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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Little Falls Commercial Historic District

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Vicinity of First Street and Broadway not for publication N/A

city or town Little Falls vicinity N/A

state Minnesota code MN county Morrison code 097 zip code 56345

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

[Signature] Date June 8, 1994

Signature of certifying official/Title Ian R. Stewart
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
State of 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 the 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] Signature of the Keeper Entered in the National Register Date of Action 7/22/94

Name of Property

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)
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
32	5	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
32	5	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE

business

financial institution

specialty store

department store

restaurant

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE

business

financial institution

specialty store

department store

restaurant

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate, Queen Anne

LATE 19th and 20th CENTURY REVIVALS:

Classical Revival, Tudor Revival, Italian

Renaissance

MODERN MOVEMENT: Moderne

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone, concrete, brick

walls brick, stone

roof asphalt shingle, composition

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See 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 grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1887-1936

Significant Dates

1887-1888

1890

1931

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

See Continuation Sheet

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately 6 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

(A) 1 | 15 | 394350 | 5092260 |
Zone Easting Northing

(C) 3 | 15 | 394315 | 5091960 |
Zone Easting Northing

(B) 2 | 15 | 394562 | 5092220 |

(D) 4 | 15 | 394500 | 5091935 |

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 See Continuation Sheet

organization _____ date _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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. Little Falls East, Minn. 1978

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Little Falls Commercial
Historic District
Morrison County, Minnesota

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DESCRIPTION

The Little Falls Commercial Historic District is situated along the intersection of First Street and Broadway, an area known as "Bank Square." The potential district includes 37 buildings on portions of four blocks comprising approximately six acres around this intersection. The district's boundaries are defined by the town's two principal business streets, First Street (north-south) and Broadway (east-west) in the center of Little Falls, with Broadway dividing First Street into First Street S. E. and First Street N. E. The buildings in the district are all within a block of "Bank Square," except for two buildings southeast of First Avenue S.E., the Buckman Hotel and the City Hall and Fire Department. Broadway has fewer buildings in the district because it has greater problems with individual building integrity and newer infill. For these reasons, the buildings fronting Broadway are west of Bank Square for a block on the south side of the street between First and Kidder streets.

The potential district is distinguished from its immediate surroundings by the predominance of 26 two-story commercial buildings and 11 one-story buildings. The district is further characterized by an absence of vacant lots and a high concentration of contributing buildings -- 32 out of 37. There is a low incidence of more recent infill in the potential district, unlike the remainder of the commercial area immediately outside the district boundaries. Although 80 foot wide lots were platted on First Street, most of the commercial buildings in the district have 40-foot street frontages or less and some building facades are as narrow as 22 feet. Many of the downtown buildings overlap lot lines. Only five buildings along First Street are not in the Original Townsite. At the west end of the district along the south side of Broadway, west of the alley behind buildings on the west side of First Street, the plat is the Mississippi Addition where lots were platted at 25 foot widths. There are no associated objects, structures, or street furniture in the potential district. All buildings in the district face one of the two major streets and abut the sidewalks without setbacks. There are no boulevard trees.

The majority of the district's buildings are red or yellow brick and many of these have been painted, especially those built of yellow brick. Little Falls is not far from the granite quarries of Morrison and Stearns counties, the source of trim on a minority of downtown commercial buildings. Three local brick manufacturers supplied much of the brick for the existing buildings in the district, but the city newspapers rarely noted the source of brick for individual buildings.

Of the alterations to the buildings in the potential district, the most common are changes to storefronts. Most of the late 19th century buildings had cornices, finials, and other decorative elements removed in the 1940s-1960s, according to city permits. Many have

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added storm windows and a few have replacement windows at the second story. The exteriors of several buildings have been covered with applied material such as wood or other siding.

The Little Falls Commercial Historic District represents the commercial development and diversified economy of the City of Little Falls, beginning around the mid-1880s and accelerating into the early 1890s. Diverse local economic activities shaped the central business district up to the late 1930s.

While the late 1850s and 1860s saw the development of the commercial area on the east side of the Mississippi River, the first generation of small wood-framed one story commercial buildings are no longer represented in the district and what few early survivors there are downtown have lost all historical integrity. As the economy of the city strengthened, nearly all these buildings were refaced or replaced by more permanent brick commercial buildings. It is the period from the late 1880s when the population and local economy began to boom, until the late 1930s when the commercial district took on its completed appearance that is reflected in the potential district today.

Initially platted in 1855, the city underwent two major building booms in the commercial district. The first began in the 1887 and lasted until 1901, resulting in the construction of 24 of the 32 contributing buildings in the district. The second and smaller one began in 1918 and extended until 1936, and was less ambitious than the first, with the construction of the remaining eight contributing buildings in the district.

The dominant architectural styles of the buildings in the district reflect national styles popular between 1882-1936. Over half of the 37 buildings in the district were built before the turn of the century, so the district reflects a Late Victorian and decidedly Classical Revival appearance. The Moderne Style of the 1930s is represented in such buildings as the Black and White Cafe, built in 1931 and the City Hall, remodelled in 1935.

The following list describes the resources which comprise the Little Falls Commercial Historic District. The current use of the buildings are noted in parentheses and major alterations are described. The number at the beginning of each description is keyed to the attached district map.

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1.

Historic Name: Morrison County Lumber Company
Current Name: Falls Court, Vision Center, KLTF Radio
Address: 119 First Street N.E.
Date of construction: 1918-19
Architect/Builder: Unknown
Status: Contributing

This is a two and a half story building with a north-south ridgeline paralleling First Street N. E., and a long ell originating at the corner of First Street N. E. and First Avenue N. E. and running west along First Avenue N. E. It is designed in the Tudor Revival (Elizabethan Revival) Style. Both the main building and the ell are built of red Menominee pressed brick. The main building has its original two-over-two wood windows and two-light wood transoms. The storefront level is sheathed in vitrolite and polished granite. The jerkin head roof is covered in asphalt shingles that have the appearance of slate. The north and south gable ends have herringbone-pattern brick and mock timbering. The building has an auditorium, the Maude Moon Weyerhaeuser Hall, on the second floor. The two-story ell runs west along First Avenue N. E. with eight bays defined by plain brick piers along the street level of its north facade. At the second story it has wood two-over-two windows with metal storm windows. The ell has had extensive brick infill at street level. The two easternmost bays of the ell are sheathed in black vitrolite and polished marble. The south wall of the ell is yellow brick that has been covered in stucco and metal panels. It was connected to Falls Court with an inner courtyard in 1961.

2.

Historic Name: Griffith Electric Company
Current Name: The Good Book Store
Address: 117 First Street N.E.
Date of construction: 1936
Architect/Builder: Unknown
Status: Contributing

This one-story tan brick building continues the facade treatment of the Ripley Theater to the south. Its storefront and transom have been altered. Above the former transom is a decorative diamond pattern in the brick. Basket-weave brick patterning is used in the parapet, and the parapet is topped by concrete coping.

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3.

Historic Name: Ripley Theater
Current Name: Denny's Floor Covering Studio
Address: 115 First Street N.E.
Date of construction: 1936
Architect/Builder: Sheldon Haatvedt, architect; Bert Wells, general contractor
Status: Contributing

This one-story tan brick building is similar in detail to the Griffith Electric Company building. It has an altered storefront and transom area. Above the former transom is a decorative diamond brick pattern. Basket-weave brick patterning is used in the parapet, and the parapet is topped by concrete coping.

4.

Historic Name: Close Building
Current Name: Fashion Crossroads
Address: 133 First Street N.E.
Date of construction: 1892 (name and date block)
Architect/Builder: Unknown
Status: Contributing

This two-story Queen Anne brick building has been painted pale yellow. Its one bay design storefront has been altered. The second story windows are wood one-over-ones with wood fill above them and are set in slightly recessed panels topped by shallow brick segmented arches. The cornice is corbelled, with a central corbelled parapet that holds the name and date block, which reads "Close" and "1892". As built, the parapet had a decorative brick gable that has been removed. From the storefront up, the building retains most of its historic character. The brick came from Little Falls' Martin Scott brickyard.

5.

