

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

DEC 21 1989

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Great Northern Freight Warehouse and Depot  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 899 Second Avenue North N/A  not for publication  
city, town Grand Forks N/A  vicinity  
state North Dakota code ND county Grand Forks code 035 zip code 58201

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		_____	<u>1</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register none

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.  See continuation sheet.

James E. Sperry September 15, 1989  
Signature of certifying official James E. Sperry Date  
State Historic Preservation Officer (North Dakota)  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. Scott Roland 1/29/90  
 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

Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Transportation (rail-related)

Commerce/Trade (warehouse)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

vacant

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Other

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone (granite); concrete

walls brick

roof asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

See continuation sheets.

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The Great Northern Freight Warehouse and Depot is located at the southwest corner of North Eighth Street and Second Avenue North, at the south edge of the central business district in Grand Forks, North Dakota. This nomination consists of a single standing structure. It has undergone a certified rehabilitation within the past year which converted the abandoned structure to 29 rental apartments.

The warehouse is a one story masonry load-bearing structure with partial basement. It measures 51 feet along Eighth Street by 414 feet along Second Avenue N. and sat originally on a flat featureless lot measuring 150 feet by 540 feet. Several adjacent parcels of land are occupied by light industrial uses along the railroad right-of-way. The building sits near the north (Second Avenue) property line, leaving the south half of the parcel for railroad trackage, which originally approached from the west and ended at Eighth Street. When the current owner bought the property, the rails and timber ties had been removed and the trackage area had become overgrown with weeds. The 17 foot-wide strip of land between the building and Second Avenue was paved with original stone blocks, providing a durable surface for vehicular access to the eighteen warehouse doors. The narrow east elevation had become overgrown with volunteer trees and shrubs, as had the unoccupied land to the west.

The rectangular building is yellow common brick with stone and concrete foundation. The shallow-pitched roof was rolled asphalt. Above a three foot base composed of irregular granite rubble and concrete (which vary through the building's length), the brick walls are 12 inches thick. The exterior is divided into slightly recessed 20 foot wide bays by brick pilasters. The twenty-one bays on the north and south facades correspond to the heavy timber (mill) construction of the interior. While the disposition of bays remains consistent on the exterior, the spacing of the interior bays changes in the three easternmost bays of the office headhouse.

The exterior wall surfaces on the north, east, and south elevations are punctuated with door and window openings, which are, with some exceptions, centered within the bays. All original vertical door and window openings are cut into the brick and spanned with segmented, nearly flat, arches of common yellow brick. Original windows were 4' x 6' wood double-hung with one-over-one lights. Freight doors on the north elevation were 8' x 10'6" to the spring line of the arches. Freight doors on the south elevation were eight feet wide, with alternating six foot wide windows with glass transoms. Originally the west elevation had no openings, but a large door was cut in sometime in the 1970s.

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Exterior walls are decorated with three courses of brick corbelling above the recessed bays, bringing the wall surface at the eaves out to the plane of the brick pilasters and foundation. Pilasters on the long north and south elevations have a corbelled impost block for the wood braces which support the ten-foot roof overhangs on the north-south facades. Shorter roof overhangs on the east and west elevations require no supplementary support. The overhangs are functional in that they protected the loading platforms from the weather. The rafters and wood decking of the 1: 12 pitched wood framed rolled asphalt roof are exposed both inside and out. The loading platforms had been removed save for a short piece at the headhouse at the east end years ago. There are three window wells, one in each of the three eastern office bays on the north elevation, which provide light and ventilation for the partial basement beneath the office headhouse.

The interior of the building was originally divided into two principal areas: the office headhouse and the freight storage area. The office area had the least integrity after repeated remodellings. In the past ten years, the office area had been remodelled extensively and included an energy-conserving lowered ceiling. Generations of applied materials had accumulated. The basement was consistently used for mechanical and other utilitarian purposes. Surviving from the office area were two 9' x 24' fireproof vaults, one in the basement and one on the first floor. Each is roofed with shallow masonry vaults and has fire-resistant intact doors. A 12 foot brick firewall separates the office and freight warehouse areas.

Most of the floor construction in the warehouse consists of reinforced concrete; other portions are wood framed, with a thin concrete topping above the wood decking for increased durability. Several areas had hardwood flooring. The warehouse area is heavy timber (mill) construction. The wood posts are 12" square and 17' tall, spaced 20 feet apart on the center line of the building. They extend from floor to ridge beam. Four diagonal braces branch out from each post about two-thirds of the way up to provide additional support for the roof.

