythe St.   telephone 651-641-1230

city or town   St. Paul   state MN   zip code   55108

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   Commerce Partners LLC c/o Joe Holmberg, Sr. V.P., Common Bond Communities

street & number   328 Kellogg Blvd. W.   telephone 651-291-1750

city or town   St. Paul   state MN   zip code   55102

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Exterior

The Commerce Building is located approximately one block from the Mississippi riverfront in downtown St. Paul at the southeast corner of E. Fourth and Wabasha Streets. The 12-story Commercial Style building was designed and developed by Hermann Kretz of St. Paul. It was completed in 1912 by the St. Paul contracting firm of Lauer Brothers at an estimated cost of $250,000.

The Commerce Building occupies Lots 6-8, Block 23 of St. Paul proper. The building measures 150 feet along E. Fourth Street and 65 feet along Wabasha Street and is 50 feet deep. It has an L-shaped plan and the reinforced concrete structure utilizes the Turner system of mushroom supporting columns and the Ransome concrete floor slab system. The exterior curtain wall is divided into a three-story stone and terra cotta base, a seven-story shaft of tan brick, and a two-story capital of white glazed brick. The three-part composition is capped by a deep decorative sheet metal cornice and a flat roof.

The Commerce Building pre-dates all of its neighbors. While the St. Paul City Hall and Ramsey County Courthouse (1889)—the early centerpiece of the E. Fourth and Wabasha area—was razed in ca. 1950, much of the surrounding early twentieth-century architectural context is intact. The courthouse site is now occupied by the 6-story Victory Parking Ramp (1954) and the 8-story Pioneer Press and Dispatch Building (1954), which originally housed the Minnesota Mutual Life Insurance Company. The 11-story Degree of Honor Building (1961) is located to the west on E. Fourth Street with a two-story, glass-clad, office building separating it from the Commerce Building. The Crowne Plaza Hotel (1966, 1985; originally the St. Paul Hilton) is located to the south (rear) of the Commerce Building on Wabasha Street and shares the remainder of the block. The 21-story St. Paul City Hall-Ramsey County Courthouse (1931; NRHP) is located across Wabasha Street to the west. The Lowry Medical Arts Building (1912, 1980) and the 10-story Lowry Hotel (1926) are located on the block across Wabasha Street to the northwest; both are undergoing conversion to housing units.

E. 4th Street Elevation (north)

The north elevation is divided into eight bays with a central entrance. An illuminated metal canopy projects over the entrance with an opaque glass "COMMERCE BUILDING" sign placed on three sides. The three-story base is clad in polished red granite on the first story and gray glazed terra cotta on the second and third. Terra cotta stringcourses with an egg and dart motif demarcate the first and second stories and the third and fourth. At the ground level, brushed silver aluminum storefronts are placed between red polished granite piers; squares of black polished granite are applied under some of the storefront windows. The northwest corner is set back from the corner pier and a brushed aluminum-faced entrance is placed in the angle. This storefront has projecting awnings. The second and third-story openings feature fixed three-part Commercial Style windows with dark aluminum frames separated by decorative terra cotta spandrels and terra cotta sills. Here and elsewhere, windows are filled with fixed single-pane modern replacement sash.

The upper seven stories of the shaft are clad in tan brick. Window openings in this section also have terra cotta sills. Each window opening contains a fixed single-pane sash with an aluminum frame. White glazed brick quoins extend the height of the building corners and are placed between the central bays of windows. A terra cotta stringcourse separates the seven-story shaft from the two upper stories. These floors are clad in white glazed brick

NPS Form 10-900-a
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Commerce Building

Name of property

Ramsey County MN

County and State

Section ___7___ Page ___2___

and capped with a heavy galvanized iron cornice with galvanized iron brackets. The cornice and brackets are painted off-white. Iron cresting shown in historic photos is missing.

Wabasha Street Elevation (west)

The west elevation is divided into four bays. The brick, polished granite, and terra cotta treatment matches the E. Fourth Street elevation.

Secondary Elevations (east and south)

The tan brick and glazed brick treatment of the north and west elevations continues on the east elevation. Three bays of windows are placed above the seventh story. Windows have terra cotta sills and contain fixed, single-pane sash. The wall below the seventh story (where the Court Block building was located) is devoid of windows, and a two-story, glass curtain-wall building now abuts this elevation.

The south elevation abuts the Crowne Plaza Hotel. A portion of the Commerce Building is visible above the sixth story. It is clad in yellow brick and the windows contain single-pane, fixed sash set in aluminum frames. Each window has a Bedford stone sill. The heavy cornice wraps the building for approximately five feet across this elevation. A painted sign of unknown date near the cornice reads "COMMERCE BUILDING" in upper case, sans serif white letters against a black background. A metal equipment shaft runs the height of the building in the corner of the L-plan and there is an open, cast-iron fire escape of unknown date. On the twelfth story, the six eastern bays of this elevation are occupied with a projecting addition that is supported by metal trusses. Resembling a boxcar, this structure is clad in clay tile.

Interior

The brushed aluminum double-leaf doors on the E. Fourth Street elevation lead to a one-story lobby faced in black and white polished marble. The lobby has three elevator bays on the south wall and stairs leading to mid-floor offices on the east wall. The lobby was remodeled in 1947; the earlier appearance is unknown. The rear freight elevator and rear stairs are placed against the south wall and are not visible from the main lobby.

The building originally contained offices and clubrooms on the upper two floors. The original terrazzo floors installed throughout the building appear to be intact, as are the concrete mushroom columns. The columns have been boxed in sheetrock and the ceilings have been lowered with acoustical tile.

The original rear (south) wall staircase is furnished with an iron railing and marble stairs. The iron balusters are enclosed in sheetrock. The original mail chute near the south wall service stairs extends throughout the building and retains its brass-faced letter opening at each floor. Panels of polished rose-colored marble are also applied to walls at some elevator bays.

Alterations

The ground floor of the exterior was renovated in 1947 with polished red granite cladding, brushed aluminum storefronts, and a brushed aluminum metal canopy and double-leaf doors. The lobby on E. Fourth Street was also

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Commerce Building

Name of property

Ramsey County MN

County and State

Section _____ 7 _____ Page _____ 3 _____

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renovated with polished black-veined white marble walls and brushed aluminum elevator bays. The original double-hung sash has been replaced with single- pane, aluminum windows (ca. 1980), but there has been no alteration of window size or location.

The original interior hallways, office partition walls, and related millwork trim were removed over the past decades, and the iron staircase railing was enclosed with sheetrock. Elevator doors and trim were replaced. Some sills may remain at the windows but most have been encapsulated by the existing window system.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Commerce Building
_____
Name of property
Ramsey County MN
_____
County and State

Section ___ 8 ___ Page ___ 1 ___

The Commerce Building is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A in the area of Commerce for its association with St. Paul's late 19th- and early 20th-century commercial organizations. Built to headquarter the Commercial Club of St. Paul and the offices of the St. Paul Association of Commerce, the Commerce Building (1912) reflects the economic strength and civic influence of St. Paul's business organizations at the beginning of the 20th century. These organizations were leaders in the city's efforts to support economic growth and to plan for a modern city with City Beautiful principles. They also launched philanthropic and charitable programs that outlived the founding organizations.

Placed on a prominent corner across from the Ramsey County Courthouse and St. Paul City Hall on an axis of the Capitol Approach proposed by Cass Gilbert and other City Beautiful proponents, the Commerce Building is exemplary of modern headquarters buildings designed to house commercial and civic organizations as well as private tenants. The 12-story reinforced concrete skyscraper symbolized the organizations' effort to promote their image and to strengthen the city's prosperity.

The level of significance is local and the period of significance is 1912-1921, which marks the completion of the building by the St. Paul Commercial Club and the St. Paul Association of Commerce and coincides with the peak of their organizational strength before the association left the building for new quarters in the St. Paul Athletic Club. The Commerce Building contributes to the state historic context, *Urban Centers, 1870-1940* and the local historic context "Downtown St. Paul: 1849-1975."

Downtown St. Paul's Commercial Development before 1880

With humble beginnings in 1839 as the "Pig's Eye" landing near the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers, St. Paul expanded from a population of 4,000 in 1853 into a Midwestern territorial center with a population of 41,473 by 1880.[1] The five-square mile grid street system was platted in 1849 and oriented to the river with the Rice and Irvine's addition laid diagonally against it to the west.[2] By 1887 the city's boundaries encompassed 55 square miles.[3]

By the mid-1850s, St. Paul's commercial district was concentrated in Lowertown near the river landing at the foot of Jackson Street, where steamboats delivered a stream of supplies and settlers.[4] While the city's position at the head of most river commerce continued for decades, it was soon surpassed by railroad growth that also concentrated in Lowertown along the Mississippi River. In 1870 there were more than one thousand miles of rail lines leading to St. Paul, which ensured the city's role as a distribution center for the Upper Midwest.[5] The heart of St. Paul's business district subsequently developed along E. Third Street in Lowertown between Wabasha and Wacouta Streets.

The Panic of 1857 forced St. Paul to develop its wholesale capacity. Unable to order large quantities of merchandise on credit from eastern cities, business owners purchased small lots of goods in the city for cash, and

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[1] C. C. Andrews, *History of St. Paul, Minnesota* (Syracuse, NY: D. Mason and Co., 1890), 328.
[2] Carole Zellie and Garneth O. Peterson, "Downtown St. Paul: 1849-1975," St. Paul Historic Context Study, 2001, 3.
[3] Zellie and Peterson, 17.
[4] Andrews, 320.
[5] Andrews, 325.