Historic Name: Ryan Building
Current Name: Help Systems
Address: 109 First Street N.E.
Date of construction: 1924
Architect/Builder: Ed Hirt & Son, St. Cloud.
Status: Contributing

This two-story tan and brown brick building is divided into three bays by panelled brick piers which run up to slightly raised parapets. The entire top of the east (front) facade has a red tile coping. The storefront has been altered and is currently sheathed in porcelainized metal panels. Above the storefront, each bay has four one-over-one double hung windows. The

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awnings above the second-story windows have been added since 1984. Between the windows and the cornice level, each bay has a panel with a diamond motif of contrasting brick.

6.
Historic Name: commercial building
Current Name: Falls Bar & Package Store
Address: 107 First Street N.E.
Date of construction: ca. 1950
Architect/Builder: Unknown
Status: Noncontributing

This one-story red brick building was built around 1950. A 1946 Sanborn Insurance Map which shows a small shallow one story wood-framed building on this site.

7.
Historic Name: commercial building
Current Name: The Personal Touch Wedding Boutique
Address: 79 E. Broadway
Date of construction: 1975
Architect/Builder: Tom Pappenfus, drafter for Peterson Construction Company, contractor
Status: Noncontributing

This two-story commercial building is sheathed in stucco with mock timbering and plate glass display windows. It appears to be of wood frame construction.

8.
Historic Name: German American National Bank
Current Name: Perry Law Office
Address: 100 First Street S.E.
Date of construction: 1913-14
Architect/Builder: R. C. Buckley, St. Cloud, architect. Frank Kopacz, Little Falls, contractor
Status: Contributing

Designed in the Classical Revival style, this tall, one-story building is clad with reddish-brown Flemish bond brick trimmed in Bedford limestone. It occupies a prominent corner lot at the intersection of First Street S.E. and Broadway. The Broadway facade is divided into five bays by brick piers with stone bases and decorative stone capitals. Low basement windows are capped by a stone water table. The large windows and entrance are partially covered with porcelainized metal. Brick soldier courses define the window lintels. Above the windows is a wide, curved stone frieze with "GERMAN AMERICAN NATIONAL

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BANK" incised in the stone; in 1918 "GERMAN" was obscured from the title. (Little Falls Daily Transcript, April 30, 1918) Surmounting the frieze is a wide overhanging stone cornice. Another narrow cornice made of molded Bedford stone is located below the gabled parapet, which is capped with a stone coping. The First Street S.E. elevation is two bays wide an entrance and windows that have been altered the same as the Broadway facade.

9.

Historic Name: Sprandel Block
Current Name: Thielen Appliance and Service
Address: 102 First Street S.E.
Date of construction: 1915 (name and date block)
Architect/Builder: Unknown
Status: Contributing

This two-story Classically-inspired brick building is four bays wide. The altered storefront has a canvas awning. Four double hung windows pierce the second floor. Rusticated granite trim is used at the cornice line surrounding the brick panels, on the two piers flanking the east (front) facade, at the lintel line of the first- and second-story windows, and at the sill line of the second-story windows. There is an incised name and date block reading "SPRANDEL" and "1915." With the exception of the altered storefront, the building is essentially intact.

10.

Historic Name: A. Tanner Building
Current Name: Thielen Appliance and Service
Address: 104-106 First Street S.E.
Date of construction: 1887
Architect/Builder: Unknown
Status: Contributing

This two-story five bay brick Queen Anne building is painted yellow with brown accents. At the first floor, the north storefront includes the central bay, making it larger than the south storefront. These proportions are the same in the current, altered, storefronts as they were originally. The top of the first story is defined by a dentilled brick cornice with corbelled projections in the piers at the same line. The second story has two large bays with two round-arched windows with slightly projecting brick hood molds flanking a smaller central bay with similar window ornamentation. At the second story, the windows have been filled with chipboard, and the hood molds have been outlined by being left unpainted. The four brick piers that run the full height of the building have also been highlighted by being left unpainted. The original coping has been removed and the parapet simplified by removing small projections of the four piers that originally projected above the parapet. The

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alterations to the second story are reversible, and the building retains its historic character at the second story. Originally, the central bay had an "A. TANNER" name block which has been removed.

11.

Historic Name: Morin Block
Current Name: Another Tyme Antiques and Collectables
Address: 108 First Street S.E.
Date of construction: 1892
Architect/Builder: Unknown
Status: Contributing

This two-story building has a brick facade, with ten courses of reddish-brown brick dividing the first and second stories with additional yellow brick on the second story. The storefront has two recessed entrances flanked by large glass windows which are framed with grey polished granite. The transomed door leading to the second floor is on the left side of the building. Six windows with one-over-one double hung sash and a continuous concrete sill pierce the second floor. A pair of brick corner pilasters and another one in the center accent the second story. The brick contractor on the original building was a local firm, O. Duclos. (Little Falls Daily Transcript, July 20, 1892)

12.

Historic Name: Wetzel Block
Current Name: vacant
Address: 112 First Street S.E.
Date of construction: 1883
Architect/Builder: Unknown
Status: Noncontributing

This wood frame, two-story building was put up in 1883 as the John Wetzel drug store. A brick veneer facade was added in 1892 to match the new Morin Block next door. The south wall has also been veneered with brick. In 1988 the facade was sheathed entirely with cedar siding, and new windows were installed on the second floor. No historic fabric is visible.

13.

Historic Name: Black and White Cafe
Current Name: Black and White Hamburger Shop
Address: 114 First Street S.E.
Date of construction: 1931
Architect/Builder: Unknown
Status: Contributing

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This simple one-story Moderne style building is sheathed in white glazed brick. At the base of the facade is a soldier course of white glazed brick, which is also used at window sill. Soldier courses of alternating black and white glazed brick accent the door and window lintels. There are alternating black and white headers as coping atop a parapet that projects above the door. The rest of the parapet is topped by a coping of two courses of white glazed brick.

14.

Historic Name: Kerrich & Moeglein Block
Current Name: Black and White Hamburger Shop
Address: 116 First Street S.E.
Date of construction: 1898
Architect/Builder: Unknown
Status: Contributing

This two-story, four bay, Commercial Queen Anne style brick building is painted yellow. The first floor storefront has been altered. The four second story windows have wood frame, one-over-one double hung sashes, jack-arched brick lintels, and a continuous band of rusticated stone defines the sill. The ornate cornice has checkerboard and corbelled brick. This building is nearly identical to sites 15 and 16 at 118 and 120 First Street S.E.

15.

Historic Name: Kerrich & Moeglein Block
Current Name: Red Bull Bar
Address: 118 First Street S.E.
Date of construction: 1896
Architect/Builder: Unknown
Status: Contributing

This two-story, four-bay, Commercial Queen Anne style brick building is painted reddish-brown. The first floor storefront has been altered, and the four second story windows have been infilled with chipboard. The lintels are jack-arched brick, and a continuous band of rusticated stone defines the sill. The ornate cornice has checkerboard and corbelled brick. A raised, round-arched brick parapet flanked by brick end piers was removed at an unknown date. At the rear is a 25x15 foot concrete block 1968 addition. This building is nearly identical to buildings 14 and 16 at 116 and 120 First Street S.E.

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16.

Historic Name: W. Tonn Block
Current Name: CECE Craft Boutique, BJ's 1 Hour Photo
Address: 120 First Street S.E.
Date of construction: 1895 (date block)
Architect/Builder: Unknown
Status: Contributing

This two-story, four-bay, Commercial Queen Anne style brick building is painted blue. The first floor storefront has been altered, and the second story windows, with nine-light upper sash above small one-over-one lower sash, are more recent additions. The second-story window lintels are jack arched, and there is a continuous rusticated stone band at the window sills. The building originally had a raised central brick parapet with brick end piers, which has been removed. The top of the current parapet is capped with metal.

17.

Historic Name: Maurin Block
Current Name: Ben Franklin store
Address: 122 First Street S.E.
Date of construction: 1895
Architect/Builder: Carl Kropp, St. Cloud, architect
Status: Contributing

This two-story, eight bay, Commercial Queen Anne brick building is painted grey. The second-story windows to the east and south have been bricked in and their rusticated stone sills are still showing. The building originally had a continuous rusticated stone sill band at the second story and jack-arched lintels. The ornate cornice has checkerboard and corbelled brick. Its raised central panelled brick parapet with brick piers was removed in 1967 along with a name and date block: "M. MAURIN, 1895." At the rear of the building is a 20 x 48 foot one-story concrete addition with a flat roof, built in 1970. Between the late 1890s and 1934, this building housed the Berg Hardware company. The building was remodelled in 1938. (Little Falls Daily Transcript, June 12, 1948; The Improvement Bulletin, May 10, 1895; Souvenir of Little Falls and Morrison County, Minnesota, 1899)

18.

