

DATA SHEET PH 0666611

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED APR 10 1978

DATE ENTERED 6/7/78

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Foshay Tower

AND/OR COMMON

Foshay Tower

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

821 Marquette Avenue

—NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Minneapolis

— VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

5th

STATE

Minnesota

CODE

22

COUNTY

Hennepin

CODE

053

**CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: offices

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

MEPC Investments Inc.

STREET & NUMBER

Suite 302, 821 Marquette Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Minneapolis

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Minnesota

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Hennepin County Government Center - Registry of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

Third Avenue South at Fifth Street

CITY, TOWN

Minneapolis

STATE

Minnesota

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Statewide Historic Sites Survey

DATE

1977

—FEDERAL  STATE —COUNTY —LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Minnesota Historical Society, Building 25, Fort Snelling

CITY, TOWN

St. Paul

STATE

Minnesota

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Foshay Tower is situated on the southern half of a city block bounded on the south by Ninth Street South, on the east by Second Avenue South, and on the west by Marquette Avenue in the central business district of Minneapolis. The two storey ground section of the building measures approximately 165 feet in width by 330 feet in length. Most prominent, however is the thirty-two storey tower itself, which is executed in the shape of a gradually tapering obelisk with a stepped pyramidal roof. The structure is constructed of fabricated steel, hot riveted, and reinforced with concrete. It is faced with Indiana limestone from grade to top. The tower rises 447 feet 3 inches above grade, measures eighty-one feet by eighty-seven feet at the base and fifty-nine feet by sixty-five feet at the top, the four sides sloping eleven feet from grade to the top at the rate of four-and-one-half inches per floor level.

The foundation structure of the Tower contains four basement levels, the first two of which were designed for the accommodation of a two-hundred car garage. The two lower levels provide space for the physical plant, maintenance shops, etc. The foundation caissons extend down a total of sixty-two feet below grade and are embedded fifteen feet into bedrock. A special feature of the foundation construction is a crossing of steel girders placed in solid concrete at the point where the Tower joins the bedrock, in which is set a heavy steel plate to which is affixed the upright beams that are carried through to the top of the Tower in the structural steel construction. These features contribute to the ability of the structure to withstand a wind velocity of 400 miles per hour.

Entrance to the ground floor of the Tower is through an arcade which extends from Marquette Avenue through the building to Second Avenue South. Originally, the interior of this arcade was finished in Italian marble for walls, terrazzo for floors, ornamental bronze and wrought iron grillework, and elaborate light fixtures ...all designed in keeping with the French-influenced Art Deco style. Unfortunately, grillework and fixtures have been removed and the elaborate ceilings hidden through the installation of suspended ceilings. The original cost of the arcade was approximately \$150,000. A secondary entrance is provided on the Ninth Street facade. All three entrances were directed toward an interior courtyard, formerly open to the sky and highlighted by a centrally located fountain with a bronze nude figure entitled "Scherzo", executed by sculptor Harriet Frishmuth.

An oblong shaft, twenty-three feet eight inches by thirty-one feet six inches passes up through the center of the Tower and contains four high-speed elevators (which could attain a maximum speed of 750 feet per minute), washrooms, janitor closets, fire-proof staircases, and necessary service pipes, conduits, and cables. This feature allows for all office space to be situated on outside walls so that these would be provided with an abundance of natural light and ventilation. The tower itself is erected no less than sixty feet from the regular building line for desirability of office space; each floor has twenty-eight windows, or one window to approximately every 100-150 square feet of rentable area.

(see continuation sheet - page 1)

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1927-1929

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Magney & Tusler, Inc.

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Foshay Tower is significant to Minneapolis and to the state of Minnesota not only as an unique example of architectural design and engineering, but as a prominent reminder of the taste and expression of "conspicuous consumption" which was felt throughout the United States during the economic boom years of the 1920s. The Foshay Tower became known as the "tallest skyscraper in the Northwest" immediately after it was finished as well as being promoted as "the best known address in the Northwest."

The idea of constructing an office tower in the shape of an obelisk was first conceived by developer (and later to become multi-millionaire through the development of public utilities companies) Wilbur B. Foshay after visiting Washington D.C. and being greatly impressed by the design of the Washington Monument. Foshay came to Minneapolis in 1915, with a debt of \$150,000 incurred through the collapse of his first venture into the utilities business. Undaunted, through shrewd bargaining and re-investment and sale of stocks, Foshay built his utilities businesses into a \$22 million operation in ten years. The rapid rise from "rags to riches" enabled Foshay to realize his dream of building his "replica" of the Washington Monument.