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Commerce Building
Name of property
Ramsey County MN
County and State

Section _____8_____ Page _____2_____

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erected warehouses near the rail lines.[6] Although early Lowertown was a mixed land use zone of residences, theaters, and schools as well as warehouses, offices, and shops, it eventually became the Midwest's specialized wholesale center. In 1853 the city's trade was valued at nearly $6 million and included specialties such as boots, books, furs, drugs, hardware, hats, lumber, furniture, grocers, glass, stoves, clothing, china, tobacco, leather, confectionary, jewelry and storage.[7] By 1881 the city's wholesale business was worth $47 million.[8] The grocery wholesale district concentrated on the east side of Jackson Street between E. Third Street and the river, while E. Third Street from Jackson to Wabasha Streets had a dispersed pattern of wholesalers dealing in dry goods, hardware, crockery, iron, drugs and liquor.[9]

Early Efforts

St. Paul merchants formed the Board of Trade in 1849 to monitor inflation, but the fledgling organization was weak and it was not until the establishment of the Chamber of Commerce in 1867 that St. Paul business leaders "organized the public spirit" and published the city's first reliable business statistics.[10] The chamber incorporated with an ambitious mission to "advance the commercial, mercantile and manufacturing interests of St. Paul, to inculcate just and equitable principles of trade, establish and maintain uniformity in the commercial usages of the city, acquire, preserve and disseminate valuable business information, to adjust the controversies and misunderstandings which may arise between individuals engaged in trade, and to promote the general prosperity of the city of St. Paul and the state of Minnesota."[11] Members encouraged additional bridge and railroad construction as well as erection of a courthouse and new State Capitol building, but "it had no certain home" and "lacked the visible signs of existence."[12] At the same time, modern systems of gas streetlights (1867), city water (1869), sewers (1873), street paving (1873), a street horsecar line (1872) and telephones (1877) provided needed infrastructure and elevated the city's commercial status.[13] The importance of technological advances to the city's future growth was appreciated by the Chamber of Commerce, which spent much of 1872 promoting the use of the elevator in new building construction.[14]

Organizing St. Paul Commerce

> Cooperation along lines of mutual interest has succeeded selfish isolation; and the merchant and citizen generally, through well-knit organization, are remaking and galvanizing old communities, establishing a new dignity and respect for commerce and emphasizing the vast value of getting together. Here is a work that touches all people and aids all interests.
> Henry Castle on the formation of the St. Paul Commercial Club in 1891

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[6] Williams, 384.
[7] Williams, p. 245 for 1849 statistics and Andrews, p. 319 for 1853 statistics; Williams, 343.
[8] Calvin Schmid, *Social Saga of Two Cities: An Ecological and Statistical Study of Social Trends in Minneapolis and St. Paul* (Minneapolis: Bureau of Social Research, The Minneapolis Council of Social Agencies, 1937), 22.
[9] Henry Castle, *History of St. Paul and Vicinity* (Chicago and New York: Lewis Publishing Co.), 1912, 266.
[10] Castle, 243.
[11] Castle, 240.
[12] Castle, 338.
[13] Millett, *Lost Twin Cities*, 49.
[14] Andrews, 326.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Commerce Building
_____
Name of property

Ramsey County MN
_____
County and State

Section _____8_____ Page _____3_____

Large American cities had at least one commercial organization by the 1880s, and by the turn of the century, terms such as "Board of Trade," "Commercial Club," and "Chamber of Commerce" represented most common types.[15] St. Paul led the state in developing business associations beginning with the Board of Trade (1849) and Chamber of Commerce (1867) and the Commercial Club in 1891. Minneapolis followed with a Board of Trade (1855), a Chamber of Commerce (1881), and the Commercial Club in 1892.[16] Duluth business associations also followed the national trend by organizing a Chamber of Commerce in 1870 and the Duluth Commercial Club in 1902.[17]

Through the late 19th century, the goal of these organizations, and the many smaller groups gathered under their umbrellas, was to promote and strengthen the economic and civic life of the city. The organizations typically supported civic improvements, opposed taxes, developed local retail trade, attracted new industries, highlighted transportation problems, and advertised the city's merits as a convention location.[18] The latter was particularly important. With the development of a transcontinental rail system, capacity for professional and trade associations to hold conventions and annual meetings were greatly increased, and St. Paul was particularly well situated for this business.

St. Paul Chamber of Commerce

When the St. Paul Chamber of Commerce finally built a home in 1886 it paid for its new six-story building at the corner of Sixth and Robert Streets (razed) by increasing membership to 150 and by levying additional assessments.[19] Standing committees covered a range of issues including the public library, immigration, education, manufacturing, park roads, the wheat trade, river improvements, interstate commerce law, and liquor sales.[20] According to Henry Castle, "it was an honor held in high estimation by the best men in the city to be a director of the chamber of commerce" and a list of members "would be a directory of the progressive men of the city."[21] The board of directors included Henry H. Sibley and *Pioneer Press* publisher Frederick Driscoll.[22] The St. Paul Board of Trade, the Jobbers' Union (organized 1884), and the Industrial Union (organized 1889) all held meetings in the Chamber of Commerce building.

Within ten years after occupying its new home, however, business leaders considered the St. Paul Chamber of Commerce ineffective and weak with disorganized meetings and an inability to attract new members. One observer noted that when a "trade association fails to meet the needs of a substantial number of members, a secession group starts a new association."[23] The St. Paul Chamber of Commerce was also a victim of another national trend developing between commercial associations and commercial clubs. Commercial associations

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[15] Kenneth Sturges, *American Chambers of Commerce* (New York: Moffat, Bard and Co., 1915), 4.

[16] Horace B. Hudson, *A Half Century of Minneapolis* (Minneapolis: The Hudson Publishing Company, 1908), 527.

[17] Dwight E. Woodbridge and John S. Pardee, *History of Duluth and St. Louis County: Past and Present.* (Chicago: C.F. Cooper & Company, 1910), 341.

[18] Joseph Bradley, *The Role of Trade Associations and Professional Business Societies in America* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1965), 43.

[19] Castle, 242.

[20] Castle, 246.

[21] Castle, 243.

[22] Castle, 240.

[23] Bradley, 23.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Commerce Building

Name of property

Ramsey County MN

County and State

Section _____ 8 _____ Page _____ 4 _____

could not easily interfere with city administration without criticism for trying to control the city for profit.[24] Under the pretenses of socializing, city clubs easily crossed this line with politicians and businessmen mixing in an informal atmosphere. In 1902, the St. Paul Chamber of Commerce was consolidated and merged with the St. Paul Commercial Club.[25]

St. Paul Commercial Club

The St. Paul Commercial Club had incorporated in December of 1891 with the purpose of "bringing the business men of the city together in close and friendly intercourse, of creating and fostering a general sentiment of public spirit, and uniting in one strong organization the energies and efforts of the principal citizens for the general welfare of the entire community."[26] An early organizer, M. W. Fitzgerald, believed that among the younger generation of businessmen there "existed a profound dissatisfaction" with the old Chamber of Commerce and its concentration on industry, and he saw a need for "a commercial body which would be thoroughly representative of the progressive spirit which then lay dormant among us."[27] The club opened with 750 charter members and three committees handling the house, membership and board activities.[28] The first president was J. J. Corcoran and honorary members were James J. Hill, Frederick Weyerhaeuser, and Auguste L. Larpenteur.[29] In 1892, the club renovated the ninth, tenth and rooftop floors of the Germania Life Insurance Building (1889, razed) on the corner of E. Fourth and Minnesota Streets and spent $20,000 refurbishing the quarters with a café, five private dining rooms, buffet, library, ladies' parlor, billiard and kitchen.[30]

The Commercial Club's success was almost immediate with the appointment of powerful business leaders representing every line of business on the board. One observer noted that the "chairmanship of the public affairs committee is considered second in importance only to the presidency, and, by many, it is considered of more importance than even that of the highest elective official."[31]

After the Commercial Club's nineteenth annual dinner the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* claimed "there has been no public work started in St. Paul in the past decade in which the Commercial Club has not played an important part both with moral support and financially."[32] At the dinner, it was reported that 1910 was the most successful in club history and membership had reached 1,400.[33] The year's successes included support for Congressman Fred C. Stevens' effort to secure a high dam and $500,000 appropriation for improvement of the Upper Mississippi, approval of the national tariff board and securing a national delegate, appointment of delegates to Washington to work for a postal savings bank for St. Paul, promotion of a new Commercial Building and securing 26 conventions for the upcoming year.[34] The successes of 1912 included obtaining 63 conventions for the city,

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[24] Sturges, 209.
[25] Castle, 248.
[26] The Commercial Club of St. Paul, *The Commercial Club of St. Paul: Its Object, Organization, Government and Membership*, (St. Paul: Press of Brown, Treacy and Sperry Co., 1903), 5.
[27] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 8, 1912, 18.
[28] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 18, 1910, 10.
[29] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 18, 1910, 10.
[30] The Commercial Club of St. Paul, 5.
[31] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 18, 1910, 10.
[32] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 18, 1910, 10.
[33] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 4, 1911, 8.
[34] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 28, 1910, 1.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Commerce Building
_____
Name of property
Ramsey County MN
_____
County and State

Section _____ 8 _____ Page _____ 5 _____

starting the Northwest Development League and the Land Show, serving 73,413 meals, and securing 12 conventions for the upcoming year.[35]

The _St. Paul Pioneer Press_ reported daily on the activities of the Commercial Club and the Sunday edition reserved a section noting the activities of local commercial clubs with the St. Paul Commercial Club occupying the headline. On many occasions, the Commercial Club employed the newspaper to advertise its work and membership. On the matter of the 1910 census enumeration for St. Paul—population counts were an important indicator for industry growth and convention traffic—the club took the lead. When the census supervisor stated that St. Paul was about to be undercounted, the Commercial Club printed and circulated several thousand circulars to the press and throughout the city stating that it would "do what it can, but the people must wake up" and "take a personal interest in the census just as they would with their own private business."[36] After the Commercial Club sealed the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen Convention in 1910 by offering to pay the $1000 rental fee of the St. Paul Auditorium, the secretary of the Commercial Club contacted the press to announce that while the delegates to the convention would number between 500 and 700, the visitors to the convention were expected to number between 5,000 and 10,000.[37]