Historic Name: Butler Block
Current Name: First National Bank
Address: 101 E. Broadway
Date of construction: 1891 (date block), 1921, 1993
Architect/Builder: G. H. Cook, brick contractor
Status: Contributing

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This two-story brick Commercial Queen Anne building is prominently located at the northeast corner of First Street S.E. and Broadway. As built in 1891, it had a corner entry and seven bays along the Broadway facade. In the summer of 1993 four additional bays were added to the east when the facade of the 1893 Lindbergh Block was integrated into the Butler Block. As built, the Butler Block had brick pier caps extending above the cornice line, which have been removed. The south facade has rectangular window openings with jack-arched lintels. The west facade has fifteen bays, rectangular windows on the first floor which were added in the 1921 remodelling, and semicircular arched windows on the second floor. The 1921 remodelling also included changing the first-floor arched window openings to a rectangular shape with new windows, new Kasota stone sills, and changing the main entry to the center of the south (front) facade. The cornice has two rows of corbelled brick separated by a repeated pattern of small round-arched openings.

19.

Historic Name: Rhodes-Wetzel Building
Current Name: Mushel Valu-Rite Drug
Address: 101 First Street S.E.
Date of construction: ca. 1878-1882
Architect/Builder: Unknown
Status: Noncontributing

This one-story wood frame building is one of the oldest buildings in downtown Little Falls, but it has been so extensively altered that it is noncontributing. In 1947, it expanded onto a narrow parcel to the south on which had stood a narrow building which was removed. When this narrow building to the south was torn down, a full basement was put in under the Rhodes-Wetzel building and the adjacent narrow lot, and the Rhodes-Wetzel was expanded to a frontage on of 35 feet on First Street S. E. (Little Falls Daily Transcript, October 1, 1951) The Rhodes-Wetzel block was re-sided in 1947 and again in 1965. Currently it is sheathed on its west and north facades with vertical wood siding above a polished granite base.

20.

Historic Name: Rhodes Block
Current Name: Lovdahl Drug
Address: 103 First Street S.E.
Date of construction: 1889
Architect/Builder: A. D. Harrison and Co., Little Falls architect
Status: Contributing

This is a two-story structure with a facade of glazed yellow brick laid in decorative patterns. This newer facade dates from the 1930s and was completed during the district's period of significance. An awning has been added to the storefront after 1984. A red tile coping tops

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the facade. At the second story are wood one-over-one wood double-hung sash with later metal storm windows, and a continuous band of soldier course brick at the sill line.

21.

Historic Name: tailor shop
Current Name: The Shanty
Address: 105 First Street S.E.
Date of construction: ca. 1895-1902
Architect/Builder: Unknown
Status: Noncontributing

This small one-story wood-frame infill building to the south of the Rhodes Block was completely refaced in 1965 with shingling above the door and window. On the 1902 fire insurance map, this building was shown as a tailor shop.

22.

Historic Name: Rhodes-Tanner Block
Current Name: Little Falls Printing
Address: 107 First Street S.E.
Date of construction: 1892
Architect/Builder: Tourtillotte and Triplett, Little Falls architects
Status: Contributing

This is a two-story red pressed brick Commercial Queen Anne style building with butter joints. It is 26 feet wide with end piers extending above the parapet. The second-story windows have been replaced with smaller windows, brick infill in the transom area and upper portion of what was the upper sash. The jack-arched window lintels are still visible at what was the original window openings. The window sills are defined by a stone belt course at the second story. The cornice is elaborately corbelled and topped by a stone coping. The storefront was completely altered in 1985 with a pedimented motif, new windows and entrance. Mr. John Rhodes began construction in April, 1892, of his portion (north third) in conjunction with Mr. Alfred Tanner who matched a building to the south with a party wall in between. It was made to look like one building with an approximate 75 foot presence on First Street S. E. and three storefronts. (Little Falls Daily Transcript, April 23, 1892) After completion of the two buildings the entire building became known as the Rhodes-Tanner Block. (Little Falls Daily Transcript, January 1, 1894)

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23.

Historic Name: Rhodes-Tanner Block
Current Name: vacant
Address: 111 First Street S.E.
Date of construction: 1892
Architect/Builder: Tourtillotte and Triplett, Little Falls architects
Status: Contributing

This is a two-story red pressed brick Commercial Queen Anne style building with butter joints, approximately 54 feet wide with twelve unequal bays. End piers extend above the parapet. Two similar piers divide the building into two 25-foot-wide bays with separate storefronts and a narrow north bay has an entrance to the second floor. The second story windows in this portion of the building have been infilled with wood, but the jack-arched window lintels are still visible. The second story window sills are defined by a stone belt course. The cornice is elaborately corbelled and topped by a stone coping. The first remodeling of the storefronts was done in 1908 and they have been subsequently remodeled. The north store has red Roman brick alterations at the storefront.

24.

Historic Name: Morrison County Realty Company
Current Name: Bookin' It , vacant
Address: 113-115 First Street S.E.
Date of construction: 1933
Architect/Builder: T.W. Emerson, Little Falls contractor
Status: Contributing

This one-story tan brick Moderne style building replaced the Rider Block which burned in the mid-1910s. The altered storefront is partially stuccoed and the original stone chevrons have been removed from above the ground-level windows. Except for the missing chevrons, the building above the storefront is original. It has stone-capped end brick piers and a similar pier dividing the facade into two bays. A band of patterned brick fills between the piers at the level of the stone caps. At the cornice level, contrasting bands of Moderne detailing remain. The parapet is topped by a stone coping.

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25.

Historic Name: Falls Theater
Current Name: Falls Cinema, Hollywood Video
Address: 117 First Street S.E.
Date of construction: 1933
Architect/Builder: Perry Crosier, Minneapolis architect with Minneapolis contractor Louis Fleisher. T. W. Emerson, Little Falls contractor.
Status: Contributing

This one-story cream brick Moderne style building replaced the Lowell Theater which burned in January, 1933. The Moderne design of this building is rather subdued with the exception of stylized stone end piers, small stone motifs at the cornice, and the brightly colored original marquee. The facade is asymmetrical and the theater entrance is to the north with a boarded-up retail storefront in the south half.

26.

Historic Name: Sand Cafe
Current Name: The Flower Dell
Address: 119 First Street S.E.
Date of construction: 1926-27
Architect/Builder: Unknown
Status: Contributing

This one-story reddish-brown Flemish bond brick building with stone trim is designed in restrained Italian Renaissance style with three bays: a larger central bay flanked by matching, slightly projecting bays on either side. The building is trimmed in rough limestone. A limestone band separates the upper and lower elements of the building. The round-arched central entry is surrounded in limestone projecting from the plane of the facade. Immediately above the head of the entry arch is a limestone "S" cartouche, signifying "Sand" for the original cafe owners, Josephine and Eugenie Sand. Round-arched doors in the left and right bays are trimmed in limestone. Each flanking bay has a limestone decorative motif in its upper element. All three bays have small parapets with limestone coping. The storefront has its original copper windows, small-paned transoms, and stone bulkhead. The interior retains its original terrazzo floor.

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27.

Historic Name: restaurant
Current Name: Luberts Auto Parts
Address: 123 First Street S.E.
Date of construction: ca. 1895-1902
Architect/Builder: Unknown
Status: Contributing

This one-story buff-colored brick building has slightly projecting brick end piers at its facade. The building is intact except for the storefront. The cornice has recessed panels and corbelled brick similar to that of the Hoffman Block, next door to the south. The brick bond is six stretcher courses to one header course. The tops of the walls have a red tile coping. Today it is considered a north addition to the adjacent Hoffman Block.

28.

