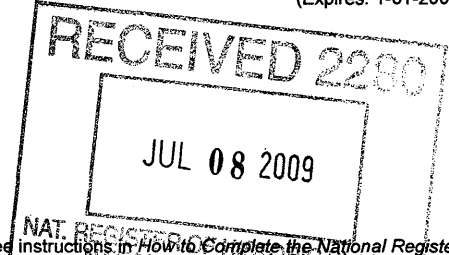


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

623



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

1. Name of Property

historic name O'Donnell Shoe Company Building

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 509 Sibley Street not for publication N/A

city or town St. Paul vicinity N/A

state Minnesota code MN county Ramsey code 123 zip code 55101

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.)

Britta L. Bloomberg 7/2/09
Signature of certifying official Britta L. Bloomberg, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Date

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

Patrick Anderson

Date of Action

8/20/2009

O'Donnell Shoe Company Building
Name of Property

Ramsey County MN
County and State

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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/business

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY

AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/

Commercial Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK

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)

INDUSTRY

Period of Significance

1914-1935

Significant Dates

1914

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Butler Brothers (Architect)

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

Acreeage of Property Less than one acre.

St. Paul East, Minn
1967, Revised 1993

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1.	<u>1</u> <u>5</u>	<u>4</u> <u>9</u> <u>2</u> <u>7</u> <u>8</u> <u>1</u>	<u>4</u> <u>9</u> <u>7</u> <u>7</u> <u>6</u> <u>7</u> <u>5</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2.	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>
3.	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4.	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>

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	<u>Amy M. Lucas, principal</u>	date	<u>3/2/09</u>
organization	<u>Landscape Research LLC</u>	telephone	<u>651-641-1230</u>
street and number	<u>1466 Hythe Street</u>	city or town	<u>St. Paul</u>
city or town	<u>St. Paul</u>	state	<u>MN</u>
		zip code	<u>55108</u>

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	<u>Aeon for Ren Box LLC, contact Pam Bookhout</u>		
street & number	<u>1625 Park Avenue</u>	telephone	<u>612-341-3148</u>
city or town	<u>Minneapolis</u>	state	<u>MN</u>
		zip code	<u>55404</u>

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it contains a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to range from approximately 18 to 36 hours depending on several factors including, but not limited to, how much documentation may already exist on the type of property being nominated and whether the property is being nominated as part of a Multiple Property Documentation Form. In most cases, it is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form to meet minimum National Register documentation requirements. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, 1849 C St., Washington, DC 20240.

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O'Donnell Shoe Company

Name of property

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Exterior

The O'Donnell Shoe Company Building is a six-story, Commercial Style building located on the southwest corner of Sibley Street and East Tenth Street. It occupies lots 4 and 5 of Auditor's Subdivision #24. The 67,000 square-foot factory is located approximately three blocks north of the Lowertown Historic District (NRHP) in an area that has recently seen development of new and renovated housing units. Much of the surrounding 19th- and early 20th-century industrial context of the area has been demolished and has been replaced with new construction. Today, the five-story brick Lyon's Court Senior Housing is at the southeast corner of Sibley and East Tenth Street. It occupies the former site of another O'Donnell Shoe Company building constructed in 1906.

In 2006, the four-story Printers Row condominium building was constructed on the west parcel adjacent to the O'Donnell Shoe Company at 509 Sibley (1914). Parking lots occupy the lot across East Tenth Street to the north, and the southern half of the block shared with the O'Donnell building. In 2005, the five-story, brick McGill-Warner Company printing factory (1909), located south of the Lyon's Court building on the corner of East Ninth and Sibley streets, was rehabilitated into the Ninth Street Lofts.

The O'Donnell Shoe Company Building was completed in 1914 at a cost of \$65,000.¹ The dark brown brick and reinforced concrete structure measures 50 feet along East Tenth Street and 150 feet along Sibley Street and is rectangular in plan. Designed by the Butler Brothers Company of St. Paul, the flat-roofed structure utilizes the Turner system of concrete mushroom supporting columns. The corner building has two finished elevations facing Tenth and Sibley, and two secondary elevations facing west and south that are faced in common brick. The common brick has been painted yellow. The historic brick projecting addition that houses the staircase and freight elevator is centered against the west elevation and extends the height of the building.

Sibley Street elevation (east)

The east elevation is divided into nine bays with a central main entrance and a raised basement. The basement level is pierced with eight windows that have been infilled with glass block. The piers between the first story windows are finished in a two-toned Flemish bond pattern and a Flemish bond band separates the first and second floors. Each of the nine bays is separated by brick pilasters that extend the height of the building. The ground-floor windows are one-over-one sash. The outer bays contain paired three-over-three double-hung sash and the inner seven bays are arranged in groups of three with three-over-three double-hung sash. All windows have a concrete sill and windows in the inner bays have concrete lintels. The original wood sashes remain on the third and sixth floors; sashes have been replaced with dark aluminum on the remaining floors. The recessed entry has a projecting stone surround. The historic doors at the top of the terrazzo entrance steps have been replaced with an aluminum system of double doors.