Many organizations followed the Commercial Club's move to the Germania Life Insurance Building. The Town Criers, a club comprised of advertising businessmen, met at the Commercial Club. They held popular annual dinners, served food from St. Paul companies, and exhibited wares made in the city.[38] After the celebration, the club was opened to the public to showcase the St. Paul exhibit. The Business League and the Jobbers' Union met in the new Commercial Club headquarters and the Real Estate Exchange (organized in 1892) opened offices in the same building. The Associated Merchants organized in 1910 and held their first meeting at the Commercial Club where they discussed free telephone service between the Twin Cities and amalgamation with the Retail Grocers' Association.[39] The Commercial Club headquarters was in heavy use with daily meetings, lunches and dinners. Its popularity was most apparent at the annual New Year's Day reception of 1912 when the expected attendance of 300 rose unexpectedly to 500 people and "the kitchen help were compelled to ransack ice-boxes and pantries."[40]

Minneapolis vs. St. Paul

Until about 1914, St. Paul led the state in establishing associations to advance commercial, industrial and civic interests, and took advantage of proximity to the State Capitol to lobby for programs. Minneapolis and St. Paul were in direct competition for new business and especially for convention business, and an uneasy rivalry existed between the two. For example, when the Minnesota Federation of Commercial Clubs organized in 1908 with seventy-two clubs, the third annual convention was held in Minneapolis. Speakers at the convention included Governor Adolph O. Eberhart, Minneapolis Mayor James C. Haynes and Louis Hill, president of the Great Northern railroad, but the bigger news surrounding the convention was its location in the new headquarters of the Minneapolis Commercial Club in the Radisson Hotel.[41] The hotel, situated at the edge of the Minneapolis

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[35] _St. Paul Pioneer Press_, January 7, 1912, Sec. 2, 1.
[36] _St. Paul Pioneer Press_, April 26, 1910, 5.
[37] _St. Paul Pioneer Press_, April 18, 1910, 5.
[38] _St. Paul Pioneer Press_, April 3, 1910, Sec. 3, 6.
[39] _St. Paul Pioneer Press_, June 15, 1910, 6.
[40] _St. Paul Pioneer Press_, January 2, 1912, 8.
[41] _St. Paul Pioneer Press_, January 11, 1910, 1.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Commerce Building
_____
Name of property

Ramsey County MN
_____
County and State

Section ___8___ Page ___6___

business district on Seventh Street between Nicollet and Hennepin Avenues, opened with great fanfare in December 1909. The Minneapolis Commercial Club occupied the eleventh and twelfth floors of the hotel and opened its doors to its 1,301 members in December 1909.[42] Minneapolis achieved consolidation of its business associations into the Civic and Commerce Association in 1911.

Across the river in 1909, the St. Paul Commercial Club hosted the fourth annual convention of the Minnesota Federation of Commercial Clubs. The convention delegates passed resolutions commending the work of the State Immigration Bureau with an appropriation of $100,000, endorsed unification of various state departments, and recommended an agricultural building be erected at the state fair. Locally, the organization was planning for its own new headquarters in what would be the country's third Commerce Building, following Louisville and Portland.[43]

St. Paul successfully consolidated its Association of Commerce and private commercial enterprises in 1912. But by 1914, however, the supremacy of the sister city's business associations was apparent when the 9th District headquarters of the Federal Reserve Bank was awarded to Minneapolis.[44]

St. Paul Commercial Development: 1880-1920

The period between 1880 and 1920 saw the introduction of many new building types in downtown St. Paul, including the department store, automobile showroom, and parking garage. Large railroad stations and warehouses added to the bulk of the district. The most significant building type to affect the downtown landscape, however, was the tall office building built on a steel or concrete skeleton. While a few multi-story hotels were constructed in the downtown core, the tallest buildings constructed between 1880 and 1920 were for office use. The tall office building—or skyscraper—is evidence of the intersection of technology and engineering advances, changing business practices, commercial growth and the growing importance of company image. The office building expressed the increasing segregation between production, manufacturing, warehousing and distribution functions, and record keeping, real estate sales, and legal transactions. Insurance firms, newspaper companies and banks not only required more office space but also desired monumental buildings that would relay the importance and financial strength of the company.

The siting of St. Paul's office buildings reflected the national trend of clustering near customers and suppliers. Corner office buildings near streetcar lines and pedestrian traffic garnered the highest rates, while office buildings located within dense retail zones risked high vacancy rates.[45] Beginning in the 1880s, St. Paul's new office buildings were developed along E. Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Streets, creating the heart of the business district that remains today. E. Third Street and Lowertown to the east remained the warehouse wholesale district, while the retail corridor developed to the north along Seventh Street and along other streets such as Robert and Wabasha.

While the Panic of 1893 slowed office building construction for over a decade, the St. Paul real estate market was thriving by 1909 and downtown sites were in great demand. Real estate agent F. M. Larkin noted in 1910 that "there never was a better outlook for real estate investment" and "the enormous building boom and growth in all

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[42] _Minneapolis Journal_, December 23, 1909, 1.
[43] _St. Paul Pioneer Press_, January 7, 1911, p. 8 and January 27, 1911, 1.
[44] _St. Paul Pioneer Press_, January 21, 1914 and _Minneapolis Journal,_ January 20, 1914.
[45] Robert W. Bastian, "Tall Office Buildings in Small American Cities 1923-1931," _Geografiska Annaler_, vol. 75 (1993), 38.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Commerce Building
_____
Name of property
Ramsey County MN
_____
County and State

Section ____8____   Page ____7____

departments of trade have obliterated all doubt as to the future of St. Paul."[46] At the same time, business circles were grumbling about the office rent hikes around downtown St. Paul noting that rates increased from 50 to more than 100 per cent in some large office buildings.[47] In 1911, real estate agent Newton Frost told the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* that downtown property "has increased remarkably of late, for our business district is hemmed in by natural barriers" which "keeps the business district from spreading."[48] To elaborate, Frost noted the recent sale at the corner of Wabasha and Fourth Streets that "sold for $125,000 but would not have fetched $100,000 a year before."[49]

Another influence on the direction of downtown development was the effort to build a new State Capitol on an elevated site north of downtown. A 1902 study by Capitol architect Cass Gilbert showed a two-part scheme, with a central axis and a partially landscaped downtown mall stretching between Cedar and Wabasha Streets with an E. Fourth Street terminus at the 1889 Ramsey County Courthouse and St. Paul City Hall. During the period from about 1908 to 1912, the *Pioneer Press* occasionally reported on the features of the Gilbert design, and on other schemes proposed by other planners.[50]

St. Paul Skyscrapers

Romanesque and Renaissance Revival Style buildings—characterized by heavily rusticated stone and dark brick that often concealed at least a partial iron or steel structural system—dominated much of St. Paul's late 19th-century office construction. The 10-story Globe Building (1887, razed) designed by E. Townsend Mix, and the 8-story Germania Bank Building (1889, NRHP 1977) designed by J. Walter Stevens, were typical Romanesque Revival buildings of this period. Built for a newspaper company and a bank, both provided leased space to other entities and were praised as the city's finest office buildings. The Pioneer Building (1888, NRHP 1974), originally the Pioneer Press Building, was designed by Chicago architect Solon Beman. At 12 stories and with a complete structural steel frame, it is considered St. Paul's first skyscraper.[51] The building provided its tenants with technological advances including the nation's first glass-walled elevators and the first commercial telephone answering service.[52] In 1910, four additional stories completed in the Renaissance Revival Style were added to the steel frame of the Romanesque building, maintaining the building's competitiveness with new office construction.

By the turn of the century, reinforced concrete structures were very popular with warehouse and department store owners who required uninterrupted floor areas. A key figure in the development of reinforced concrete construction was Ernest L. Ransome (1844-1917).[53] A native of England who emigrated to the United States in 1869, his first patents were issued in the 1880s, and by 1900 he was the leading designer of a concrete structural system that integrated concrete floor slabs reinforced with steel bars and joists as one unit.[54] In 1908, Minneapolis engineer, Claude Allen Porter Turner (1869-1955), patented a new structural form that allowed columns to carry

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[46] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 23, 1910, 3.
[47] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 9, 1910, 2.
[48] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 15, 1911, 5.
[49] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 15, 1911, 5.
[50] See for example, "Architect Gilberts Plans for the Ideal Capitol Approaches," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, July 4, 1909, 12.
[51] "Pioneer Press Building and Endicott Building," St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission site local designation form, 1978.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Carl Condit, *American Building Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 154.
[54] Condit, 154.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Commerce Building

Name of property

Ramsey County MN

County and State

Section _____ 8 _____   Page _____ 8 _____

slab floors, eliminating beams.[55] Turner's flared "mushroom" capital reduced the shearing stress at the perimeter of the column by spreading the load over a larger area.[56] By 1913, Turner's mushroom slab system was employed in more than one thousand buildings;[57] by 1915, "the Twin Cities had the nation's greatest concentration of tall concrete frame buildings;" this is likely due to Turner's local presence coupled with the strong demand for commercial and industrial structures.[58] In the 1910s, the new generation of St. Paul office buildings exhibited reinforced concrete construction covered by smooth-skinned terra cotta and brick, with and limited ornamentation. Inspired by Louis Sullivan's 1896 essay, "The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered," and aided by structural advances, these Commercial Style buildings promoted Sullivan's tripartite exterior design for tall buildings that divided them into a vertical column with an articulated base, an uninterrupted shaft and a prominent capital.