Historic Name: Hoffman Block
Current Name: Luberts Auto Parts
Address: 125 First Street S.E.
Date of construction: 1889
Architect/Builder: Unknown
Status: Contributing

This two-story Italianate wood-frame building is veneered in buff-colored brick. At the second story, it has its original wood one-over-one windows with metal storms, stone sills, and arched brick hood molds with stone keystones. It has a canted corner entrance. The parapet and piers that originally topped the canted entrance have been removed. At the cornice line there are recessed panels and chamfering in the brick. The first-floor storefront has been covered with applied metal and wood with Permastone under the display windows.

29.

Historic Name: vulcanizing shop
Current Name: Luberts Machine Shop
Address: 103 First Avenue S.E.
Date of construction: ca. 1909-1915
Architect/Builder: Unknown
Status: Contributing

This two-story building is buff-colored brick laid in American bond, and was added to the back of the Hoffman Block possibly when Frank Grzeca bought the vulcanizing business from Herbert Muncy. The facade is symmetrical with a single bay. The ground level is painted white and has one segmented brick arched door on the east leading upstairs and a

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modern overhead garage door below a three-light glass transom. There are two sets of one-over-one windows on the second story grouped under a brick segmented arch opening.

30.

Historic Name: Buckman Hotel

Current Name: vacant

Address: 100-106 First Avenue S.E.

Date of construction: 1901

Architect/Builder: Tourtillotte and Triplett, Little Falls architects,
from 1892 design, A.D. Harrison, contractor

Status: Contributing

This three-story buff-colored brick building replaced the first Buckman Hotel, which was built in 1892 and burned in 1901. It is an anchor to the district on the southeast. Historic photos indicate that the original design was substantially reused in the rebuilding after a January 1901 fire destroyed everything but the basement. The west facade facing First Street S. E. is divided into eleven unequal, slightly recessed bays separated by brick piers that extend to the top of the cornice. The north facade facing First Avenue S. E. is of similar design, with twelve unequal bays which originally had large glass display windows on the first floor. The front entrance was flanked by sample rooms for travelling salesmen. The chief exterior decorative element is patterned brickwork. Window lintels are jack-arched, and each window has a rusticated red sandstone sill. The brick cornice above the third floor is one of the best examples of turn-of-the-century brickwork surviving in the downtown. It is constructed of projecting brick banding, a row of soldier course, a dentilled course, and elaborate arched brickwork for a heavily detailed relief. The building is missing most of its brick pier caps which originally projected above the parapet. Alterations occurred in 1956 and 1957 to the business fronts on the first floor. During this remodelling the hotel kitchen was torn out after the dining room closed. Subsequently, the concrete block rear additions were added where the kitchen had been.

31.

Historic Name: City Hall and Fire Department

Current Name: Police Department

Address: 114 First Avenue S.E.

Date of construction: 1890-91, remodelled 1935

Architect/Builder: Max Beutow, St. Paul, and Philip C. Bettenberg, 1935
architects (Little Falls Daily Transcript, May 7, 1935)

Status: Contributing

This two-story brick Moderne style building is a the result of the 1935 remodelling of the 1890-1891 City Hall. The remodelled facade is of reddish-brown brick; the side and rear

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walls remain local buff-colored brick. The facade is asymmetrical, with the entry door on the west side and two large access doors for vehicles on the east. Above the entry door on the west is a ribbed vertical brick inset that extends to the parapet. Above the access doors on the east are four six-over-six windows. Above the windows is a zig-zag design in brick, surmounted by four ribbed vertical brick panels that extend to the parapet.

32.

Historic Name: Kiewel Building
Current Name: Fitness Connection
Address: 58 E. Broadway
Date of construction: 1906-07
Architect/Builder: Benjamin Belanger, Little Falls contractor
Status: Contributing

This two-story Classical Revival building is constructed of contrasting grey and tan brick. The principal (north) facade is four bays wide while the Kidder Street elevation has seventeen bays. The storefront has a canted entry, which has been altered, and there is wood fill above the display windows. Above the storefront, the second-story window sills are of rusticated granite. The windows are wood one-over-ones with aluminum storm windows. The jack-arched lintels are emphasized with tan brick. A band of sawtooth brick and a corbelled and dentilled parapet in both grey and tan brick top the structure. The parapet has been repaired with yellow brick, not a perfect match, but not intrusive. Tan brick end piers terminate in brick caps projecting above the parapet. The east cap facing north on E. Broadway is missing. The same design features of the facade are repeated in the west-facing Kidder Street wall. The piers that define the side bays project above the parapet. At street level, the west facade has one much-altered business entry at the back of the wall. This building underwent a sensitive major remodelling in 1986.

33.

Historic Name: Union Block, Cardinal-Wilcox Block
Current Name: Planned Parenthood, St. Cloud Area Legal Services
Address: 62 E. Broadway
Date of construction: 1891 (date block), substantially rebuilt 1893
Architect/Builder: Unknown
Status: Contributing

This is a two-story yellow brick building, laid in American bond, with every fifth course in Flemish bond. This building was built by the "union" of two Little Falls businessmen named Cardinal and Wilcox in 1891. It has an "1891" incised stone date block. It was extensively damaged by fire on December 9, 1892, and rebuilt in 1893. The altered storefront is sheathed in rough limestone. Above the storefront is a band of rusticated granite

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at the sill line. The facade is slightly recessed and runs up to a corbelled and dentilled cornice. Narrow brick end piers flank the facade. The west pier projects slightly above the cornice to a height that matches the truncated pier of the Kiewel Building, next door to the west. The second-floor windows are newer double sets of wood one-over-ones topped by sheet metal infill and covered in aluminum storm windows. Rusticated granite blocks define the lintels. This building housed the Merchant's State Bank earlier in this century and Minnesota Power & Light offices in the 1950s and 1960s.

34.

Historic Name: Samuel Burton Cigar Factory

Current Name: Pap's Sport Shop

Address: 64 E. Broadway

Date of construction: 1891

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Status: Contributing

This one-story yellow brick commercial building is quite similar to the adjacent Union Block, suggesting that it was built around 1891 at the same time as its neighbor. This building received little damage during the December 9, 1892, fire in the Union Block, but probably required some repairs (Little Falls Daily Transcript, December 9, 1892). Its brick is laid in American bond, with every sixth course in Flemish bond. Its altered storefront is finished in the same rough limestone as that used in the Union Block. Above the storefront, the facade is slightly recessed and runs up to a corbelled and dentilled cornice topped by a stone coping. The facade is flanked by narrow brick end piers. The east pier is part of this building. The west pier doubles as the east end pier of the adjacent Union Block. This shared pier also suggests that the two buildings were built at the same time. Sanborn fire insurance maps show a very shallow building used as a cigar factory in 1892 which city directories confirm was operated by Samuel Burton. The same shallow configuration in 1895 showed the building being used as a tailor shop. The original south foundation wall of that shallow building can still be seen in the basement. By 1902, the building had approximately tripled in depth and matched the depth of the Union Block and was a harness shop. The storefront was remodelled first in 1956, and has seen subsequent changes. In the back is a one-story concrete block addition with a flat roof that was built in the 1930s. The exterior of this rear addition is stuccoed.

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35.

Historic Name: Bourassa Block
Current Name: Esie's Liquors
Address: 66 E. Broadway
Date of construction: 1888
Architect/Builder: Unknown
Status: Contributing

This two-story cream brick Italianate building was built as a saloon by businessman Joel G. Bourassa. The brick has been painted. The storefront has been altered, with changed windows and wood infill. Above the storefront, the three-bay facade is slightly recessed and runs up to a dentilled and sawtooth cornice topped by a tile coping. The facade is flanked by brick end piers and topped by a tile coping. The windows are wood one-over-ones with brick hood molds above the openings. The hood molds are tied together by a band of sawtooth brick at the lintel line. City permits and directories indicate that between 1955 and the early 1980s it housed the Brass Rail Bar.

36.

Historic Name: Muske Block
Current Name: H & R Block
Address: 68 E. Broadway
Date of construction: 1907 (date block)
Architect/Builder: Unknown
Status: Contributing

This two-story brick business building was built by Robert Muske and housed a grocery store (Little Falls Daily Transcript, February 4, 1907). The brick has been painted green and the storefront altered with a shingled awning. Above the storefront are rectangular window openings with newer casement windows and wood infill. The facade is slightly recessed between flanking brick piers. Between the jack-arched lintels of the second-story windows and the cornice level are two decorative bands produced by a projecting course of brick. At the top of the facade is a dentilled cornice capped in metal. The current display windows and awning date from 1986.