Construction began in 1927 and the building was completed on 30 August 1929. In the implementation of the construction, cost was no apparent factor, for the finest materials available at the time were used in the building. The shape and method of construction (fabricated steel, hot-riveted with reinforced concrete) was developed by Foshay and Gottlieb R. Magney (of Magney and Tusler, Architects) and received a patent from the U.S. Patent Office on 11 November 1930, being filed on 1 February 1929 (Design 82492). The total cost of the construction was approximately \$3,750,000.

The Foshay Tower was dedicated with a most extravagant three-day series of events (at a cost of \$116,449.38) which was attended by dignitaries such as governors, public officials, foreign ministers. A total of 25,000 personal invitations were sent. An address was made by Secretary of War James W. Good who represented President Herbert Hoover, and concerts were performed at various times during the celebration by John Philip Sousa and his seventy-five piece band. (Sousa wrote the "Foshay Tower-Washington Memorial March" for the occasion).

(see continuation sheet - page 2)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Chapman, Dick. "Foshay Tower: Monument to Man & Nymph", Minneapolis Magazine, May 1977, p. 76  
 Darnall, C.C., "The Foshay Tower and Its Advertising Value to Minneapolis" brochure, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 26 September 1928.  
 Parsons, James, "Foshay's Folly", Twin Citian Magazine, Minneapolis, March 1976.  
 U.S. Patent Office, Design No. 82492, 11 November 1930.  
 Brochure: "Foshay Tower: Best Known Address in the Northwest", Minneapolis, 1932.  
 Hennepin County History, "The Tower and W.B. Foshay", Fall 1967.  
 "The Foshay Spotlight" February 1929, pub. W.B. Foshay Company

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approx. 1 acre  
 UTM REFERENCES

A	1 5	4 7 8 6 2 0	4 9 7 9 9 4 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

## LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Charles W. Nelson, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Minnesota Historical Society

DATE

23 September 1977

STREET & NUMBER

Building 25, Fort Snelling

TELEPHONE

612-726-1171

CITY OR TOWN

St. Paul

STATE

Minnesota

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Russell W. Fridley*

TITLE

Russell W. Fridley  
 State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

3/16/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*R. B. Rettig*

DATE

9/20/78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHITECTURE AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

*William LeBaron*

DATE

9/18/78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	APR 10 1978
DATE ENTERED	SEP 20 1978

CONTINUATION SHEET Foshay Tower      ITEM NUMBER 7      PAGE 1

---

At the thirty-first storey, over 400 feet above street level is an observation gallery from which an unobstructed view of all Minneapolis could be had. At the time of construction, the Foshay Tower was the tallest building in Minneapolis (and acclaimed to be the tallest "skyscraper in the Northwest"). The observation gallery extends out over the walls of the Tower. It is reached via an elevator to the thirtieth floor, then by stairs to the thirty-first floor. Protection to visitors to the gallery is provided by a continuous aluminum grille which is carried from the top of the stone railing in a curved line to the inner wall of the building.

The interior of the building was finished in the finest materials available in construction and decoration at the time. Foshay's own office and quarters on the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth floors were finished in African mahogany; other walls were sheathed in Italian Siena marble. Furnishings and architectural features such as grilles bore the Foshay crest (coat of arms). Much of the paneling and nearly all of the furnishings have been removed through constant modernization efforts of the interiors during the lifetime of the building. The exterior, however, including the four signs cut into the stone facing "FOSHAY" ten feet high and forty-three feet long remain or originally conceived. The Foshay Tower continues to function as a commercial/office building, and is well maintained.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	APR 10 1978
DATE ENTERED	SEP 20 1978

CONTINUATION SHEET Foshay Tower      ITEM NUMBER 8      PAGE 2

---

Less than two months after the grand opening of the Foshay Tower, the stock market crashed and the country entered into the Great Depression. Foshay found that his "paper empire" had dissolved, and within the following year, he was charged with fifteen counts of mail fraud and lost his Tower into receivership. He was sentenced to fifteen years in Leavenworth Prison, being pardoned by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1937 and unconditionally pardoned by President Harry Truman in 1947. Foshay did not return to the world of large corporations and business dealings, and died unnoticed in Minneapolis on 30 August 1957 on the twenty-eighth anniversary of the dedication of the Tower.

The Tower, however, succeeded in providing Foshay's intentions at building it. It remained not only as a distinctive architectural statement, but as a grandiose promotion stunt for not only Foshay's utilities companies, but for the city of Minneapolis.