A New Commerce Building

Commercial Club members announced their intention to build a new headquarters in 1909, with members agreeing that the current quarters were cramped and an "attractive and central site" with a showcase building to promote the entity was desired.[59] The executive board visited Portland, Oregon in 1909 and returned to promote the idea of commercial associations housed in one central building.[60] They also agreed that the association models of Portland and Chicago were successful and furthered strong community images. Portland completed their Commerce Building in 1906, and followed Louisville's example in combining a Commercial Club and private business tenants. Louisville's ten-story building, The Commerce (1890, razed 1966), was heralded as that city's first skyscraper. While Portland accomplished the feat of financing a building housing the commercial club and private firms, Chicago was the first to consolidate multiple business associations into a single association, the Chicago Association of Commerce.[61] St. Paul would be the first to provide a prominent building to house its business associations as well as private business tenants.

In May 1910, an advisory board of the most prominent citizens and businessmen in St. Paul was established to secure a new location. The board included the presidents of ten business organizations, including Eli Warner of the Commercial Club; George Smith of the Associated Merchants; A. C. Raymer of the Builders Exchange; C. C. Gray of the Board of Trade; C. L. Kluckhohn of the Jobbers Union; Val Rothschild of the Real Estate Exchange; George Kibbe of the Hotel and Restaurant Mens' Association; George Prince of the Bankers' Association; Newton Frost of the Consolidated Publicity Bureau; and Paul Doty of the Business League. The committee included the city's leading businessmen such as Louis W. Hill of the Great Northern Railroad; Charles W. Gordon of Gordon & Ferguson; Benjamin L. Goodkind of Mannheimer Brothers; Everett H. Bailey of the First National Bank; Chauncy Milton Griggs of Griggs, Cooper & Co.; James T. Clark of the Omaha Road, as well as John Field, William Hamm, Lucius P. Ordway; William W. Lindeke, Robert A. Kirk, Fred Lynch, L. V. Ashbaugh, William Magivny, Joseph McKibbin, Pierce Butler, James Henry Skinner. H. H. Bigelow, Joseph Strong and George Thompson.[62] In July 1910, the advisory board announced, "A long lease and liberal rentals will be

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[55] Adolf K. Placzek, *MacMillan Encyclopedia of Architects* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1982), 23.
[56] Condit, 168.
[57] Placzek, 23.
[58] Millet, 245.
[59] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 25, 1910, 19.
[60] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 22, 1910, 1.
[61] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 5, 1911, 10.
[62] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 10, 1910, 1.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commerce Building
Name of property
Ramsey County MN
County and State

Section _____ 8 _____ Page _____ 9 _____

offered to any individual or company who will agree to construct a tall building in the downtown business district."[63]

Choosing a site involved balancing budget concerns with a need for a prominent and strategic location. At first, the board considered moving to one of several new office buildings, but before they could meet with developers, another club member announced his interest in the new floors being added to the Pioneer Press building.[64] Then it was discovered that the Pioneer Press building addition was designed for offices and the club required large uninterrupted assembly spaces.[65] The club received its next offer from the owner of the site on the corner of E. Fourth and Jackson streets and the executive board signed an option to purchase the site for $150,000 and erect a building for $250,000.[66] This agreement caused one of the few documented eruptions among the Commercial Club members. The real estate businessmen associated with the club believed there were cheaper locations closer to the business center noting that "everything in St. Paul is growing away from E. Fourth and Jackson."[67] Other members did not believe the club could support its own building and assume building management.[68]

At the same time a new solution was offered by architect and Commercial Club member, Hermann Kretz, who proposed to erect a tall office building on his recently purchased parcel at E. Fourth and Wabasha Streets, opposite the courthouse and along the axis proposed by Cass Gilbert's Capitol Approach plan of 1902.

The prolonged location search allowed for the "beehive"—the concept of a unified commercial organization—to garner support of the prominent advisory board that voted to conduct a study for consolidation.[69] Not only was a centralized building desired, but also a consolidated organization that would "result in increased efficiency, a greater scope of commercial activity, added harmony and economy of time and money."[70] Soon "consolidation was the cry among members of the club" who recognized that more than $100,000 was subscribed annually by the business men of St. Paul to keep subsidiary trade and commercial organizations on foot whose purposes practically overlap and duplicate each other."[71] For example, the city's retail merchants were represented by the Associated Retail Merchants' Association, Retail Grocers' Association, Retail Druggists' Association, Retail Hardware Men's Association and the Retail Fuel Dealers Association. Each paid for office rental and secretarial staff.[72] The president of the Associated Merchants claimed to have had this plan "up his sleeve" for some time and felt it was a "splendid time" to consolidate.[73]

Consolidation: St. Paul Association of Commerce

In February 1911 more than 100 members of the Commercial Club voted to adopt a report recommending the establishment of the St. Paul Association of Commerce with the added initiative of building a new building to

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[63] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, July 28, 1910, 1.
[64] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 25, 1910, p.1 and July 27, 1910, 1.
[65] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, July 28, 1910, p. 1.
[66] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 22, 1910, p. 1.
[67] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 25, 1910, p. 19.
[68] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 25, 1910, p. 19.
[69] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, August 31, 1910, 1.
[70] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 27, 1911, 2.
[71] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 12, 1911, 5.
[72] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 12, 1911, 5.
[73] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, July 27, 1910, 1.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Commerce Building

Name of property

Ramsey County MN

County and State

Section _____ 8 _____   Page _____ 10 _____

house the two entities.[74] The Commercial Club would continue to act at the social agency, and St. Paul Mayor Herbert P. Keller expressed his support of the merger's "compactness and convenience."[75] Secretary Joseph H. Beek was appointed staff to the new association and a campaign for one thousand members was announced.

By the end of March, the Public Affairs Committee of the Commercial Club, the Business League (organized 1906), Consolidated Publicity Bureau, Associated Merchants and the St. Paul Jobbers and Manufacturers' Association voted to merge into the St. Paul Association of Commerce.[76] The mission of promoting commerce, industry and civic interests continued, and temporary offices in the Endicott Building (1890) at 350 Robert Street were leased until the Commercial Club and Association of Commerce could office together.[77] With the added financial benefits of the consolidation, the option to build at E. 4th and Jackson streets was released and Hermann Kretz's offer to reserve the eleventh and twelfth floors of the proposed Commerce Building was accepted by the Commercial Club and the St. Paul Association of Commerce. The Commercial Club agreed to sign a ten-year lease paying a monthly rental of $900 for the first five years and $1,000 for the second five years. The St. Paul Association of Commerce arranged for space on the tenth floor in the new building.[78]

The St. Paul Association of Commerce was divided into three divisions: Interstate, Local, and Public Affairs. An elected vice-president and four directors served each division. The first officers were C. L. Kluckholm, president; W. J. Dean, interstate vice-president; Paul Doty, public affairs vice-president; J. R. Mitchell, treasurer; Joseph H. Beek, secretary; J. W. Cooper, traffic chairman; Eli S. Warner, industrial chairman; and Walter J. Driscoll, publicity chairman.[79] Bureaus of traffic, industries, and publicity were also formed as reporting committees.[80]

Skyscraper for Commerce

With consolidation addressed, construction of what was first known as the Commercial Building and later as the Commerce Building began in April 1911. The prime E. Fourth Street site was across from the Ramsey County Courthouse and St. Paul City Hall (1889, razed) and was at the busy corner where two streetcar lines crossed. The building was sited on axis with the new State Capitol, and while commanding "an excellent view of the river and the surrounding bluffs"[81] it did not directly focus on the industrial riverfront and unpleasant E. Third Street. The desirability of the location would be further evident in 1916 when the St. Paul Athletic Club built on the neighboring corner of Cedar and E. Fourth Streets, also facing the courthouse.

Building construction required the demolition of the three-story, brick Merriam Building (1875). This caused the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* to lament the loss of a "historic landmark."[82] The demolition was part of the increasingly

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[74] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 27, 1911, 2.
[75] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 27, 1911, 2.
[76] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 10, 1911, supplement.
[77] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 4, 1911, 7.
[78] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 29, 1911, 4.
[79] Castle, 255.
[80] Castle, 256.
[81] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 26, 1911, Sec. 2, 8.
[82] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 16, 1911, 1. The Merriam Building was built by John Merriam, father of Minnesota governor William Merriam, and originally housed the Department of the Dakotas.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Commerce Building

Name of property

Ramsey County MN

County and State

Section _____ 8 _____ Page _____ 11 _____

competitive early 20th-century downtown real estate market. Kretz purchased the property from a speculator, Pittsburgh attorney A. M. Thompson, who paid a reported $125,000 for the corner lot in September 1910.[83]

Kretz selected Lauer Brothers as contractors for the $250,000 project.[84] Nimis and Nimis were the electrical contractors and St. Paul Roofing and Cornice Works completed the roof.[85] The terrazzo floors were laid by Minnesota Fama Stonewood Company and millwork was installed by the Villaume Box and Lumber Company.[86]

The building design utilized the Ransome slab and Turner mushroom systems of concrete construction. Such reinforced concrete construction may have allowed for the rapid completion of the building, which was prepared for interior finishes by October 1911, only six months after work began.[87] *The Western Architect* proclaimed, "This quick record in building operations excels, by several months, any job of similar size and importance ever attempted by other contractors in the entire Northwest."[88] Kretz's reputation rested on the "soundness of his structures and their mechanical systems;" his structural specifications for the Commerce Building provided for two additional floors.[89] Promotion began before the building was completed and in September 1911 the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* illustrated the Lowry Arcade and Commerce Building as "St. Paul's Two New Sky Scrapers."[90]

Kretz acted as architect and developer and marketed the lower floors for office tenants. He moved his architectural office and the Kretz Realty Company from the New York Life Insurance Building into the building. By 1915, at least 15 firms specializing in life, real estate or fire insurance were tenants.[91] Nine real estate firms, including the Bitter Root Plantation Company and long-term tenant H. H. Miller, worked alongside ten lawyers.[92] The ground-floor commercial tenants included a cigar store and a barber, which were good counterparts for the upper-floor business clubs.