Since the 1989 certified rehabilitation, the building and site have retained a high degree of integrity. The level site has been minimally landscaped with grass and some low shrubs and evergreens. Paving blocks have either been left in place or some were removed and relaid on the north side for the drive. Deteriorated original double-hung wood windows were replaced with exact duplicate wood double-hung windows. Original freight doors were replaced with wood custom sash designed to reflect the original configuration, depth, and reveals. The large door on the west

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which was not original was replaced by wood windows which match the replacement windows at the original freight doors. The existing masonry opening was retained. A new rolled asphalt roof replaced the original rolled asphalt roof. No changes were made to original exterior wood rafters, braces, and overhangs.

The interior was converted to 29 living units. The post and beam structure was left intact. Wood floors were retained and refinished where they existed. Concrete floors were evened and covered with Gypcrete and carpeting. New demising walls were constructed of wood studs and wall board. Insulation and wall board cover the inside perimeter of the brick exterior walls. The vaults were retained.

The conversion of the Great Northern Freight Depot into rental apartment units is almost complete. The project, assisted by the Investment Tax Credit for certified rehabilitation of historic buildings, will serve as another model for the adaptive use of historic resources in the Grand Forks community. Part 2 Certification has been reviewed; the application for the Part 3 Certification will be made by the owner once the nomination has been submitted and all phases of the Part 2 have been documented.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G    N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Transportation  
Commerce  
Architecture

Period of Significance

1904-1940

Significant Dates

1904

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

none

Architect/Builder

Great Northern Railway Company

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

See continuation sheets.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

See continuation sheet.

See continuation sheet

**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

**Specify repository:**

State Historical Society of North Dakota  
Bismarck, ND

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property less than one acre

**UTM References**

A 

1	4
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6	4	6	6	2	0
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5	3	0	9	1	5	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

See continuation sheet.

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

See continuation sheet.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Dr. Norene Roberts, (based on a draft by Ronald L.M. Ramsay)  
organization Historical Research, Inc. date March 4, 1989  
street & number 7800 Tessman Drive telephone (612) 560-4348  
city or town Minneapolis state MN zip code 55445

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The Great Northern Freight Warehouse and Depot is significant under Criteria A and C. Under Criterion A, it is the surviving local example of a railroad-related warehouse building in Grand Forks from the Second Dakota Boom. It was built within the period of increased wholesale and retail activity which brought increased prosperity to eastern North Dakota towns. The Second Dakota Boom (1895-1917) helped insure Grand Fork's economic role as a major trade and distribution center for the northeastern portion of North Dakota. This is one of two railroad-owned freight warehouses through which wholesale and retail goods passed during the early years of this century: the other has been razed. Under Criterion C, the building is representative of a distinctive type and method of construction for Great Northern freight depots of this period. Distinctive construction characteristics include post and beam construction and the linear one-story footprint with end gabled roof and office headhouse at one end.

The freight warehouse was constructed in 1904 by the Great Northern Railroad. According to a notice in the Grand Forks Herald, the railroad had planned to construct the building, originally on a smaller scale, in 1903, but delayed construction for a year. The notice follows:

The Great Northern company will erect this season the freight depot which it was planned to build last year but the construction was postponed on account of not being able to get the necessary material on the ground in time. The new depot will be constructed of brick with stone foundation and will be 250 x 40 feet in size, with a wide porch roof for the protection of freight in handling both from cars and drays. The depot will occupy the site which was cleared for it last year, opposite the passenger depot. By this arrangement the loading platforms can be reached by drays from three different streets, greatly facilitating the work of handling heavy goods. The building will cost about \$30,000.<sup>1</sup>

Both Grand Forks and Fargo, 75 miles to the south, were important transfer points between rail and river traffic during the 1870s and early 1880s when both towns were initially settled. Situated at the confluence of the Red River of the North and the Red Lake River, Grand Forks was platted in 1875 by Alexander Griggs, a riverboat captain and influential figure in early local affairs. By the early 1880s, the young city became the focus of competitive railroad building activity which characterized the period of early settlement in the state.

After 1879, regional competition among the railroads was greatest between the federally-chartered Northern Pacific Railroad financed by land grants, and James J. Hill's privately-financed St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba line. Chartered in 1857, the St. P., M & M was originally conceived by



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the Minnesota Territorial Assembly as a north-south link with the Canadian border. Several competing Canadian lines were chartered subsequently to make the connection at or near Pembina. A group of Canadian investors headed by James J. Hill purchased the bankrupt line and reorganized the railroad. The Manitoba altered its strategy for competing with the Northern Pacific which had reached from near Duluth to Bismarck via Fargo by 1873 when it, too went broke. Lacking a government land grant beyond Minnesota, Hill directed the Manitoba north toward Crookston and up the eastern edge of the Red River Valley. The Manitoba reached the east bank of the Red River opposite Grand Forks in October, 1879. The stage was set for a race across Dakota Territory toward the Pacific, the NP to the south through Valley City, Bismarck, and west; the Manitoba, renamed the Great Northern, parallel across the northern portion of North Dakota.