¹ St. Paul Building Permit records. Ramsey County Historical Society.

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East Tenth Street elevation (north)

The north elevation is divided into three bays and the nearly identical brick treatment and window treatment matches the Sibley Street elevation. At the ground floor, a non-original door has been placed in the middle window. The historic iron fire escape runs the height of the building along the west bay of windows. The original wood sashes remain on the third and sixth floors; sashes have been replaced with dark aluminum on the remaining floors.

Secondary elevations (south and west)

The south elevation faces a surface parking lot and consists of three bays with one-over-one aluminum replacement sash. The exception is the sixth floor, which retains the historic windows. The common brick surface has been painted yellow. The first floor has a new arched opening and a wooden accessibility ramp. The new brick projecting elevator bay is attached to the western bay of this elevation.

The west elevation faces the new Printers Row condominium building and has a new elevator and stair tower addition. The one-story brick loading dock is also attached to this elevation. All windows have been replaced with one-over-one aluminum sash. The common brick has been painted yellow.

Interior

The historic main entrance at the west has been replaced with a pair of silver, brushed aluminum doors. The area between the doors retains the historic terrazzo steps and floor. The high-ceiling lobby has sheetrock office partitions and laminate flooring over the poured concrete. The first floor has 14-foot ceilings and exposed concrete mushroom columns and poured concrete ceilings. The freight and passenger elevators are placed against the west wall and the hallway runs north and south along the western wall. The interior walls are 13 inches thick with exposed yellow common brick on all floors.

The upper floors, two through six, have 12-foot ceilings with concrete mushroom columns and poured concrete ceilings and floors. The air-conditioning mechanical system (2005) is exposed and attached to the ceilings. Steam heat radiators are along the walls. The building features an open floor plan with a few sheetrock office partitions on the lower levels. The seventh floor addition has eight-foot ceilings and wood floors.

Modern shoe manufacturing equipment was highly portable, and factory buildings typically do not retain mechanical evidence of their former use.

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Alterations

The cornice was removed at an unknown date and some replacement brick has been installed at the roofline. The main entrance doors have been replaced and some window sashes have been replaced with aluminum, but there has been no alteration of window size or location except for one window on the first floor of the north elevation.

In ca. 2000 a brick and stucco addition containing a passenger elevator, second emergency stairwell, and bathrooms for each floor was added to the secondary west elevation. A one-story, concrete block loading dock entered off East Tenth Street was constructed to the west of the building at an unknown date. A wood frame, one-story addition was constructed on the roof in 1924. The rooftop addition has a hip roof and is setback approximately ten feet from the parapet and is eight feet tall. The addition has aluminum storm windows in the openings and is sided with stucco.

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Summary

The O'Donnell Shoe Company Building, located at 509 Sibley Street, is locally significant under National Register Criterion A in the area of industry. Its period of significance begins with building construction in 1914 and extends through its years of operation, ending in 1935 when the company relocated to Tennessee. The O'Donnell Shoe Company was a significant leader in St. Paul's early twentieth-century shoe industry. At the time of the firm's incorporation in 1910, the city dominated Minnesota's shoe industry with more than \$7 million in profits. O'Donnell reflected the period's pattern of increasingly larger firms, complete mechanization in modern buildings, diverse product line, and participation in a national market. The company was incorporated by employees of a competing St. Paul manufacturer and first located in a rented location above a hide store that was readily accessible to rail and leather stock. In 1914 the firm built its open-plan factory in St. Paul's warehousing and manufacturing core. The efficient new factory contributed to its 1928 ranking as the largest shoe manufacturer in the state, which included production of its staple shoes and boots as well as novelty women's shoes. In 1935, the firm's relocation to the rural south reflected the expansion of a national transportation network, lower shipment costs, and the need to avoid labor conflict. In conclusion, the O'Donnell Shoe Company followed national shoe manufacturing trends of location, mechanization and product development. Its building is a significant representative of the once-prominent, early twentieth-century shoe industry in St. Paul.

Shoe and Boot Manufacturing in St. Paul

Before 1850, the American shoe industry remained a "kitchen shop" industry of masters who trained journeymen in the art of handmade shoes.¹ Itinerant cobblers arrived early in St. Paul, with Hugh McCann serving as the single shoemaker in 1849.² By 1853 he was joined by four others: Henry Buel, Luke Marvin, H.A. Schliek, and Philip Feldhauser.³ The early influx of German immigrants to St. Paul in the 1850s and 1860s would include many more shoemakers. One of the most successful was Conrad Gotzian, who immigrated to Philadelphia in 1852 where he learned the shoe trade, and arrived in St. Paul in 1855.⁴ He opened his first shop in 1857 on Jackson Street. This shop was similar to New England "central shops," where a few shoe craftsmen gathered to make custom-order shoes.⁵ St. Paul and other Midwestern cities with a large pre-Civil War influx of Germans subsequently led the national shoe and leather industries.⁶

¹ Harold Quinby, *Pacemakers of Progress: The Story of Shoes and the Shoe Industry* (Chicago: Hide and Leather Publishing Company, 1946), p. 12.