New Commercial Club

The 18,000 square-foot club included a main lobby, main parlor, rest room, ladies' reception room, card room, buffet, banquet room, ladies' tea room, secretaries office, check room and pantry on the 11th-floor and billiard room, main dining room, kitchen, and private dining rooms on the 12th floor. An additional 2,000 square-feet in the basement were provided for storage.[93] The 12th-floor kitchen was designed to overhang ten feet on the south elevation and was described as the "aerial kitchen."[94] The club quarters completed for $50,000 featured fumed oak, silver oak, burnt cypress and old ivory intermingled with oriental rugs, upholstered furniture, Spanish leather and tapestries.[95] The Turner mushroom system proved significant for the organization's social events; the club

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[83] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 11, 1910, Sec. 2, 7.
[84] Castle, 246.
[85] *Western Architect*, January 1912 (Vol 18, No. 1), 10.
[86] *Western Architect*, January 1912 (Vol 18, No. 1), 10.
[87] *Western Architect*, January 1912 (Vol 18, No. 1), 10.
[88] *Western Architect*, January 1912 (Vol 18, No. 1), 10.
[89] Jeffrey A. Hess and Paul Clifford Larson, *St. Paul's Architecture: A History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2006), 71.
[90] "St. Paul's Two New Sky Scrapers." *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 10, 1911, Supplement.
[91] *St. Paul City Directory*, 1915.
[92] *St. Paul City Directory*, 1915.
[93] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 8, 1912, 18.
[94] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 8, 1912, 18.
[95] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 8, 1912, 18.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Commerce Building
_____
Name of property
Ramsey County MN
_____
County and State

Section _____8_____ Page _____12_____

noted that the billiard room is "without a pillar or post to interfere with players."[96] James F. Denton designed the club interior and contracts were awarded to Schuneman and Evans for furniture, Mannheimer Brothers for draperies and upholstery, Frank J. Spriggs for plumbing, Koehler and Hinnrichs for buffet furnishings and Fixture Equipment Co. for lighting.[97]

The grand opening of the Commercial Club on September 9, 1912 began with the Town Criers' band leading 200 members from the old headquarters to the new. A wake for the gavel used at the old headquarters was held, with burial of the remains in Rice Park held at a separate ceremony. St. Paul Mayor Herbert P. Keller and Bishop John J. Lawler spoke at the opening dinner that was followed by a week of festivities around the new quarters.

St. Paul Association of Commerce

In 1912, Henry Castle, a member of the Commercial Club and the St. Paul Association of Commerce, noted "practically every business man in the city now belongs to this association and contributes $50 a year to its support."[98] Soon after the Association of Commerce was organized the board met to discuss topics such as the Land Show for the Northwest Development League, and consolidation of the Indian Affairs divisions, Army Department of the Dakota, and the Army Department of the Lakes.[99] The association provided "valuable assistance in virtually all lines of civic improvement" at local and national levels. [100]

The well-attended annual meeting ending the year 1912 featured multiple speeches highlighting the new organization's achievements, and referred frequently to the organization's role in the City Beautiful Movement. In his introduction, Secretary Beek "emphasized the importance of doing work for the city's betterment and his comment that "moral and social forces outweigh industrial achievements" received an ovation.[101] The Association's achievements included endorsing the electric line from St. Paul to Rochester, raising $100,000 for purchasing land for the new library, endorsing the widening of Robert Street, preventing drainage of Lake Como and securing multiple conventions.[102] In a display of its strength, the Association of Commerce voted to investigate whether the city and the county should consolidate the areas of costly duplication.[103] Within one year of organizing the Association of Commerce had clearly expanded the power of the consolidated entities.

As the Association of Commerce grew, more organizations folded into its mission. In 1912, the Women's Council of St. Paul, under the leadership of Lenora Hamlin, consolidated the New Century Club, Thursday Club, St. Paul Political Equality Club, Woman's Civic League and Fourth District of Women's Clubs and garnered membership in the St. Paul Association of Commerce. The organizers understood the formation would "represent women in the affiliation of commercial bodies" and "mean less overlapping of effort in all lines of civic and philanthropic work."[104]

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[96] _St. Paul Pioneer Press_, September 8, 1912, 18.
[97] _St. Paul Pioneer Press_, July 19, 1912, 4.
[98] _St. Paul Pioneer Press_, July 19, 1912, 4.
[99] _St. Paul Pioneer Press_, May 27, 1911, 2.
[100] _St. Paul Pioneer Press_, January 9, 1913, 2.
[101] _St. Paul Pioneer Press_, January 9, 1913, 2.
[102] _St. Paul Pioneer Press_, January 9, 1913, 2.
[103] _St. Paul Pioneer Press_, January 9, 1913, 2.
[104] _St. Paul Pioneer Press_, April 3, 1912, 1.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Commerce Building

Name of property

Ramsey County MN

County and State

Section ____8____ Page ____13____

In 1916, the St. Paul Association printed a 14-page pamphlet documenting the achievements of the 4200-member organization in its first few years. Some of the significant accomplishments included the establishment of a Midway district branch, organization of the Junior St. Paul Association, organization of the City Planning Commission and participation in multiple war activities.[105] The Association secured the Federal Land Bank, initiated highway construction, financed festivals and considered over one hundred proposed laws of special interest to the city and made recommendations to the Senate.[106] The organization's role in supporting welfare programs grew exponentially and it sponsored hundreds of school surveys, housing surveys, milk programs, health surveys and sanitary condition reports.[107]

The Business of City Beautiful

The placement of the Commerce Building at the "power corner" of E. Fourth and Wabasha Streets reflected support for St. Paul's version of the City Beautiful Movement by the Commercial Club and the St. Paul Association of Commerce. Following the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, there was a national effort by commercial organizations to promote the movement that promoted well-managed, planned cities with landscaped, broad avenues anchored by handsome buildings and parks. Businessmen supported the connection of civic improvement and commerce and understood that "health and education, city planning and zoning, municipal administration, language and religion, politics and race, were intertwined with the business of making a living."[108] As "politics became more democratic and business less feral" business organizations were able to work directly with government officials to coordinate change and advocate for city planning initiatives.[109] Coordination among industrial, transportation, wholesaling, hotel, and real estate industries led to powerful organizations that demanded the ear of city leaders.
St. Paul leaders noted national models. In 1901, the McMillan Commission summoned the World's Columbian Exposition design team, including architect Daniel Burnham, to redesign the national capital as a monumental modern city, the country's first City Beautiful.[110] Elsewhere, commercial clubs took lead roles in securing plans for their cities. In 1909, for example, the Commercial Club of Chicago hired Burnham, along with Edward Bennett, to draw up its city improvement plans. Also in 1909 the Portland Commercial Club raised $20,000 to hire Bennett to produce a comprehensive plan.[111] Minneapolis followed in 1910 when its Civic and Commerce Association hired Burnham, and then Bennett and Andrew Crawford, to prepare its City Beautiful plan.[112]

[105] St. Paul Association of Commerce, *The More Important Accomplishments of the St. Paul Association Since the Reorganization in 1916.* (St. Paul: The Association, 1916)
[106] St. Paul Association of Commerce, *The More Important Accomplishments of the St. Paul Association Since the Reorganization in 1916.* (St. Paul: The Association, 1916).
[107] St. Paul Association of Commerce, *The More Important Accomplishments of the St. Paul Association Since the Reorganization in 1916.* (St. Paul: The Association, 1916).
[108] W. J. Donald, "Public Service Through Chambers of Commerce," *The American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 26, no. 5 (1921), 561.
[109] John Grimond, "Chicago," *The Economist*, (March 2006), 4.
[110] Lance M. Neckar "Cass Gilbert: Architecture, Landscape, and the City." Unpublished chapter manuscript for inclusion in forthcoming book (2006), 4. On file, College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture Library, University of Minnesota.
[111] Mansel Blackford, "The Lost Dream: Businessmen and City Planning in Portland, Oregon, 1903-1914," *The Western Historical Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 1 (1984), 47.
[112] Millet, 31.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Commerce Building

Name of property

Ramsey County MN

County and State

Section _____ 8 _____ Page _____ 14 _____

The Commercial Club and City Beautiful

The City Beautiful Movement was not lost on St. Paul. Its business leaders were among the first to recognize the need for beautification of the Capitol City, especially because the crowded patchwork of downtown streets overlooked an industrial riverfront. In 1902, during the construction of his new Capitol building, architect Cass Gilbert provided the Women's Civic League with plans for a Capitol Mall that branched across downtown St. Paul.[113] One component of Gilbert's plan was a mall and boulevard stretching from the Capitol to the river and extending along the width of Wabasha and Cedar Streets. It was anchored at the landscaped square surrounding the courthouse and city hall at E. 4th Street. Following Gilbert's presentation of the plan in November 1902, the Commercial Club joined with the Chamber of Commerce to pursue the purchase of parcels around the Capitol necessary to implement the plan.[114]

Other designers also presented proposals with similar schemes. For example, in 1903, the president of the Women's Civic League, Lenora Hamlin, who was a chief promoter of the City Beautiful Movement in St. Paul, invited landscape architect Warren H. Manning of Cambridge, Massachusetts, to present his plans to the Civic League and the Commercial Club.[115]

In the period between 1902 and 1910, the Capitol building was completed but major work on the approaches awaited political leadership. As noted above, the potential connection between the Capitol and an enhanced downtown and riverfront was impressed on Commercial Club members as they searched for a location for their own new headquarters.

