

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

FEB 03 1989

NATIONAL
REGISTER

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 A. Larson & Co. Building
other names/site number A. Larson & Co.

2. Location

street & number 539 W. Pacific Ave. not for publication N/A
city, town Willmar vicinity N/A
state Minnesota code MN county Kandiyohi code 067 zip code 56201

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>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> objects
			<u> </u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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.

Nina M. Archabal 1/25/89
Signature of certifying official Nina M. Archabal Date
Minnesota State Historic Preservation Officer
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.

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.
 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:)

Alvora Byers Entered in the National Register 3/2/89

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/Department Store

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/Not In Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Italianate

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE/limestonewalls Brick

roof OTHER:Compositionother

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The A. Larson & Co. Building registration consists of two attached buildings which were constructed nine years apart to serve complimentary and related functions for the same owner. The buildings are located at the southeast corner of Pacific Ave. and Sixth St. in Willmar (1980 pop. 15,895), the seat of government in Kandiyohi County. They are situated just south of the Great Northern Railroad tracks, two blocks from the depot in the extreme north-western corner of Willmar's central business district. The neighborhood in which the Larson Building stands was once Willmar's primary commercial center, but as businesses opened to the south, the oldest section was abandoned and much of the area razed for highway construction. Today the A. Larson & Co. Building is surrounded by a small cluster of late nineteenth century brick warehouses and commercial buildings which are isolated from the downtown by a major thoroughfare.

Erected in 1876 as a dry goods business, the original A. Larson & Co. building is a three bay, two-story, rectangular-shaped, brick structure laid on a rough-faced limestone foundation. The north-facing facade has a storefront with three brick rounded arches supported by two narrow, square columns in which are set two wide display windows and a slightly recessed central entrance. The entry retains an original double leaf door with tall rounded panes, topped by a three-light transom. Two bands of corbeled brick separate the first and second floors. Three 2/2 double hung segmental arch windows with projecting brick hoods and limestone sills light the upper story. Above the windows is a wooden panel which once contained the sign "A. LARSON & CO." Decorative brick corbeling accentuates the cornice and continues around the west wall. The six bay sidewall has six evenly spaced 2/2 double hung sash identical to those along the facade. A rear door originally provided access from the west and a small, square window was added directly above by ca.1895. In 1945 a small window and wide overhead door were cut into the middle of the west elevation; the latter was converted into a store entrance in 1984.

In ca.1885 a two-story, nearly square brick grocery department was attached to the rear (south) wall in order to accommodate an enlarged business by Larson. While the addition had its own storefront directly opposite the original A. Larson building, both structures were interconnected creating an expansive interior space. The later section is two bays deep, five bays wide, and its overall design features such as windows, corbeling, and brick match the 1876 building. The addition originally had a two-thirds width storefront on the left side with three double hung windows to the right. The storefront

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A. Larson & Co. Building, Kandiyohi County, MN
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was altered in ca.1980 to resemble the arched windows of the original A. Larson & Co. building, and the remaining double hung windows were converted to a separate storefront at the same time. Despite these alterations to the south elevation, the A. Larson & Co. building still has a rare intact storefront and remains in good condition.

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1876-1900

Significant Dates

1876

ca. 1885

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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

The A. Larson & Co. Building is historically significant under the statewide context "Agricultural Development and Railroad Construction, 1870s-1930s" because it represents the initial townsite development of this south-central Minnesota community. By virtue of its location directly across from the Great Northern Railroad tracks near the depot, the A. Larson & Co. Building illustrates not only the importance of the railroad to the entire city, but also serves as an excellent example of an early business which was historically oriented toward the rail line and later took advantage of a growing business district by expanding toward the community center. The Larson Building is also architecturally significant as an extremely well preserved example of an Italianate style commercial building.

The A. Larson & Company was co-founded by Willmar businessman Andrew Larson and local entrepreneur John Spicer in 1871, just two years after the town's platting by the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad (acquired in 1885 by the Great Northern Railroad). Willmar was located in the center of Kandiyohi County and soon became an important railroad division point which by 1916 included a 36-stall roundhouse, yards, shops, and offices. In 1876 Larson and Spicer constructed a \$10,000 mercantile store on one of the prime locations in Willmar's fledgling commercial district. For nearly ten years the partners operated a successful dry goods business, and in ca.1885 Larson assumed full ownership. In about the same year he doubled the size of his company by dismantling the back wall of his dry goods shop and adding a two-story brick building in which he sold groceries. Both buildings were linked inside to create a long, narrow space, but the new addition was created not only as a convenience to customers, but also because Larson wanted to take advantage of increased pedestrian and vehicular traffic to the south as a result of the expanding commercial area. Erection of the grocery building coincided with the construction in 1886 of a Great Northern branch called the Willmar and Sioux Falls Railroad, which was financed by a group of local investors led by Larson's former partner, John Spicer. The addition of another rail line contributed to Willmar's continued residential and economic growth, as evidenced by the establishment in ca.1886 of the Kandiyohi County Bank, an institution

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Larson helped organize, and for which he served as president continuously until 1916.

In about 1900 the A. Larson & Co. mercantile and grocery firm became known as Peterson, Larson and Wellin and was operated by Andrew Larson's son, Lars. The building was later occupied by the Willmar Cooperative Mercantile Co. and used as a creamery and warehouse. The second story was eventually converted to apartments. Today the original 1876 A. Larson & Co. Building is vacant and the rear addition houses a photographer's studio.

Architecturally, the A. Larson & Co. Building is an outstanding example of the Italianate style executed in a commercial design. In Minnesota the Italianate storefront was popular between ca.1865-1900, although it is rarely found in such pristine condition as the Larson Building in smaller communities such as Willmar. Several key features in the Larson Building characterize the style. The central double door entrance is flanked by large display windows and set in a rhythmic triple arch. Molded and corbeled brick across the original facade provides a division between the first and second floors, and all upper story windows are tall, narrow, double hung sash ornamented with heavy hood molds. Pilasters delineate the building's edges and frame each facade. Finally, corbeling along the cornice provides a decorative finish to the design. The A. Larson & Co. Building is Willmar's most intact late nineteenth century commercial building, and one of the city's oldest standing structures. As perhaps the finest example of Victorian period commercial architecture within a ten county area, it clearly offers a direct association with the city's early period of growth and development.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Barnes, Dwight. Unpublished research on the A. Larson & Co. building. Notes located at 540 Benson Ave. W. in Willmar

Willmar Tribune. 30 August 1945; 17 September 1945.

A Guide to Historical Sites In Kandiyohi County, Minnesota. Willmar, MN.: Kandiyohi County Historical Society, 1966.

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: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of property Less than one

UTM References

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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property occupies Lots 12 and 11 except the east 4 feet of the south 91.23 feet of Block 22.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire city lots that have historically been associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Michael Koop / Historic Preservation Consultant	date	27 January 1988
organization	N/A	street & number	615 Jackson St. NE
city or town	Minneapolis	telephone	612-623-8356
		state	MN
		zip code	55413