² Fletcher J. Williams, *A History of the City of Saint Paul to 1875* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1876; Borealis Reprint, 1983), p. 246.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 342.

⁴ Rolf Anderson, "Proposed Lowertown Historic District Boundary Increase" to Lowertown National Register of Historic Places District, 1989, p. 16. On file, St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission.

⁵ *The Gotzian Foot Print*, March 1915, p. 5.

⁶ Edgar M. Hoover Jr., *Location Theory and the Shoe and Leather Industries* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), p. 269.

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The second half of the century saw a revolution in mechanization of the shoe industry. Elias Howe's sewing machine (1846) and Lyman Blake's sole sewing machine (later the McKay sewing machine, 1848) were the first widely-accepted machines applied to shoe manufacturing.⁷ In the 1860s, mechanized shoe manufacture spread to most industrialized cities and was encouraged by population growth and Civil War demand.⁸ Charles Goodyear's "turn shoe" sewing machine (1875) was quickly followed by machines that compressed shoe heels and pricked them for nails.⁹ The first standardized shoe measurement chart was published in 1881 and was followed with a machine that stamped the last or measured footprint.¹⁰

Mechanization was fully incorporated into St. Paul's boot and shoe industry by the 1880s. In 1888 shoes were listed as one of the city's top manufactured products, with \$1,400,000 in value.¹¹ The industry was growing rapidly, but first-generation German immigrants and their children continued to dominate the boot and shoe industry in St. Paul. Conrad Gotzian died in 1887, but his shoe company was re-incorporated with a capital of \$600,000 and elected the following officers, including his son: George W. Freeman, president; Theodore L. Schurmeier, vice-president; Paul H. Gotzian, secretary, and R.H. Stevens, treasurer.¹²

In 1888, C. Gotzian & Company, located at 187 and 189 East Third Street (razed), was the largest shoe company in the Northwest with 480 employees and \$1,800,000 in sales concentrated on the western states.¹³ The new corporation also owned two shoe manufacturing plants in California as well as the Minnesota Shoe Company in St. Paul. This firm was established in 1886 and operated from a building on the corner of Isabel and Fifth streets where it produced 1,000 pairs of shoes per day.¹⁴ Other St. Paul manufacturing firms included Foot, Schulze & Company, which was originally established in Red Wing in 1859, but was reincorporated in 1884 by L. B. Foot, Theodore Schulze, C. Heinrich and Gustave Schurmeier. The Foot, Schulze & Company factory at 233-37 East Third Street (razed) was located on the corner of Third and Wacouta Streets in St. Paul.¹⁵ The Tarbox, Schlick & Company was organized in 1887 and operated at 228, 230 and 232 East Third Street (razed).¹⁶ The firm of Schnittger, Stickney & Company organized in 1890 and operated at 232 East Third Street.¹⁷

⁷ Charles Cahill, "The Evolution of the Modern Shoe Factory," *New England Magazine*, vol. 5 (March 1914), p. 42.

⁸ Harold Quinby, *The Story of Footwear* (New York: National Shoe Manufacturers Association, 1945), p. 26.

⁹ Charles Cahill, p. 47.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹¹ Henry Castle, *History of St. Paul and Vicinity* (Chicago and New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1912), p. 439.

¹² Castle, p. 440. Casper Schurmeier emigrated from Germany the same year as Gotzian, and both men built houses on either side of James J. Hill in early Lowertown around 1867. Casper Schurmeier's son, Theodore, married Conrad Gotzian's daughter, Caroline, and continued to run the C. Gotzian Shoe Company into the next century.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ The East Third buildings were razed as part of the Kellogg Boulevard construction in 1928.

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St. Paul's Lowertown area changed from a mixed residential and commercial area in the 1850s to the wholesale and manufacturing center of Minnesota by the 1880s.¹⁸ In the 1870s, the construction of a railroad hub that would spread throughout the Upper Midwest solidified the industrial core of the area, encouraging manufacturing including shoe production. East Third Street was Lowertown's commercial thoroughfare, and several shoe companies erected their prominent buildings along it.

St. Paul's shoe companies enjoyed proximity to a steady leather supply. The St. Paul Stockyards, established in 1886, covered 186 acres along the western banks of the Mississippi River in South St. Paul.¹⁹ The Tarbox, Schlick & Company appears to be the only shoe manufacturer to have built a factory near the stockyards.²⁰ The factory, located at 629 Concord (razed), was sold to the St. Paul Tannery in 1901.²¹ By 1913 the St. Paul Stockyards were the seventh-largest livestock market in the United States, covering 250 acres and employing 2,400 workers. St. Paul led the Twin Cities' shoe industry.²²

Shoe manufacturers in Minneapolis settled in the warehouse district north of Hennepin Avenue. One of Minneapolis' first, the North Star Boot and Shoe Company, organized in 1873 with officers H.G. Harrison, Christopher B. Heffelfinger and A.M. Reed. The firm's six-story building was constructed at 416-430 First Avenue North in 1896 (NRHP).²³