St. Paul's various City Beautiful plans were grandiose and, while the expensive schemes were never fully realized, they nevertheless had an impact on downtown development. In 1911, just as their new building was underway, the Commercial Club invited John Nolen and Arthur Comey of Boston to create a plan for the Central District of St. Paul. The plan recommended street widening and riverfront beautification and was endorsed by Hamlin and Louis Betz, president of the Commercial Club and promoter of the Commerce Building efforts.[116] Employed as the St. Paul City Comptroller, Betz was an early example of St. Paul's government officials taking a direct interest in the growth of business associations. As chair of the committee to consolidate women's groups into the Women's Council of St. Paul, Hamlin collaborated with Betz and was instrumental in women garnering membership in the St. Paul Association of Commerce.[117] A few recommendations of the Nolen-Comey plan were eventually followed, including the widening of Third Street and the cantilevered terrace of Kellogg Park, and creation of Shepard Road along the river.[118] In the 1920s, the St. Paul Association of Commerce would be instrumental in the formation of the St. Paul Planning Commission and implementation of the city's first zoning code.[119]

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[113] Millet, 24.

[114] Neckar, "Cass Gilbert," 4.

[115] Neckar, "Cass Gilbert," 9.

[116] Neckar, "Cass Gilbert," 9.

[117] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 3, 1912, 1.

[118] Neckar, "Cass Gilbert," 10.

[119] Neckar, "Cass Gilbert," 9.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Commerce Building
_____
Name of property
Ramsey County MN
_____
County and State

Section ____8____ Page ____15____

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Changing Club Status and the Growth of Philanthropic Work

Athletic Club Absorption

The St. Paul Commercial Club and the St. Paul Association of Commerce followed the national trend of endorsing athletic clubs and "secured a fair and equitable affiliation with the St. Paul Athletic Club, whereby men of small means can secure membership, thus making the Athletic Club a center for St. Paul's more important civic, commercial, social and recreational activities."[120] In 1916, the Association helped secure a $500,000 bond to complete the St. Paul Athletic Club building at the northeast corner of Cedar and E. Fourth Streets.[121] Minneapolis also followed national trends towards expanding the social nature of Commercial Clubs by a 1911 athletic facility addition to the Minneapolis Club (1908), and by the new Minneapolis Athletic Club in 1913. By 1921, however, both commercial clubs were absorbed by their respective downtown athletic clubs.[122] On a national level, many older social clubs were expanding into "athletic clubs" that housed gyms, pools, bowling alleys, and hotel rooms.

Labor, Women, and Philanthropy

The 1920s saw St. Paul's business associations expand their roles in labor, women's organizations, and philanthropy and charitable organizations. As labor unions gained strength, wealthy industrialists saw a need to capture middle-class support. In reaction to the labor unrest of 1918, the St. Paul Association of Commerce stressed "democracy" but secretly tried to garner the support of the small businessmen who were not unionized.[123] The Association instituted a sliding membership scale to the St. Paul Athletic Club in order to reshape the elite image of the Club and to gain acceptance by "white collar" workers.[124] The Association also tried to attract women members to the St. Paul Athletic Club in hopes of diverting the unionization of teachers and acknowledging the power women would gain with the inevitable right to vote.[125] Many businessmen wanted to be seen more sympathetically in the community, and due largely to the efforts of the associations, the 1920s saw the rise of philanthropic foundations and community chests.

The financial depressions of 1921-23 and 1929-33 weakened businesses and office rentals throughout the country; the Commerce Building's tenant losses reflected the problems of the national economy.[126] By the early 1920s, the status of St. Paul's Commercial Club as well as that of the Commerce Building was declining, but the St. Paul Association of Commerce continued to influence the community.

St. Paul Community Chest

The Community Chest is the best example of the philanthropic efforts of the St. Paul Association of Commerce and its members. Before the reform of charities laws in 1893, it was difficult for wealthy businessmen to establish

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[120] Neckar, 3.
[121] Neckar, 7.
[122] Marion D. Shutter, *History of Minneapolis: Gateway to the Northwest* (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1923), 649.
[123] Mary Lethert Wingerd, *Claiming the City: Politics, Faith, and the Power of Place in St. Paul* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 224.
[124] Wingerd, 224.
[125] Wingerd, 224.
[126] Morell Heald, "Business Thought in the Twenties: Social Responsibility," *American Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 2 (1961), 136

NPS Form 10-900-a
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Commerce Building

Name of property

Ramsey County MN

County and State

Section ____8____ Page ____16____

charitable trusts due to the perception that charitable organizations would influence public policy with their directed giving.[127] The nation's first charitable foundation was established in 1907 and required a new charter in the New York state legislature, but corporate owners remained wary in the wake of John D. Rockefeller's 1915 Senate hearings over his charitable foundation and potential influence.[128] Businessmen often agreed with Rockefeller that "the pressure of these appeals for gifts has become too great for endurance"[129] and others concurred with Henry Ford "that philanthropy, no matter how noble its motive, does not make for self-reliance."[130]

Minnesota's wealthiest and most influential members of the business community, James J. Hill and his son, Louis, dealt with the same dilemmas. Although once stating in a fit of anger that "we should just give them (poor people) enough to keep them alive" Louis Hill was deeply connected to St. Paul's relief organizations and managed his charitable endeavors with a hands-on approach.[131] As president of the Great Northern Railway, Louis Hill's influence affected all areas of business and his wariness "surely delayed St. Paul's charity reform," but as a founding member of the Commercial Club and the St. Paul Association of Commerce he was not immune to the organization goals of community building and consolidating forces in order to avoid duplication of efforts.[132]

In 1901 the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce organized the country's first Community Chest to disburse funds to selected charitable recipients.[133] Business and trade associations increasingly supported such efforts.[134] By 1929, a business association management handbook reminded members that their purpose was to "advance the commercial, industrial, and civic interests of a community" and while the associations are concerned with community welfare work it suggested it was best to direct financial resources elsewhere.[135] To that end, the handbook noted that business associations were the logical agency to assume the responsibility of central control in establishing "community chests" for charity disbursements.[136] Community chests appealed to businessmen because of their efficiency and promise to relieve them from the necessity for evaluating the many appeals received from individual agencies.[137]

St. Paul's relief charities of the 1910s had been disorganized and poorly run and their ineffectiveness led to irregular support.[138] Realizing the potential of consolidation, in 1916 the St. Paul Association of Commerce advocated for consolidation of relief agencies and distributed a survey form to charitable institutions scoping interest in "cooperation" and "standardization of work." Child welfare, anti-tuberculosis, health improvement, nursing, recreation, housing and neighborhood organizations were targeted.[139] The Association committee on

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[127] Peter Dobkin Hall, *Inventing the Nonprofit Sector and Other Essays on Philanthropy, Volunteerism, and Nonprofit Organizations* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 48.
[128] Hall, 48.
[129] Hall, 45.
[130] Heald, 138.
[131] Randall T. Getchell, "The Historic Fight: The Struggle to Control St. Paul Charity," *Minnesota History*, vol. 58, no. 8 (2003-04), 397.
[132] Getchell, 403.
[133] Hall, 51.
[134] Heald, 129.
[135] Henry Holtzclaw, *Association Management: Organization and Operation of Civic and Commercial Bodies* (New York: Ronald Press Company, 1929), 62.
[136] Holtzclaw, 62.
[137] Heald, 135.
[138] Getchell, 403.
[139] St. Paul Association of Commerce, *Official Bulletin*, July 14, 1916. The *Official Bulletin* began May 1, 1916.

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Commerce Building
_____
Name of property
Ramsey County MN
_____
County and State

Section ____8____ Page ____17____

"Charities Subscriptions and Donations," focused their 1916 efforts on charity reform including a campaign for protection of citizens from fraudulent and inefficient charities, setting standards for charitable organizations, and creating a system of protection from fraud."[140] F. R. Bigelow, owner of the St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company (predecessor to The St. Paul Companies, Inc.) chaired this committee, and Louis Hill remained a member into the 1930s.[141] In December 1919, the Association newsletter noted that the organization met with 24 agencies that would entertain ideas of consolidation of efforts.[142]

In 1920, after six months of local and national research on community chests (and provoked by Minneapolis' ability to establish a community chest the year before), F. R. Bigelow announced   that the St. Paul Association of Commerce would establish the St. Paul Community Chest with the blessing of the Central Council of Welfare Agencies.[143] The organization was open to non-religious, local charities.[144] The 13-member board of directors would include six charity members, one mayoral appointment and six Association of Commerce appointments.[145] By August, the Community Chest received membership applications from more than 40 organizations including the St. Paul Institute, Woman's Council of Home Defense, Boy Scouts, Y.W.C.A., Mutual Blind Aid Association, and the Lyngblomsten and Linnea Societies (nursing homes).[146] Not surprisingly, the Relief Society, an organization that Louis Hill openly criticized, was rejected for consolidation and the Community Chest suggested that the organization consider "amalgamation with another agency doing similar work."[147] The fall fundraising campaign for $600,000 was announced and the Association authorized a series of twelve motion pictures on the works of the forty participating agencies.[148]

The effects of the national community chest movement greatly affected St. Paul's social welfare programs and community viability. The St. Paul Community Chest pamphlet "After Fifteen Years" noted that by 1935, the organization had raised over $9.7 million for St. Paul's charitable causes.[149] Louis Hill remained active in the 1930s with the Community Chest and chaired a number of committees as well as acted as Commander and Team Captain for multiple campaigns.[150] One of the Community Chest's key supporters, F. R. Bigelow, established his own family foundation in 1938.[151] Nationally, more than 1000 community chests were organized by 1938 and in 1963 they were consolidated into the larger national organization, The United Way.[152]

Depression Years

With the loss of the Public Affairs Committee to the St. Paul Association of Commerce, the Commercial Club was relegated to dinner club status and was eventually overshadowed by the St. Paul Athletic Club and its twelve-