37.

Historic Name: Security Block
Current Name: Robert Miller, DDS, Falls Barber Shop
Address: 70-74 E. Broadway
Date of construction: 1915 (date block)
Architect/Builder: Unknown
Status: Contributing

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This two-story red brick Classical Revival building was built for John Vertin and the German-American National Bank to the east (Little Falls Daily Transcript, June 12, 1948). It is trimmed in stone, possibly Bedford limestone to match the German-American National Bank and was designed to be compatible with the adjacent bank building. A section at the east end has been bricked in at the street level. The storefronts at the west end have been altered and the window transoms are infilled. At the second story, the windows are newer, and grouped into sets with infill above them. At the cornice level is a stone band that continues the same feature on the bank building. Above this band is a raised parapet. The top of the parapet has a stone coping.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Little Falls Commercial Historic District is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A, significance to the broad patterns of our history, in the area of Commerce. The district is significant as a uniform collection of late 19th and early 20th century commercial buildings which comprises the core of Little Falls' historic commercial center. The buildings embody much of the 19th and early 20th century commercial development of the city, and are strongly associated with Little Falls' meteoric rise as an important industrial and lumbering site, supplementing the community's role as a railroad-based agricultural trade center. The district is significant within the statewide historic context entitled "Northern Minnesota Lumbering, 1870-1930s" as an example of a downtown district whose commercial development was associated with a 19th century logging boom. It also fits within the statewide context entitled "Railroads and Agricultural Development, 1870-1940" for its role as an agricultural trade center along the Northern Pacific railroad line.

The buildings in the commercial district served as the historic center of Little Falls' retail, service, and banking industries, and as a social and political focal point of the city. The district is comprised of 32 contributing buildings which were constructed between 1887 and 1936. Twenty-four of the 32 contributing buildings date from the period of Little Falls' tremendous post-1887 economic boom which was stimulated by the harnessing of the Mississippi's water power and the subsequent siting of major lumbering, milling, and manufacturing plants in the city. The remaining eight contributing buildings are associated with two post-1920 factors which influenced the development of the community--the construction of highways and the subsequent development of northern Minnesota tourism, and the establishment of Camp Ripley, a nearby National Guard training and supply facility.

WATER POWER AND EARLY SETTLEMENT

Situated just south of the confluence of the Crow Wing and the Mississippi rivers, present day Little Falls is located in the northwestern corner of the so-called St. Croix Triangle, a large region of forested land which was ceded by the Dakota and Ojibwe Indians in 1837. These treaties opened the first Minnesota lands to Euro-American settlement and marked the beginning of the wholesale harvesting of Minnesota timber.

Although itinerant logging crews began to penetrate the forests around Little Falls searching for white pine in the early 1840s, it was not until 1848, when the first sawmill was erected on the Mississippi River at St. Anthony (the present site of Minneapolis), that logging of the forests around Little Falls began in earnest. The sawmills which rapidly developed in and near St. Anthony were hungry for northern Minnesota's logs. As the settlement of the state created a huge demand for lumber, a number of Minneapolis lumbering interests began buying land and stumpage rights in the Little Falls area, felling the timber, and driving it

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down the Mississippi.

Permanent Euro-American settlement at the site of Little Falls began in 1848 on the eastern bank of the Mississippi River at the river's only large, natural waterfall above St. Anthony. In 1849 a group of six speculators established the Little Falls Mill and Land Company with the goal of building a dam and sawmill at the site. Included among the investors were fur traders, a lumberman, and military officers attached to nearby Fort Ripley, a frontier post which was then under construction about ten miles north of Little Falls. Half-owner of the company was James Green who in 1849 built the first wing dam and a boom to guide logs into his mill pond, and began to construct a sawmill on the eastern bank of the river. By 1850 Green had died and the dam, mill, and nearby land were sold to a new adventurer, William Sturgis. Under Sturgis' ownership, the mill at Little Falls sawed the first lumber north of St. Anthony (Peavy and Smith 1990, 17).

The town of Little Falls itself was not born until 1854 when speculators James Fergus and Calvin Tuttle joined Sturgis in forming the Little Falls Company (later the Little Falls Manufacturing Company). In 1855 the Little Falls Company increased the operation of the sawmill and attracted a few other timber processors to the site. The company laid out the townsite on part of the 2,000 acres of land which had been patented to them by the federal government, officially filing the plat in May of 1856. By the end of 1856 Little Falls was a full-fledged community. It had been named the seat of Morrison County, a courthouse was planned, and the town had eight stores, three hotels, several boarding houses, a school, and a newspaper (Peavy and Smith 1990, 21). The hub of the community and its economic backbone was the Little Falls Company's dam and lumber mill.

Just as Little Falls was gathering momentum, however, the first of a series of disasters struck. In the spring of 1856 the dam and sawmill were flooded and \$40,000 worth of logs washed away. The 1856 flood was followed during the next summer by a grasshopper plague which devastated crops in Morrison County, and by the nationwide financial panic of 1857 which crippled fledgling businesses. Little Falls lost one third of its population during the next three years, land values plummeted, and the Little Falls Manufacturing Company fell into financial disarray (Peavy and Smith 1990, 26). The company improved Green's wing dam and built a bridge over the Mississippi during the winter of 1857-1858, only to have the dam break through in 1859. It was repaired during the winter of 1859-1860, but completely washed out during the summer of 1860, finally spelling doom for the company. Little Falls' first boom which had begun with such promise in 1854, had ended.

Although several plans were made to rebuild a dam at Little Falls, the Mississippi remained unharnessed until 1887 when the Little Falls Water Power Company was formed by a group of lumbermen, local entrepreneurs, and Eastern investors. Aided by a grant from the federal government and public financing, the company built a \$200,000 dam with a 20-foot head in

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1887-1888, making it the second largest source of water power in the state behind Minneapolis' St. Anthony Falls. The dam, which extended across both channels of the river and rested on the northern end of Mill Island, was 830 feet long and 40 feet wide and was capable of generating 10,000 horsepower. In addition to providing power, the dam created a massive reservoir which could be used for holding and sorting the thousands of logs which were being driven down the Mississippi.

The 1887-1888 project also included a 1,000 foot long, 80 foot wide, and 13 foot deep canal which was built along the western side of the river, parallel with its flow. The canal had head gates at the northern end, a waste way at the lower end, and a wheel house, races, and facilities for electric power. Railroad track spurs and sites for prospective factories were located on both sides of the canal.

RAILROADS

In 1887, when construction of the dam began, Little Falls already possessed an excellent, ten-year-old transportation system with which to export the products of the city's manufacturing plants and surrounding farms. The Northern Pacific line had been built in 1877, originally by the Western Minnesota Railroad Company. The tracks ran along the eastern side of the Mississippi between Sauk Rapids and Brainerd, linking St. Paul with the Northern Pacific's main line which ran east and west between Duluth and Moorhead. The Northern Pacific's main line reached the Pacific in 1883, becoming the first railroad to complete a transcontinental route across the northern tier of states, and placing Little Falls directly on the route between the Twin Cities and the Pacific Northwest.

A second railroad line was completed from Little Falls westward to Morris in 1882 by the Little Falls and Dakota Railroad Company. This line, which eventually reached Brown's Valley on the Minnesota-South Dakota border, was used almost immediately by the Northern Pacific.

In 1888-1889 the Northern Pacific shortened the length of the trip between St. Paul and its main line by constructing the Little Falls and Staples "cut-off." The cut-off crossed to the western bank of the Mississippi just south of Little Falls and travelled northwest to the Northern Pacific main line, by-passing Brainerd. When the cut-off was completed, Little Falls was the hub of a rail network of Northern Pacific-controlled lines which extended outward from the city in four directions. By the turn of the century, Little Falls had become an important point along the Northern Pacific line, ranking behind only the Twin Cities and Duluth in the volume of freight shipped (Roberts and Roberts 1993, 11). Railroad freight service continued to be essential to the city's economy well into the 20th century.