By the 1890s American manufacturers were not only supplying the home market but also exported shoes abroad, surpassing France, Germany and Switzerland in shoe exports.²⁴ Minnesota shoe manufacturers were renowned for export of work boots; by 1900 boot and shoe manufacturing was listed as the tenth-most productive industry in Minnesota with a value of \$3,615,801.²⁵ There were 16 shoe factories employing over 2,000 employees in the state. While the census does not differentiate among factory sizes, St. Paul had four factories employing over half of the state's shoe industry wage earners.²⁶ In 1902 Minnesota rose to eleventh place for shoe manufacture.²⁷ The prominence of the industry is confirmed with Paul Gotzian's hiring of St. Paul architect Cass Gilbert to design two new shoe factory buildings at 242 Fifth Street East (1892, NRHP; Lowertown Historic District) and 352 Wacouta Street (1894, NRHP; Lowertown Historic District) as well as Gotzian's own house at 33 Summit Court.²⁸ It should be noted that these buildings represent an earlier age of

¹⁸ Susan Granger and Patricia Murphy, Lowertown Historic District. National Register of Historic Places, p. 7.

¹⁹ Glewwe, Lois A. Glewwe, *South St. Paul Centennial, 1887-1987: The History of South St. Paul* (St. Paul: The Chapter, 1987), p. 95.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 79. Tarbox, Schlick & Company continued to maintain their salesroom on East Third Street.

²¹ Ibid, p. 80. The St. Paul Tannery later operated as the A.C. Lawrence Leather Company and remained at the location into the 1930s.

²² *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, August 31, 1913, supp.

²³ Issac Atwater, *History of Minneapolis* (New York: Munsell Publishing Company, 1895), p. 660.

²⁴ Nancy Rexford, *Women's Shoes in America, 1795-1930* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2000), p. 20.

²⁵ U.S. Department of Commerce, *Census of Manufactures 1905* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905), p. 18.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 22.

²⁷ *Minneapolis Journal*, August 1, 1902, p. 7.

²⁸ Eileen R. McCormack, "Lost Neighborhood: Mary Hill's Lowertown, 1867-1891," *Ramsey County Historical Society*, 2006 p. 20.

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shoe factory construction that did not take advantage of clear-span, reinforced concrete construction and optimal light and ventilation.

St. Paul was the heart of the state shoe manufacturing industry. In 1909, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* proclaimed St. Paul a “great shoemaking center,” stating that the “first-class railway facilities, climatic conditions, the lesser likelihood of strikes than in the East and the raw material for manufacturing purposes” all contributed to its success.²⁹ The newspaper noted that St. Paul’s shoe industry contributed \$6,500,000 to \$7,000,000 in 1908 and distributed throughout the Northwest.³⁰ The *Census of Manufactures* for 1909 listed 18 shoe factories in the state employing 2,664 workers and contributing \$7,568,000 to the market. Of these factories, five were located in St. Paul and represented 1,617 wage earners, making shoe manufacturing the seventh-leading industry in the city.³¹ St. Paul’s shoe factories were newer facilities with modern equipment and required fewer workers which may have explained why the majority of the state’s shoe income was centered in St. Paul, but only half of the state’s shoe workers.

The Shoemaking Process

At the turn of the century, the American shoemaking process was fully mechanized and, as one observer noted, “in no other branch of manufacturing has there been so strikingly displayed the remarkable progress of the present age.”³² In 1906, a factory visitor described “immense rooms accommodating seven hundred or eight hundred employees each with a hundred different kinds of machinery.” This was a “vastly different picture from the low bench with its compartments at one end for knives, awls, hammers and rasps, paste-pots and blacking and rub-sticks, which formed the ‘shop’ of the American shoemaker of sixty or seventy years ago.”³³

The five steps of the early 20th-century shoemaking process: cutting, stitching, lasting, bottoming and finishing, were organized in the modern shoe factory; the top floor contained raw materials and the finished product was completed and shipped from the ground floor.³⁴ In 1917 the St. Paul firm of Foot, Schulze & Company photographically documented the five-step manufacturing process used in their seven-story building at 500 North Robert Street (extant and rehabilitated). Their process likely reflects early 20th-century operations at O'Donnell and other St. Paul companies.

Cutting began on the top floor at Foot, Schulze & Company with insoles and outsoles (heels and box toes) as well as the shoe uppers. Two types of leather hides were used for soles and uppers. Brass dies and trimming-cutters cut the leather, and splitting machines thinned it. After shoe uppers and linings were cut, perforation and

²⁹ *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 7, 1909, p. 6.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ U.S. Department of Commerce, *Census of Manufactures 1914* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1914), p. 5.

³² William R. Stewart, “Great Industries of the United States: Boots and Shoes,” *Cosmopolitan*, vol 38 (Feb 1905), pp. 473.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 478.

³⁴ Rexford, p. 271.

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decoration was applied to the upper before stitching. The edges of the uppers were folded before stitching and went through a skiving machine that made a beveled edge that was easier to fold. The linings and uppers were next fit together before they were sent to the stitching floor.

Stitching involved sewing the uppers and linings together before they were placed on the top of the shoe. The uppers and outsoles were attached with stitching, cement or nails.