At stake in this competition between the NP and GN was economic control of the vast hinterland, still filling up with new settlers, which would make both Grand Forks and Fargo the major wholesale and retail distribution centers and largest two cities in North Dakota. In 1880, the then "Manitoba" line crossed the river into Grand Forks, with trackage passing along the southern edge of the commercial district, curving north at the west edge of the district, and building north in 1881 toward the Canadian border to link Winnipeg and west in 1882 toward Devils Lake and the Pacific Northwest. The NP, on the other hand, built on the east side of the Red River, crossing to Grand Forks and building a line through Grafton to Pembina in 1887. The major thrust of the NP was west from Fargo; Grand Forks was serviced by the NP in its northward thrust by feeder lines. In downtown Grand Forks, the NP entered the city on the east just north of DeMers Avenue, hugging the river behind the east side of North Third Street and tended northeast out of the city.

Perhaps because of the Manitoba's intended purpose to provide a major rail connection between Minneapolis and Winnipeg, its original passenger depot was built on the northern leg of their trackage west of downtown Grand Forks. In 1884, the Sanborn fire insurance map shows this first depot at what is now North Ninth Street between Second and Third avenues. The original freight depot and warehouse was located on DeMers Avenue, indicating its service function to new businesses downtown. As chronicled in Sanborn maps from 1888-1906, this is virtually the reverse of the present situation. In 1892, the Cass Gilbert-designed Great Northern passenger depot was built along DeMers, a site common to both northbound and westbound traffic. In 1904, the freight depot and warehouse operations had been shifted to the area around Second Avenue N. between Eighth and Ninth streets north with the construction of the new masonry

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freight depot. It appears that as the Great Northern redirected its thrust from Canada to the Pacific, it became necessary to reverse the locations of freight and passenger operations. The Great Northern also built its roundhouse, repair shops, coal sheds, and maintenance buildings in the same area as the present freight depot.

On the other hand, the Northern Pacific facilities remained on the east side of Grand Forks along the river. An undated plat map of Grand Forks, compiled around 1904, indicated that there was also a freight depot owned by the Northern Pacific at the corner of Demers Avenue and Second Street in the central business district (easternmost corner of Block 24 in the Original Townsite). This depot serviced the retail, wholesale, and light manufacturing concerns on the east side of North Third Street with a spur line running from the NP freight depot along the east rear of the commercial concerns.<sup>2</sup> When this NP freight depot was built and razed is unknown, but it or its predecessor probably occupied this area from the NP's advent into town in 1887.

Both the GN and NP freight depots would have handled much of the wholesale traffic in and through Grand Forks. Representative lines of wholesale trade in the city in 1904 included: dry goods, clothing, drugs, jewelry, notions, paper, furniture, millinery,<sup>3</sup> hardware, paints and oils, harness goods, and agricultural implements.<sup>3</sup> Grand Forks also supplied goods to<sup>4</sup> merchants in an estimated 500 towns in the early years of this century.<sup>4</sup>

Since Grand Forks was the major distribution point for northeastern North Dakota and the GN freight depot often warehoused goods destined for towns along the northern tiers of counties in North Dakota, there was enough traffic to keep both the GN and NP freight depots in the city busy. Located farther from downtown Grand Forks businesses, goods stored in the GN freight depot would have been transferred by dray to central business district merchants. These additional drayage costs would have been the price the GN had to pay for its original 1880 decision to locate its facilities west of downtown. There were also several businesses along the north leg of the GN tracks at Grand Forks in 1904 including an iron foundry, the Grand Forks Sash and Door factory, and the Red River Lumber Company and Planing Mill. The GN freight warehouse and depot was conveniently located to ship raw and finished material to and<sup>5</sup> from these businesses which depended on the rails for their livelihood.<sup>5</sup>

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In fact, the two freight depots and warehouses had more than they could handle and individual businesses were forced to construct their own warehouse facilities. For example, the Houghton Implement Company built two large warehouses on N. Ninth Street near the GN tracks and another behind their offices on DeMers in 1904, as large as 200 x 30 feet long. The St. Hilaire Lumber Company also built a new office and warehouse that year.<sup>6</sup> Like the NP freight depot, these private warehouses no longer exist.