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INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Construction of the dam and power plant at Little Falls in 1887-1888, coupled with attractive incentives such as free building sites, discounts on power costs, and local tax exemptions, immediately drew a number of industries to the community. Among the first to locate along the canal were two flour mills. The Minnesota Milling Company was an 800-barrel-per-day mill which was built between the canal and the river. The Little Falls Milling Company, an 150-barrel-per-day mill, was constructed on the western side of the canal. Many other enterprises, including the Grand Grip Horseshoe Company, the Jacob Kiewel Brewing Company, the Little Falls Granite Works, the Little Falls Packing Company, and the Little Falls Iron Works were attracted to the community during the next several years, or formed by local residents.

Construction of the dam and boom area was also a compelling factor in the Weyerhaeuser group's decision to choose Little Falls as the site to build its first Minnesota sawmill. Called Pine Tree Lumber and established in 1890, the company was headed by Frederick Weyerhaeuser and Peter Musser and managed locally by Charles A. Weyerhaeuser and R. Drew Musser. The Weyerhaeuser group had selected the site after carefully evaluating Little Falls, Brainerd, and St. Cloud, and concluding that Little Falls had good water power, an abundant labor force, facilities for boom and storage, and an existing sawmill on the eastern side of the river from which to launch the venture. Pine Tree purchased the Little Falls Lumber Company mill which had been built by St. Cloud investor N. P. Clarke in 1882, and immediately began sawing lumber. In April of 1892 it opened a much larger state-of-the-art facility on the opposite side of the river which was known as the "west side mill." In 1892 Pine Tree cut 32 million board feet of lumber at Little Falls, the largest amount cut by any single firm north of Minneapolis (Larson 1949, 238). Much of the cut wood was shipped out of Little Falls on the Northern Pacific. Pine Tree quickly became Little Falls' largest employer, a position it held until it closed in 1920.

In 1907 Pine Tree formed a retail subsidiary, the Morrison County Lumber Company, to sell its lumber in a series of small retail lumberyards, many located in railroad towns. In 1918-1919 Pine Tree constructed a building in downtown Little Falls (#1) to house the offices of the Morrison County Lumber Company. The offices of Pine Tree and related organizations such as Pine Tree Land Company eventually moved into the second floor of the building. The Morrison County Lumber Company remained in business after the Pine Tree mill was closed in 1920, continued to operate in the building until December of 1960.

Another prominent Little Falls firm, the Hennepin Paper Company, began local operations in 1890. Hennepin Paper had been organized in Minneapolis in 1889 by two prominent lumbermen, Benjamin F. Nelson and Thomas B. Walker, who began to produce newsprint paper at a mill in Minneapolis in 1889. By early 1890 Nelson and Walker were searching

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for a site to build a new pulp mill which could feed their Minneapolis paper plant. In 1890 they chose a site at the southern end of the canal in Little Falls and built a \$50,000-\$60,000 pulp mill which opened the same year. In 1891 they added a large paper mill to the complex, replacing the Minneapolis mill. For most of the 1890s, Hennepin was Minnesota's only mill making pulp for newsprint and its only newsprint manufacturing plant. Hennepin was a national competitor in the production of newsprint paper for several decades. Its steadily increasing output created a huge demand for spruce and poplar cut in the forests north of Little Falls and driven down the Mississippi. Today Hennepin Paper is the state's oldest operating pulp and paper mill and is still in business at its original location (Mellor 1990, 6-17, 47-48).

The local impact of the Little Falls dam and the opening of Pine Tree, Hennepin Paper, and other industries was phenomenal. Little Falls doubled in size within a year of the dam's completion, and mushroomed to 2,354 people in 1890. By 1895 the city had doubled again to 5,116. In 1910 Little Falls had a population of over 6,000.

AGRICULTURAL TRADE CENTER

Coincident with the development of lumbering and other industries, Little Falls became an important agricultural center which served a trade area which extended nearly to the boundaries of Morrison County. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries farmers living as far away as Motley to the northwest, Fort Ripley to the north, North Prairie to the south, Swanville to the west, and Pierz to the east hauled their grain to Little Falls. Brainerd and St. Cloud, 35 miles to the north and south, were Little Falls' major competing markets.

While a large portion of the county was wooded, open prairies and logging cutover regions exposed Morrison's rich glacial drift and alluvial soil to agriculture. By 1915 about one-half of Morrison County's land area was under cultivation or being used as pastureland by approximately 2,622 farms. Morrison County farmers grew wheat, oats, rye, barley, and flax and raised hogs and cattle. Corn and potatoes became increasingly important after about 1905. Morrison County farmers owned 19,400 dairy cows in 1913, helping to make central Minnesota one of the Midwest's leading dairy-producing regions.

As the trade center for the surrounding farmlands, Little Falls was visited regularly by farmers who brought grain to the city's flour mills and elevators, livestock and produce to buyers and processing plants, and sold milk to the city's creameries. Among the city's early agricultural processors were the Little Falls Packing Company (established in 1890), the Little Falls Milling Company, Dewey Produce, Central Creamery, the Farmers' Cooperative Creamery (established in 1916), Little Falls Produce (established in 1920), the West Side Cooperative Creamery (established in 1924), and the Sanitary Milk and Ice Cream Company (established in 1930). Most agricultural products gathered and produced in Little Falls were

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shipped to larger markets such as Duluth and the Twin Cities on the Northern Pacific.

Little Falls also sponsored a Saturday Market Day when area farmers brought produce into the city to sell in stalls along Kidder Street west of the historic district. Many farmers would arrive in Little Falls late on Friday evening and begin to trade before dawn on Saturday.

In addition to serving as a collection and marketing point for farm products, Little Falls was a trade and service center in which area farmers purchased lumber, implements, hardware, feed, seed, clothing, groceries, durable goods, and the services of veterinarians, attorneys, doctors, dentists, and blacksmiths. With 25 percent of the county's population living outside of Little Falls in 1900, the farm market was extremely important to Little Falls merchants who aggressively advertised to farmers in the local newspapers.

COMMERCE

Little Falls' 1887 industrial and population boom brought immediate improvements to the town. In addition to creating jobs, the dam and power plant provided Little Falls' residential and commercial areas with an excellent lighting system and water supply. The city increased in size geographically as new additions were platted and hundreds of new houses were constructed. Little Falls was incorporated as a city in 1889, and major new public buildings were built, including the towering brick Little Falls City Hall and Morrison County Courthouse, both built in 1890-1891.

Merchants flocked to the growing city of Little Falls just as industrialists had. Downtown exploded in a building boom which lasted for 15 years as retail stores, banks, hotels, restaurants, and office buildings were constructed. Construction of the downtown buildings provided work for a number of Little Falls architects and contractors, and many of the buildings were constructed of local brick from one of the city's three major brickyards--Duclos Brick Manufacturing, the Minnesota Brick Company, and Scott and Sprandel. As the final report of a recent downtown historic building survey states,

The effect of these events on the commercial district was immediate. Where small wood-framed buildings had been, new brick business blocks began to rise. . . . The Butler Block [#18] at 101 E. Broadway was built in 1891 and the Lindbergh Block next door was put up by Charles A. Lindbergh, Sr. in 1893. Between 1892-1898 almost the entire west side of First Street S. E. was built up with substantial two story business blocks. New buildings like the Rhodes-Tanner Block [#22 and #23] at 107-111 First Street S. E. and the Hoffman Block [#28] at the northeast corner of First Street S. E. and First Avenue S. E. were built between 1889-1892. The Buckman Hotel was also built as the premiere hotel on the east side in 1891 [sic]. When it burned in 1901, it was immediately rebuilt [#30]. The year

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1891 [sic] also saw the construction of both the City Hall on First Avenue S. E. and the Morrison County Court House at Broadway and Second Street S. E. (Roberts and Roberts 1993, 17-18).

Twenty-four of the 32 contributing buildings in the historic district were built between 1887 and 1901 during this boom. Commercial construction continued downtown through the 1890s, although the Panic of 1893 had a temporary dampening effect on construction and no commercial buildings were erected in the potential district in late 1893 and 1894. In 1895 the Maurin Block (#17) and the Tonn Block (#16) were built at 122 and 120 First Street S. E., respectively. In 1896 two local butchers, Kerrich and Moeglein, built their first commercial building (#15) at 118 First Street S. E. and added a second building in 1898 at 116 First Street S. E. (#14).