Lasting shaped the uppers to a wooden form shaped like a foot. During lasting, the form was placed with the sole facing upward. The insole was tacked on and the upper placed on the underside and pulled upward with pincers. Lasting was a slow process before mechanization, which introduced machine presses and rounding machines.

On the bottoming floor, surplus materials were trimmed off and the outsole and heel were attached to the uppers. Heeling required four machines that nailed, trimmed, and shaped the front and cut the nails. On the finishing floor, shoes were cleaned and polished, and laces were provided. Finally, at ground level, the finished product was boxed and sent directly to stores with factory labels, or sent to wholesalers for application of their own company labels.

O'Donnell Shoe Company

No one was more positioned for success in the shoe industry in 1909 than William O'Donnell. Raised by Irish immigrant farmers in Le Sueur, Minnesota, O'Donnell moved to St. Paul in 1879. By 1890, O'Donnell was a clerk for the Minnesota Shoe Company and a bookkeeper for the C. Gotzian & Company. From 1903 until he resigned in 1909, O'Donnell was the manager of the Minnesota Shoe Company, a subsidiary of the Gotzian firm.³⁵ With \$100,000 in capital and 400 employees, the O'Donnell Shoe Company was incorporated in January 1909 and listed William O'Donnell as President and Charles Patterson, president of the Patterson Street Lighting company, as vice president and treasurer.³⁶ Their first and possibly rented location at 237 East Sixth Street (extant, NRHP in Lowertown Historic District) shared space with a leather company and was around the corner from the two Gotzian shoe company buildings on Wacouta and East Fifth Streets. There may have been some concern about O'Donnell's new endeavors because the Gotzian firm—known as a manufacturer and wholesaler with no advertising in newspapers or retail magazines—purchased a full-page ad in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* on the day O'Donnell incorporated his shoe company. George W. Freeman, president of the C. Gotzian & Company, presented his "letter to the public" calling "attention to the displays of Gotzian Shoe in the retail stores of St. Paul" and explained that his company "proposes to continue in the future to be the biggest and the strongest house in the shoe trade."³⁷

³⁵ St. Paul Directories.

³⁶ *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 7, 1909, p. 6.

³⁷ *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 6, 1909, p. 6.

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In 1910, the O'Donnell Shoe Company moved into their first new factory at 510 Sibley Street (razed), located at the southeast corner of Sibley and East Tenth streets. The five-story, Commercial Style brick building was built by the Butler Brothers company. This factory manufactured men's "high-grade" shoes.³⁸ At the opening, Charles Patterson also announced that the O'Donnell Company had just acquired the North Star Shoe Company in Minneapolis from its creditors "which will manufacture men's, women's and children's shoes with 600 employees."³⁹ The new North Star Shoe Company was incorporated by Charles Patterson, William O'Donnell and George W. Freeman, the past president of C. Gotzian & Company.⁴⁰

In 1914, the O'Donnell Shoe Company built its second factory, a six-story brick building across Sibley Street at 509 Sibley Street. The building was also designed by the Butler Brothers company and initially housed the manufacture of men's shoes while the neighboring factory manufactured women's shoes and leased space to the Freeman Shoe Company (started by George J. Freeman, son of George W. Freeman). The two factories were linked by a tunnel under Sibley Street. While it is tempting to call this building at 509 Sibley the men's factory and the previous building 510 Sibley Street the women's factory, it is likely that the facilities shared manufacture of the two types, and that this was facilitated by the connecting tunnel.

The new building was a model of modern construction, incorporating the most up-to-date factory design features including large windows providing maximum natural light and cross ventilation. Both factory buildings occupied corner lots allowing for more windows and better ventilation. The Turner concrete column structural system allowed ample space for employees and machinery and minimized fire damage. O'Donnell's production followed the process described at Foot, Schulze & Company, with leather cutting on the top floor and finished shoe packaging on the ground floor. The basement and first floor was reserved for office and stock, the second floor was used for shoe finishing, the third and fourth floors for trimming and soling, and the fifth floor for cutting and sewing. Over 70 percent of the shoes produced in America between 1919 and 1933 were either welt (insole and outsole seamed together) or McKay (inner sole laid on top of outsole), and the O'Donnell Shoe Company made both types through the years.⁴¹

The O'Donnell Shoe Company, like many of the St. Paul manufacturers, succeeded with very little advertising. Most shoe companies depended on their own salesmen selling directly to the retail stores and shoe manufacturers rarely expanded their growth into retail establishments. The C. Gotzian and Company printed a brochure for the sales force, entitled *The Foot Print*, which provided marketing points for the traveling salesmen. The O'Donnell Company paid for monthly ads in *The Minneapolis Journal* in 1913 and 1914.

³⁸ *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, June 25, 1910, p. 12.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Hoover, p. 163.