The year 1904 and subsequent ones were good for Grand Forks, which prospered during the Second Dakota Boom. The construction of many important commercial and governmental buildings endowed the city's core with a Beaux Arts flavor still evident today. Buildings from this era included the Christian Science Church, the Carnegie Library, the Y.M.C. A. block, the telephone exchange building, the city hall, and the new Federal Building, to name but a few. The basis for the new economic vitality in Grand Forks was the increased business brought on by more favorable railroad tariffs which allowed Grand Forks and Fargo to compete more equally with Minneapolis and St. Paul.

According to the Grand Forks Herald Silver Anniversary Edition, 1904,

Until within comparatively a few years the wholesale trade of North Dakota was altogether in the hands of St. Paul, Minneapolis, and other eastern jobbers, except that some of its merchants in the small towns bought small supplies as necessary at wholesale from the merchants in the larger cities. The railroad freight tariffs were adjusted to suit the convenience of eastern jobbers, and if for instance a Grand Forks merchant wanted to buy a car of Oregon fruit he was obliged to pay the freight to St. Paul and the local freight rate from St. Paul to Grand Forks in addition. The interstate tariff law finally helped some and some of these discriminations were removed. Persistent efforts largely of Grand Forks and Fargo business men finally prevailed and at the present time these<sup>7</sup> cities are on an equal footing with the Twin Cities of Minnesota...

The Great Northern freight warehouse and depot is architecturally one of the most functional buildings representing this economic boom in Grand Forks. The GN railroad erected a very similar freight warehouse in Fargo in 1904, a facility which records several building campaigns and periods of expansion. The more "pristine" depot in Grand Forks is an important subject for future regional comparisons of integrity among the freight depot property type.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 Grand Forks Herald, Silver Anniversary Edition, 1904, p. 60.
- 2 "Plat of the City of Grand Forks, North Dakota and the platted portions of East Grand Forks, Minnesota. n.p., n.d. (ca. 1904-1910)
- 3 Grand Forks Herald, p. 93.
- 4 P. 94.
- 5 Plat of the City of Grand Forks.
- 6 Grand Forks Herald, p. 59.
- 7 P. 93.

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Authorization for Expenditure (AFE) Files, Great Northern Railway Company. Blueprints of building projects are included in these files along with related correspondence and expenditures. The AFE files up to 1970 are in the possession of the Great Northern Railway Historical Society, c/o Stu Holmquist, Senior Research Assistant, 12910 Essex Way, Apple Valley, Minnesota 55124.

Arnold, H.V. The Early History of Grand Forks, North Dakota. Larimore, North Dakota: Privately Published, 1918.

Bladow, Eldon, ed. They Came to Stay. Grand Forks: Jet Printing, 1974.

Grand Forks Herald, Silver Anniversary Edition, 1904.

Great Northern Railway Company Papers. GN Advertising and Publicity Department, Box 13375. Claims Photograph (1937) of the GN Freight House. Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

"Plat of the City of Grand Forks, North Dakota and the platted portions of East Grand Forks, Minnesota." n.p., n.d. (ca. 1904-1910).

Roberts, Norene A. and Joe D. Roberts. Historical Research Report: Summer 1981 Historical and Architectual Survey of Downtown Grand Forks, North Dakota. On file: Division of Archeology and Historic Preservation, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck, ND.

Sanborn Insurance Company maps for Grand Forks, 1884, 1888, 1897, 1901, 1906, 1912, 1916. On file: Chester Fritz Library, Univ. of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

Tweton, D. Jerome. Grand Forks, a Pictorial History. Norfolk, Virginia: The Donning Company, 1986.

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Item #10: GEOGRAPHICAL DATA:

Verbal Boundary Description:

Lots 1, 3, 5, and 7 of Block 6 of Griggs' Addition to the City of Grand Forks; Lots 10 and 12 in Block 6, Budge and Eshelman's Addition to Grand Forks; Lots 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, and 11 of Block 6, being partly in Griggs' Addition and partly in Budge and Eshelman's Addition; and all of the vacated alley in said Block 6 which is adjacent to the said Lots 1 through 12; and,

Lots 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13, and 15 of Block 5 of Budge and Eshelman's Addition to Grand Forks, and the northwesterly 10.0 feet of that portion of the vacated alley in said Block 5 which is adjacent to said Lots 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13 and 15; and,

The portion of vacavted Ninth Street lying between the portions of Blocks 5 and 6 described above.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes the entire legal description above which has been historically associated with the property.

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# GN FREIGHT DEPOT - GRAND FORKS, ND

SITE MAP SHOWING LOCATIONS OF PHOTOGRAPHIC VIEWS