The heart of commercial activity in Little Falls was centered around the intersection of First Street and East Broadway. First Street was the main north-south route through the city. Broadway was the main east-west street through the city and linked eastern and western Little Falls via a bridge over the Mississippi near the falls.

During this period the intersection of East Broadway and First Street within the historic district became the city's financial center, known as "Bank Square." The Morrison County Bank, founded circa 1881, was located at the southwestern corner of the intersection in a building which it had erected in 1882. It eventually became the German American National Bank. Officers of the German American National Bank in 1891 were Harold Thorson, Charles A. Weyerhaeuser, J. D. Anderson, and S. A. Smerts. In 1913-1914 the bank replaced its earlier building with the Classical Revival style bank which still stands at the southwestern corner of the intersection (#8). The First National Bank was organized in 1888. Beginning in 1891 it was housed in the newly-completed Butler Block (#18), which was built for William Butler at the northeastern corner of the intersection. A third Little Falls bank, the Merchants State Bank, was organized in 1902 with G. F. Kirscher, H. A. Warner, and Jerome McCuskey as its first officers. The Merchants State Bank was housed for a time in the Union Block (#33) which had been built in 1891 at 62 E. Broadway.

During the two decades after 1900, ten buildings were constructed in the historic district. The Buckman Hotel (#30) was rebuilt in 1901 following a fire the same year which destroyed everything but a partial wall and the basement, which were reused in the new construction. The Kiewel Building (#32) at 58 E. Broadway was a major addition to the district in 1907. In 1913-1914 the new German American National Bank was constructed of dark red brick and Bedford limestone (#8). With co-owner John Vertin the bank built the Security Block (#37) next door to the west in 1915, designing it to match the bank building. In 1915 Charles Sprandel built the two story brick and granite-trimmed Sprandel Block (#9) at 102 First Street S. E. In 1918-1919 Pine Tree Lumber Company built an office for its retail

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subsidiary, the Morrison County Lumber Company (#1), at 119 First Street N. E. The building also eventually housed the offices of Pine Tree itself and its various affiliated firms. This building defines the northern edge of the potential historic district.

Merchants in downtown Little Falls sold everything from fruit to hardware, clothing to meat. Barbers, bakers, druggists, launderers, milliners, photographers, plumbers, tailors, and morticians sold their services. Among the merchants whose buildings still stand in the historic district are Marcus Maurin and Peter Medved who were the original owners of the Maurin Block (#17), built in 1895. Maurin and Medved ran a general store stocked with dry goods, groceries, clothing, boots, and shoes. John Wetzel, owner of the Wetzel Block (#12) and co-owner of the Rhodes-Wetzel Building (#19), operated the Wetzel Drug Company until 1892 when he became cashier of the German American National Bank. Joel G. Bourassa operated a saloon in his Bourassa Block (#35) which he had built in 1888. William Tonn was an early saloon keeper who operated a saloon in the Hoffman Block (#28) before he had the Tonn Block (#16) constructed in 1895 (Roberts and Roberts 1993, 21-23). Samuel Burton was the proprietor of the Burton Cigar Factory (#34), built in 1891, one of a number of early Little Falls businesses which either produced or sold cigars and tobacco. There were seven hotels and five restaurants and lunch counters advertising in the 1907-1908 business listings of the city directory, including the Buckman Hotel (#30).

The business listings of the 1907-1908 city directory also included 16 insurance companies and 9 real estate brokers. Among them was John Vertin, a leading real estate and insurance agent who opened a Little Falls office in 1898. Vertin brokered the sale of hundreds of acres of railroad land in the region as local real estate agent for the St. Paul and Northern Pacific and St. Paul and Duluth railroad companies. His office was in the German American National Bank (#8), and later in the Security Block (#37).

Downtown's commercial buildings also housed the offices of virtually all of Little Falls' early professionals including physicians, dentists, optometrists, and attorneys who occupied the upper floors of many of the buildings in the historic district. These professionals include John H. Rhodes, a partner in the law firm of Rhodes and Staples, which served as local attorneys for the Northern Pacific Railroad. An 1899 source states that Rhodes and Staples "probably own more real estate in Morrison County than any other firm" (Nichols' Headlight 1899, 7). Rhodes is associated with the Rhodes-Wetzel Building (#19), built circa 1878-1882, the Rhodes Block (#20), built in 1889, and the Rhodes-Tanner Block (#22), built in 1892.

The buildings in Little Falls' historic commercial district served as a political focal point of the community. Many of the buildings were the site of political gatherings and events of public importance. Many of Little Falls' most important civic and political leaders were downtown businessmen, and much of Little Falls' local government activity occurred in their

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offices and places of business, as well as in City Hall. Little Falls' businessmen served as mayors, city councilmen, and county commissioners, and filled virtually all elected and appointed city and county offices. John Vertin, co-owner of the Security Block (#37), served as city treasurer for 44 years, chaired many civic committees, and was an important benefactor of the educational and health care efforts of the local Franciscan Sisters. Clarence B. Buckman, owner of the Buckman Hotel (#30), represented the 6th District in the U. S. Congress for many years and served several terms in the state legislature. Buckman was followed in Congress by Charles A. Lindbergh, Sr., who maintained law offices in the Butler Block (#18) in the 1890's, and numbered among his clients the Pine Tree Lumber Company, the First National Bank, and the German American National Bank. Lindbergh served five terms in Congress and made innumerable contributions to state, local, and national politics. Another important civic leader was attorney and businessman Nathan Richardson who served as the county's first Registrar of Deeds and held numerous other offices including County Clerk of Court, Chairman of Township Supervisors, Town Assessor, County Surveyor, County Attorney, Judge of Probate, City Attorney, and Mayor for several terms. Richardson also served three terms in the state legislature. Many of the city's early business, professional, and civic organizations such as the Little Falls Board of Commerce and the Little Falls Commercial Club also met in the buildings within the historic district, as did later organizations such as the Little Falls Lions Club which was chartered in 1922.

The downtown historic district also served as a social and cultural focal point for the community as buildings such as the Buckman Hotel (#30) housed numerous social gatherings. Downtown Little Falls was home to the majority of the city's early fraternal groups and social organizations, many of which leased space on the upper floors of commercial structures. In March of 1919 the Maude Moon Weyerhaeuser Hall was dedicated on the second floor of the newly-completed Morrison County Lumber Company building (#1). Created by Maude Moon Weyerhaeuser as a gift to the community, the concert hall became the permanent home of the Musical Art Club, a several-hundred member group which had been organized in 1911 and brought well-known musical, literary, and dramatic performers to the city.

POST-1920 DEVELOPMENT

The eight newest contributing buildings in the historic district were built after most of the pine had been harvested from the forests north of Little Falls and the Pine Tree Lumber Company had closed. These buildings are associated with a second period in the city's history which is marked by two events, the improvement of highways in central and northern Minnesota, which helped stimulate the region's tourism industry, and by the establishment of Camp Ripley.

Tourism around Little Falls developed as the building of lakeside cottages in the area became

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popular in the 1910s. Fishing lakes in the Little Falls area including the Lake Alexander cluster, the Platte and Sullivan Lake group, and Lake Mille Lacs were first reached via railroad passenger service and horse-drawn hack, and after World War I by automobile. The grading, paving, bridging, and marking of Minnesota highways beginning in the late 1910s and 1920s made northern Minnesota's fishing lakes far more accessible to the general public, and stimulated the development of a successful tourism industry. Parks, campgrounds, picnic areas, boat launches, and resorts sprang up throughout Morrison County and northern Minnesota. In Little Falls, Pine Grove Park was improved in 1923, Lindbergh State Park was established in 1931, and a municipal tourist camping grounds was established on the northern edge of the city. The Jefferson Highway, a popular interstate tourist route, passed through Little Falls as early as 1917, bringing hundreds of seasonal travellers to the community. In 1922 a community celebration marked the paving of Highway 371 between Little Falls and Brainerd. Little Falls' picnic grounds, camping spots, and other travellers' amenities were promoted by the Board of Commerce and other civic and business groups. Within the historic district, the Buckman Hotel (#30) served as the local depot for long distance bus service which was criss-crossing northern Minnesota by the 1920s.