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O'Donnell appears to have paid for only one advertisement—for the ladies' two-strap pump in 1919—in *The Shoe Retailer*, a monthly publication started in Boston in 1898.⁴²

In fact, O'Donnell's early success may have taken advantage of two national trends—regionalism and lack of Midwestern organized labor—rather than direct marketing. The second factory allowed O'Donnell to manufacture staple shoes and novelty shoes. Staples included the basic oxford and work boot, and novelties included the colored leather or ornamented shoes more frequently used in women's shoes. It was difficult for smaller shoe companies to remain competitive with the seasonal style changes and rapid trend turnover in women's novelty shoes, but O'Donnell was equipped for this increasingly important part of the industry. O'Donnell was also fortunate that regionalism in shoe preferences was still common in the 1910s. Retail stores continued to purchase from local manufacturers and certain styles were preferred in various regions, depending on climate.⁴³ As *The Shoe Retailer* noted, into the 1920s, Minneapolis and St. Paul customers preferred black and brown shoes and Spanish and Cuban heels with slightly longer vamps (the part of the shoe covering the instep) for women.⁴⁴ St. Paul was also known for manufacture of medium-grade shoes, while Philadelphia and New York manufactured high-grade shoes.⁴⁵ The O'Donnell Shoe Company was large enough to cater to the region's needs without major national competition and by 1928 became the largest shoe manufacturer in Minnesota.⁴⁶

The company had the advantage of incorporating after complicated labor issues had been resolved in eastern states. Boot and shoe worker unions were the first wage-earners to organize, and the Society of Master Cordwainers (Leatherworkers) of Philadelphia first organized in 1789 following one of the first recorded American labor strikes.⁴⁷ The Knights and Daughters of Crispin were active in New England by the 1860s.⁴⁸ The Boot and Shoe Workers' International Union organized in 1889 to secure “a uniform rate of wages for the same class of work everywhere” and “to secure for both sexes equal pay for equal work” and to “control the system of apprentices” and “reduce the hours of labor by refusing to work more than eight hours per day.”⁴⁹ In 1899, the Boot and Shoe Workers Union centralized control by persuading manufacturers to sign the Union Stamp contract that gave the employer the right to hire and fire and renounced strikes.⁵⁰

Although O'Donnell advertised the manufacture of “high-grade” shoes, St. Paul was best-known known for medium-grade shoes that required less skilled labor. These workers were less likely to strike. Mechanization advancement also led to fewer workers and a smaller group was less likely to organize a strike. The Boot and

⁴² Rexford, p. 320 and *The Shoe Retailer*, Sept. 20, 1919.

⁴³ Rexford, p. 26.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 34.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 23.

⁴⁶ U.S. Department of Commerce, *Census of Manufactures 1927* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1927), p. 12.

⁴⁷ August Emile Galster, *The Labor Movement in the Shoe Industry with Special Reference to Philadelphia* (New York: Ronald Press, 1924), p. 4.

⁴⁸ Hoover, p. 230.

⁴⁹ Galster, p. 74.

⁵⁰ Hoover, p. 233.

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Shoe Workers Union organized branches in Minneapolis and St. Paul in 1902, but their numbers and power were limited next to larger unions of rail workers, machinists and bakers.⁵¹ William O'Donnell was probably well acquainted with the Minneapolis North Star Shoe Company strike of 1902. The strike may have led to North Star's demise and O'Donnell's subsequent purchase.⁵² The O'Donnell Shoe Company building at 510 Sibley Street was under construction during the strikes of the Gotzian and Red Wing Shoe companies.⁵³ Upon completion of his factory, O'Donnell created the O'Donnell Shoe Corporation Club and Benefit Association to promote labor incentives.⁵⁴

Decline of Shoe Manufacturing

The reason for the decline of the shoe industry in America and the O'Donnell Shoe Company's eventual move from St. Paul to the south involved several factors. By the 1920s, the popularity of women's novelty shoes put manufacturers in a risky and expensive position of producing a variety of styles that required massive amounts of stock. After World War II, the price of leather rose sharply and maintaining stock was difficult.⁵⁵ William O'Donnell had avoided strikes, but union agreements had resulted in higher wages throughout the industry and especially in the Midwest.⁵⁶ These factors, along with the stock-market crash of 1929 and the depression of the 1930s, precipitated the closing of many shoe factories.⁵⁷ In 1929, shoe manufacturing did not rank in the Minnesota census of manufacturers. The O'Donnell Shoe Company, surrounded by a struggling economy, was listed as the state's largest producer of shoes in 1928 and the sales offices and showrooms were moved to the Gotzian Building at Fifth and Wacouta. The company also maintained wholesale offices at 476 Rosabel (razed) and in the Security Warehouse (razed) in Minneapolis.

The shoe manufacturing machinery was surprisingly small and transportable and it was not uncommon to move shoe manufacturing to smaller towns at the hint of union grumblings. It was also customary for small towns and southern states to offer inducements to manufacturers. Tennessee, in particular, focused on attracting shoe companies by stressing cheaper wages.⁵⁸ The Minneapolis Teamster's Strike of 1934 in which 35,000 truckers and building trades workers walked out was devastating to the region and may have been the final blow for the O'Donnell Shoe Company which moved operations to Humboldt, Tennessee the following year.⁵⁹

⁵¹ Dave Riehle, "When Labor Knew a Man Named Charles James," *Union Advocate* (1997), p. 3.