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[140] *Official Bulletin*, January 11, 1917.
[141] St. Paul Association of Commerce, *Annual Reports*.
[142] St. Paul Association of Commerce, *Official Bulletin*, December 13, 1919.
[143] *Official Bulletin*, July 3, 1920.
[144] *Official Bulletin*, June 19, 1920.
[145] *Official Bulletin*, June 19, 1920.
[146] *Official Bulletin*, August 7, 1920.
[147] Getchell, 403.
[148] St. Paul Association of Commerce, *Official Bulletin*, August 14, 1920.
[149] Community Chest, *After Fifteen Years* (St. Paul: Community Chest, 1935), n.p.
[150] St. Paul Association of Commerce, *Annual Reports*.
[151] St. Paul Association of Commerce, Annual Meeting Minutes, 1935 and F. R. Bigelow Foundation website, accessed as www.frbigelow.org, 1/15/07.
[152] United Way of America website, accessed as www.unitedway.org, 1/15/07.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Commerce Building
_____
Name of property

Ramsey County MN
_____
County and State

Section ___8___ Page ___18___

story, enhanced facility that included a swimming pool and tennis courts.[153] When the ten-year lease arrangement at the Commerce Building expired in 1921, the St. Paul Association of Commerce moved to the ground floor of the St. Paul Athletic Club and the Commercial Club dissolved. The Minnesota Mutual Life Insurance Company moved into the former quarters of the Commercial Club.[154]

Advertising urged prospective tenants to consider office space in the slowly emptying building. The 1920 *St. Paul City Directory* advertised that the Commerce Building "cost nearly $750,000" and the 1929 Directory advertised the direct connection to the "new Ballard Ramp Garage."[155] An attached parking garage was a significant bonus to office tenants and the Commerce Building altered the second floor of the south elevation to connect to the new Ballard Ramp. The *St. Paul City Directory* of 1929 advertised the building as "fireproof, conveniently located, best of service" with Abbott-Miller Company as building manager.[156] Such modern managers were necessary to oversee building maintenance, office cleaning, and waste disposal, and management companies were often promoted in building advertisements.

The painted sign on the south elevation of the Commerce Building may have been created to attract tenants during the 1930s, when vacancies increased. One of the most competitive buildings would have been the 32-story, Moderne Style First National Bank building on Minnesota Street, which was crowned with a lighted landmark sign proclaiming "1st." [157] Heralded as the tallest skyscraper in downtown St. Paul, the First National Bank Building was completed in 1931 while the nation was struggling through the early years of the Great Depression.

As a result of the Great Depression and World War II, downtown construction slowed dramatically and many 19th-century buildings were torn down or vacated. Between 1930 and 1945 St. Paul lost many landmarks, including the stone-towered Ramsey County Courthouse and City Hall opposite the Commerce Building.[158]

The Commerce Building survived, however, and city directories suggest that a slight tenant upswing occurred after Federal deposit insurance was extended to savings and loan companies in 1934. By 1937, the St. Paul Federal Savings and Loan and the Minneapolis Savings and Loan Association opened offices on the ground floor of the Commerce Building. Joseph Lennon cigars and a barber remained on the ground floor and were joined by a liquor store; few vacancies were listed on the upper floors.[159] The First Federal Savings and Loan Association opened their offices on the ninth floor of the Commerce Building and in 1948 the organization occupied its own building at the corner of Cedar and 5th Streets.[160] The move to find their own signature building may have been encouraged by the ground floor remodeling and polished granite re-cladding of the Commerce Building undertaken by the Minneapolis Savings and Loan Association in 1947.

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[153] Two additional floors were added in 1959.
[154] *St. Paul City Directories*, 1920, 1923.
[155] *St. Paul City Directories*, 1920, 1929.
[156] *St. Paul City Directory*, 1929.
[157] Hess and Larson, *St. Paul's Architecture*, 161.
[158] Millett, *Lost Twin Cities*, 260.
[159] *St. Paul City Directory*, 1937.
[160] *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 24, 1949.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commerce Building	
Name of property	
Ramsey County MN	
County and State	

1950s and Beyond

The Commerce Building escaped the urban renewal that resulted in the loss of many of St. Paul's downtown office buildings, and the south and west elevations show the scars of demolished buildings. Nearby new construction included the two-story Victory Parking Ramp (1952) built on the site of the Ramsey County Courthouse and St. Paul City Hall. The Globe Building on E. Fourth Street was demolished in 1959.

The Minneapolis Savings and Loan Association remained on the ground floor of the Commerce Building through the 1940s and 1950s until it was merged with Midwest Federal Savings and Loan Association around 1960. At this time, Midwest Federal's trademark sign—a green neon oak with the words "GROWING WITH ST. PAUL"—was installed on the Commerce Building roof. The sign was removed in the 1970s.

Although Hermann Kretz died in 1931, his realty company remained in the Commerce Building until about 1980 when the building was sold to John Bloomquist. Sherman Rutzick and Associates purchased the building in the mid-1990s.[161]

Hermann Kretz

Hermann Kretz (1860-1931) was born in Essen, Germany and was educated at the University of Essen and the Technical School at Holzminden before working for his uncle as an architect.[162] Prior to his arrival in St. Paul in 1886, he worked in New York City, Chicago, Winnipeg and Bismarck.[163] He married Helen Botzet of St. Paul in 1894 and their daughter, Helen, was born in 1896.[164]

Kretz operated a successful real estate business while practicing architecture as Hermann Kretz and Company. Besides developing the Commerce Building, he was well known for his apartment-building empire on Summit Hill. Between 1887 and 1897, Kretz designed at least 18 apartment buildings and owned many, including the Waldorf Apartments (1900, extant) at 672 Summit Avenue and the Colonial (1895, extant) at 579 Summit Avenue.[165] Kretz designed a number of churches and schools throughout the state. His St. Paul commissions include St. Mark's Catholic Church (1889, razed); St. Vincent de Paul (1897, razed); Harrison School (1902, razed); and Maxfield School (1906, razed).[166]

His early German-American associations appear to have been strong and career boosting. Among his commissions for German clients were the Defiel Building (1889, razed) at 215 W. Kellogg, the Henry and Hilda Defiel House at 732 Margaret Street (1890), as well as houses for Jacob Wertheimer (846 Summit, 1898, razed) and Charles Schlier at 624 Summit (1898).[167] Kretz also designed his own home at 768 Summit Avenue (1900) and lived there until his death.

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[161] James Rutzick and Sherman Rutzick personal communication to Carole Zellie, November 13, 2006.
[162] Castle, 829.
[163] Carole Zellie, "697-73 Laurel Avenue and Hermann Kretz." (St. Paul Planning and Economic Development Department report, 1998), 2.
[164] Castle, 830.
[165] Zellie, "Laurel Avenue," p. 2. Both apartment buildings are located in the Historic Hill District (NRHP).
[166] Zellie, "Laurel Avenue," p. 2.
[167] Zellie, "Laurel Avenue," p. 3.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Commerce Building

Name of property

Ramsey County MN

County and State

Section ___8___ Page ___20___

Summary

The Commerce Building (1912) is associated with the early 20th-century success of St. Paul's business and civic organizations. The St. Paul Commercial Club and St. Paul Association of Commerce were among the first in the country to consolidate their organizations into a single building, in this case a modern skyscraper placed at a key downtown location. The organizations' support for the city's economic and social vitality included involvement in all aspects of business as well as city planning and the development of charities and philanthropic organizations.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet	Commerce Building
	Name of property
	Ramsey County MN
	County and State

Section ___9___ Page ___1___

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OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Commerce Building

Name of property

Ramsey County MN

County and State

Section 9 Page 2

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NPS Form 10-900-a
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Commerce Building

Name of property

Ramsey County MN

County and State

Section ___9___   Page ___3___

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NPS Form 10-900-a
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

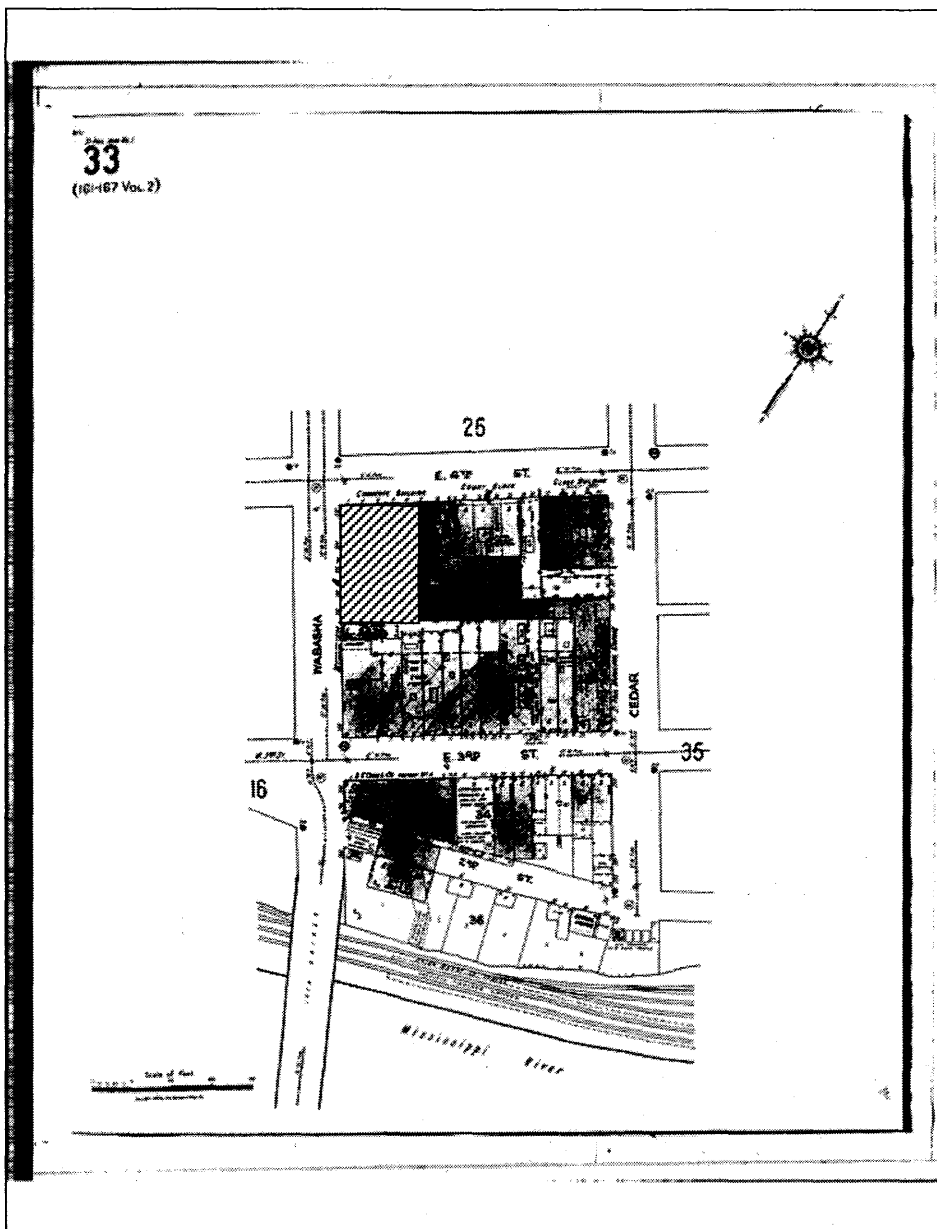**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Commerce Building
Name of property