Many of the cottage owners at Lake Alexander northwest of Little Falls became early customers of Larson Boat Works, a Little Falls boat manufacturer which has been in continuous operation in the city since 1913. The boat works was established by Paul Larson, the son of Swedish immigrants who moved to Little Falls in 1898. In 1922 Paul Larson became the first Johnson Motors dealer in Minnesota. Larson Boat Works supplied boats and motors to customers throughout Minnesota just as the state's tourism and fishing industries were growing, and eventually became one of Little Falls' largest employers.

The Minnesota National Guard's Camp Ripley military reservation was established in 1931 about ten miles north of Little Falls. The camp was established just south of the site of Fort Ripley, the frontier military post which had been manned between 1849 and 1878 for the protection of Euro-American settlers on the frontier. During the summer of 1932 the first group of guardsmen encamped at Ripley, and by 1936 130 buildings had been constructed. In 1936 alone between 600 and 700 men worked at the camp on Works Progress Administration (W.P.A) construction projects. By the end of the 1930s, the camp had a capacity to train an infantry division of approximately 9,000 men in two weeks (W.P.A. 1938, rpt 1985, 464). Ripley is now the largest National Guard training camp in the country.

Like the tourism industry, Camp Ripley brought thousands of visitors to the Little Falls area each year. Little Falls was directly on the Northern Pacific line to Camp Ripley from the south, and U. S. Highways 10 and 371 also passed through the city on the route northward to the camp. Traffic to Camp Ripley stimulated the construction of gas stations, cafes, and movie theaters (including one named the "Ripley") in Little Falls, and brought customers to

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the city's hotels. Little Falls businesses also profited from the sale of goods and services to the camp. The Sanitary Milk and Ice Cream Company, for example, supplied milk and ice cream to Camp Ripley, among its other customers.

The eight post-1920 buildings in the historic district include two cafes and two movie theaters which drew part of their clientele from travelers and tourists, and three buildings which housed retail stores and offices. The Sand Cafe (#26), with its rounded arched windows and terrazzo floors was built in 1926-27 for two sisters, Josephine and Eugenie Sand. The Black and White Cafe (#13) at 114 First Street S. E. was built in 1931 with a striking Streamlined Moderne style facade. The two movie theaters, the Falls Theater (#25) and the Ripley Theater (#3), were constructed in 1933 and 1936. Both theaters were operated by the Falls Amusement Company which had been in business in Little Falls since July of 1915.

CONCLUSION

The buildings within the Little Falls Commercial Historic District comprise the focal point of the late 19th and early 20th century commercial development of the city. The district is strongly associated with the industrial development of the city, as well as with its role as a railroad-based agricultural trade center. Twenty-four of the 32 contributing buildings in the district date from the period of the construction of the Little Falls dam and power plant (1887-1888), and the subsequent siting of major lumbering, milling, and manufacturing plants in the city. The remaining eight contributing buildings are associated with the post-1920 improvement of area highways and the development of the region's tourism industry, as well as with the 1931 establishment of the Minnesota National Guard's Camp Ripley.

SUMMARY OF IDENTIFICATION AND SURVEY METHODS

This nomination was based on two surveys: a reconnaissance survey of Morrison County in 1984-85, administered by the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office, which identified some 70 downtown commercial properties, and an intensive survey in 1993 of the downtown commercial area on both sides of the Mississippi River. The 1993 survey covered 100 percent of the pre-1943 commercial downtown buildings with good physical integrity. The 1993 study was administered by the City of Little Falls and its Heritage Preservation Commission. One hundred fifty-five properties identified between January and June 1993 became the basis for the selection of 37 commercial properties in this registration form.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the Little Falls Commercial Historic District is shown as a hatch line on the accompanying map entitled "Little Falls Commercial Historic District."

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries of the Little Falls Commercial Historic District were decided after an intensive survey and evaluation of the Little Falls central business district. The district encompasses buildings in portions of five blocks along the two main downtown thoroughfares, Broadway and First Street, known as "Bank Square". Buildings and areas excluded from the district include the north side of Broadway west of First Street which has been substantially altered by fires and new infill buildings, the east side of First Street N. E. north of Bank Square, which has similarly suffered from alterations to older buildings, and E. Broadway east of "Bank Square," which has a concentration of noncontributing buildings too altered to fall within the period of significance.

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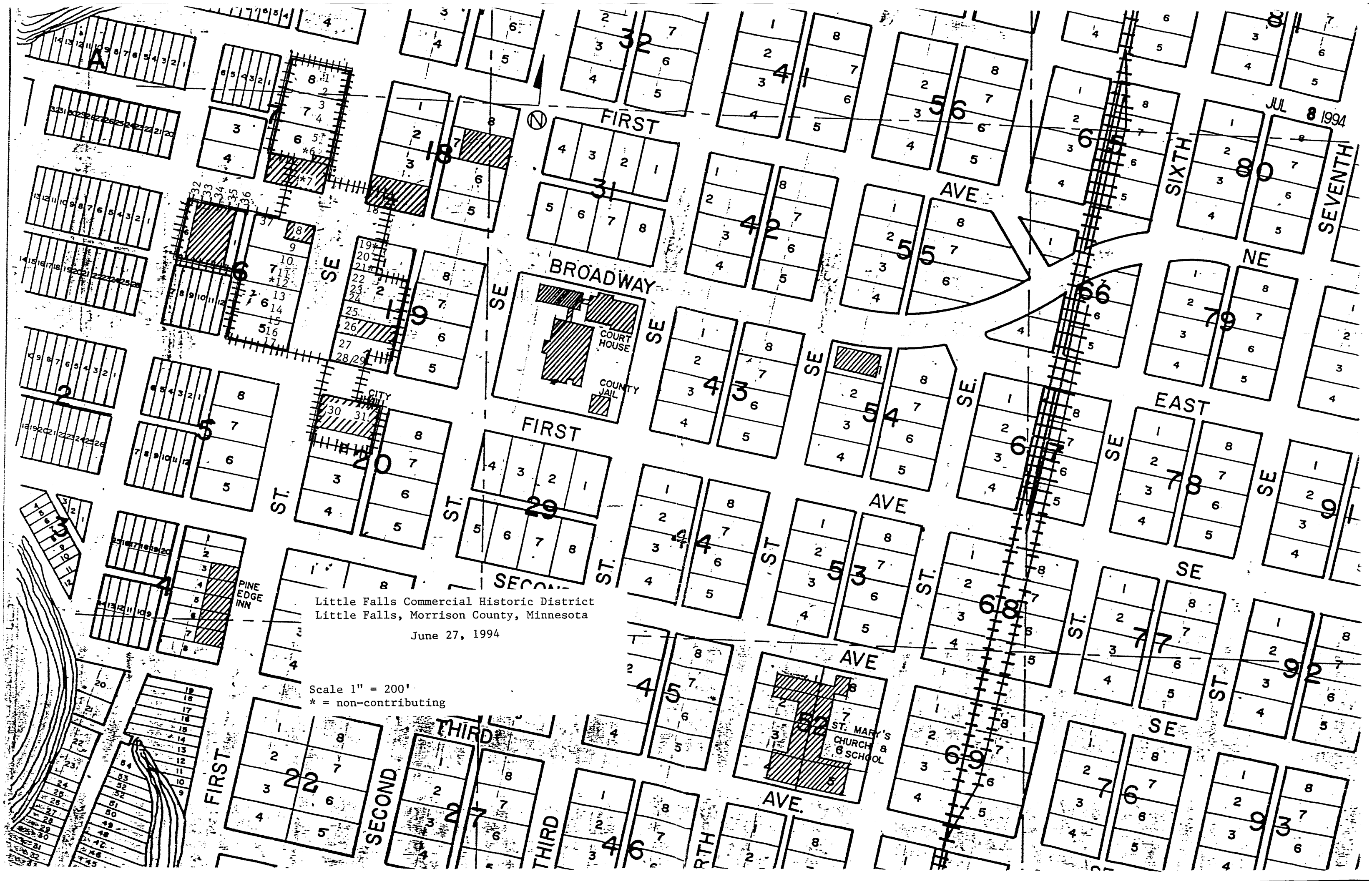
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Little Falls Commercial Historic District
 Little Falls, Morrison County, Minnesota

June 27, 1994

Scale 1" = 200'
 * = non-contributing

JUL 8 1994