⁵² *Minneapolis Journal*, December 18, 1902, p. 6.

⁵³ *Minneapolis Journal*, February 2, 1914, p. 12 and May 19, 1914, p. 12.

⁵⁴ Susan Granger, p. 15.

⁵⁵ Rexford, p. 26.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 29.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*.

⁵⁸ Horace Bancroft Davis, *Shoes: The Workers and the Industry* (New York: International Publishers, 1940), p. 20 and Irvin Sobel and Richard Wilcock, "Labor Market Behavior in Small Towns," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* (vol. 9. no. 1., Sept 2000), p. 57.

⁵⁹ Eric Arnesen et al. American Labor History Theme Study, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2003, p. 104.

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William O'Donnell died in Humboldt in 1939⁶⁰ and the O'Donnell Shoe Company continued in Humboldt with Charles McGill, of the St. Paul McGill-Warner Printing Company, acting as president until operations were sold in 1943 to the Brown Shoe Company. The Brown Shoe Company continued operations at the Tennessee factory into the 1970s.⁶¹

The O'Donnell Shoe Company vacated both factories at Sibley and East Tenth Streets in 1935. The factory at 510 Sibley Street remained vacant until the National Youth Administration moved in from 1941 to 1944 and its neighbor to the south, McGill-Warner Company, expanded operations in the building in the 1950s and connected the buildings with a skyway. The building was demolished in the 1990s.

The factory at 509 Sibley was leased to the Market Seed Company and Albert Wholesale Produce upon O'Donnell's departure. St. Paul Goodwill Industries located in the building from the 1940s into the 1970s. The Goodwill second hand shop was also located in the building. Since 1999 the O'Donnell Shoe Company has been known as the Renaissance Box. It housed tenants such as a theater group and other arts, educational, non-profit and retail ventures. Current development plans by Aeon are to rehabilitate the building for affordable housing.

Summary

The O'Donnell Shoe Company Building meets National Register Criteria A for its association with the development of St. Paul's shoe industry. The progress of the city's industry paralleled national trends of mechanization, growth and location. Between 1914 and 1935, the O'Donnell Shoe Company operated at this location and became the largest shoe manufacturer in St. Paul.

⁶⁰ *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 4, 1939, p. 1.

⁶¹ *American Shoe Directory*, 1975.

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Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The O'Donnell Shoe Company Building occupies Lots 4 and 5 of Auditor's Subdivision #24.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the property historically associated with the O'Donnell Shoe Company Building.

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O'Donnell Shoe Company Building, looking southwest ca. 1915-19. (Minnesota Historical Society)

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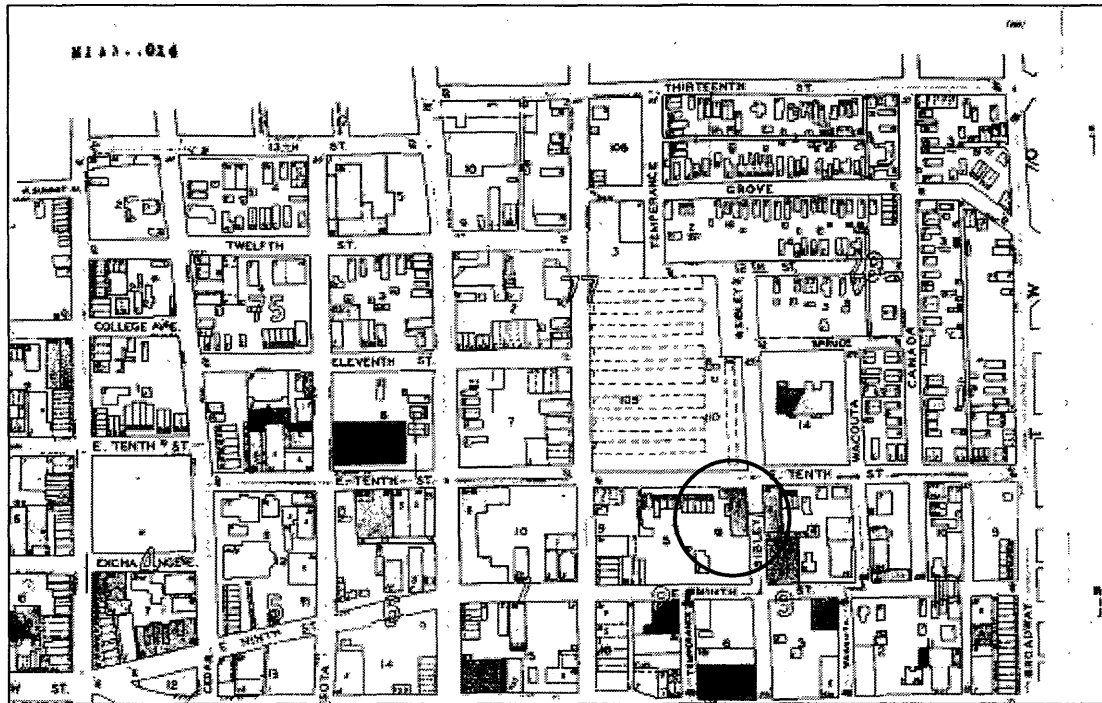
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O'Donnell Shoe Company Buildings, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, St. Paul, MN, 1926-39, vol. 1, Sheet 0a