Ramsey County MN
County and State

Section ____10____ Page ____1____

Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The Commerce Building occupies the northerly 65 feet of Lots 6-8, Block 23 of St. Paul Proper.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the property historically associated with the Commerce Building.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Commerce Building
_____
Name of property
Ramsey County MN
_____
County and State

Section _____ 10 _____ Page _____ 2 _____

Map 1. Commerce Building, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1926-39, vol. II, Sheet 33 (see hatched area).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Commerce Building

Name of property

Ramsey County MN

County and State

Section _____10_____ Page _____3_____

Historic Photograph 1. Commerce Building, 1912, looking southeast (Minnesota Historical Society)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Commerce Building

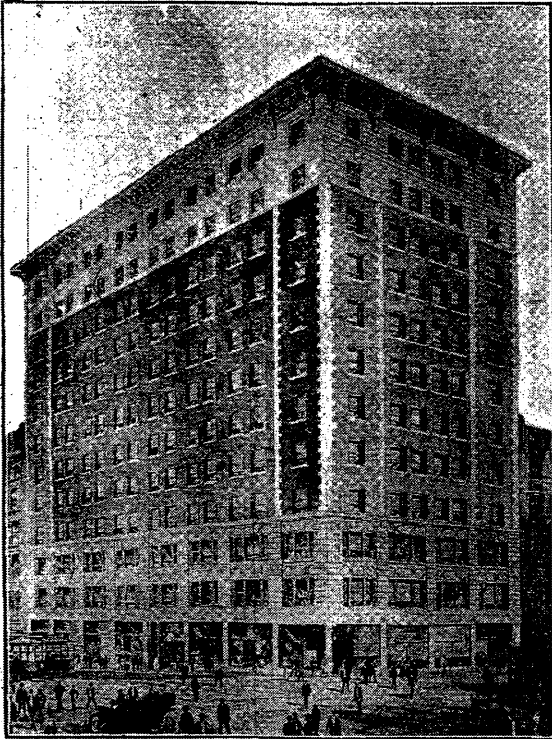Name of property

Ramsey County MN

County and State

Section _____ 10 _____ Page _____ 4 _____

COMMERCE BUILDING, ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA
HERMANN KRETZ, ARCHITECT AND OWNER
LAUER BROTHERS, GENERAL CONTRACTORS

THE WESTERN ARCHITECT
JANUARY
1912

Historic Photograph 2. *The Western Architect,* January 1912

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Commerce Building

Name of property

Ramsey County MN

County and State

Section ___10___ Page ___5___

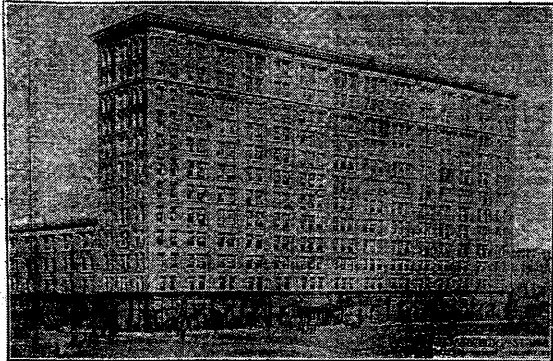# St. Paul's Two New Sky Scrapers

The future home of the St. Paul Commercial Club, the St. Paul Association of Commerce, as well as many other important business interests. It is now being erected on the corner of Wabasha and 4th streets.

THE NEW COMMERCIAL BUILDING, ST. PAUL—Herman Kretz & Co., Architects.

The New Lowry Arcade, Fourth, Fifth and St. Peter streets, erected mainly for physicians' and dentists' offices, will be one the finest of its kind in the country, and marks a new era in the construction of buildings of this character.

LOWRY ARCADE BUILDING, ST. PAUL—Kees & Colburn, Architects.

Historic Photograph 3. *St. Paul Pioneer Press,* September 10, 1911

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Commerce Building
_____
Name of property
Ramsey County MN
_____
County and State

Section _____10_____ Page _____6_____
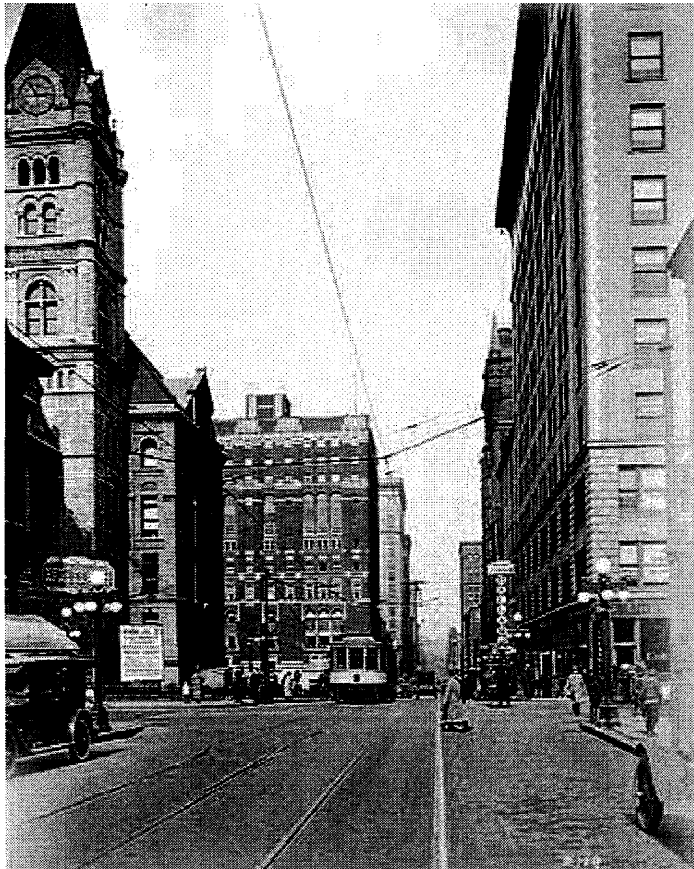
Historic Photograph 4. E. Fourth and Wabasha, Commerce
Building at right, looking east, 1925 (Minnesota Historical
Society)

Historic Photograph 5. E. Fourth Street, Commerce Building in center, looking south, ca. 1950 (Minnesota Historical
Society)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
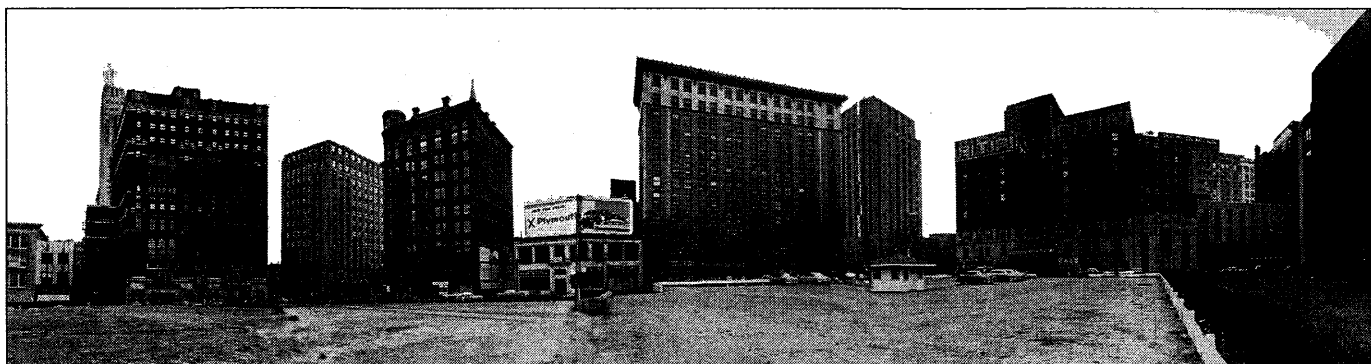Continuation Sheet**

Commerce Building
Name of property
Ramsey County MN
County and State

Section _____ 10 _____ Page _____ 7 _____

Historic Photograph 6. Wabasha Street looking north, 1931; Commerce
Building and painted sign at right (Minnesota Historical Society)

Historic Photograph 7. Commerce Building with Minneapolis
Savings and Loan Association sign, ca. 1947 (Minnesota Historical Society)