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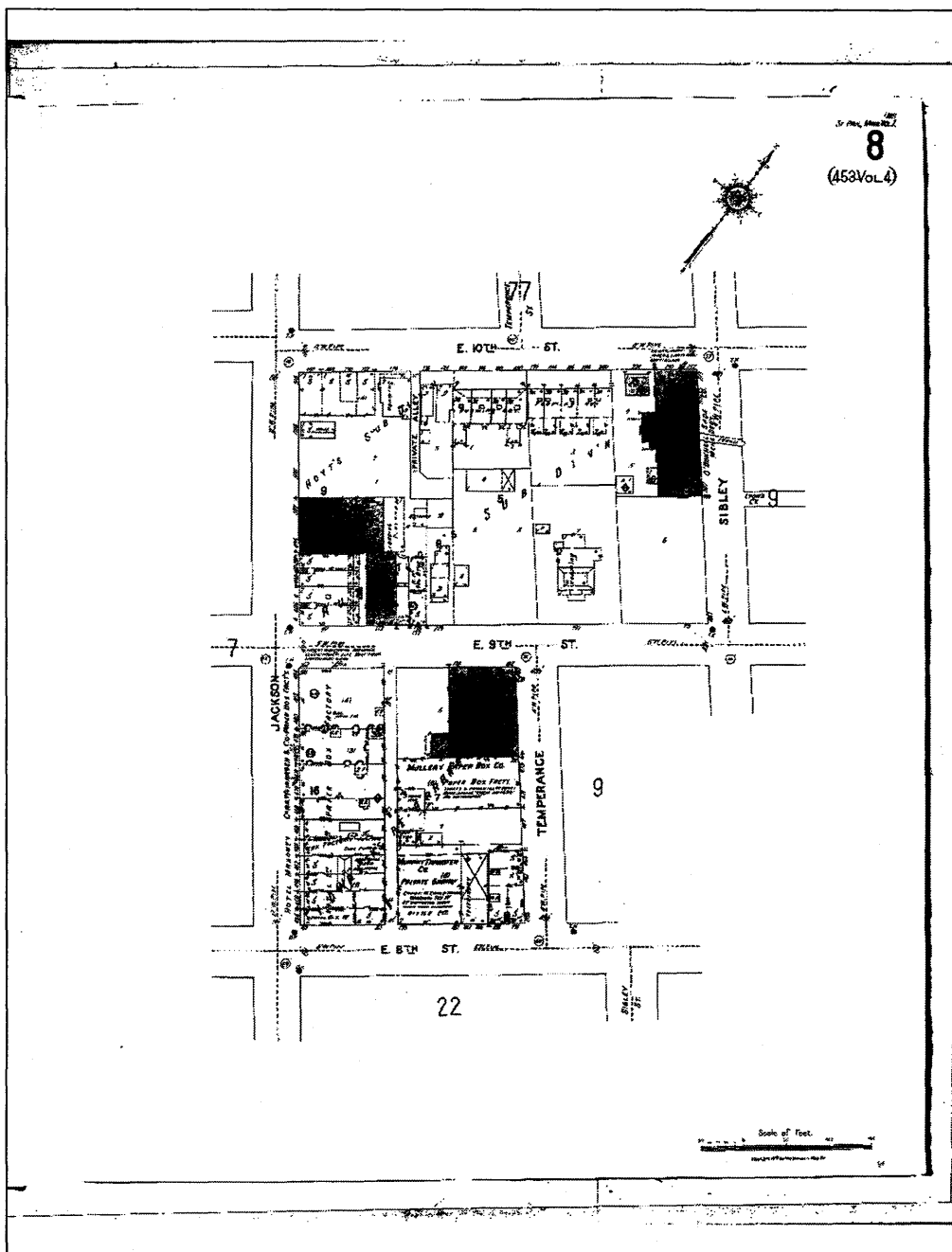
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O'Donnell Shoe Company Building, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, St. Paul, MN, 1926-39, vol. 4, Sheet 8.

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Black and White, 8x10 Prints-Photo Log

Date of Photographs: June 2006

Photographer: Amy M. Lucas

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MN_RamseyCounty_O'DonnellShoeCompanyBuilding
Exterior, East Elevation
2.
MN_RamseyCounty_O'DonnellShoeCompanyBuilding
Exterior, North Elevation
3.
MN_RamseyCounty_O'DonnellShoeCompanyBuilding
Exterior, South Elevation
4.
MN_RamseyCounty_O'DonnellShoeCompanyBuilding
Exterior, West Elevation
5.
MN_RamseyCounty_O'DonnellShoeCompanyBuilding
Interior, Fourth Floor
6.
MN_RamseyCounty_O'DonnellShoeCompanyBuilding
Interior, Fourth Floor