

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received JUL 18 1985

date entered AUG 15 1985

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Sabin S. Murdock House

and/or common N/A

**2. Location**

street & number Clara Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town Murdock N/A vicinity of

state Minnesota code 22 county Swift code 151

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Marquette National Bank and Doris Boothe  
Trustee for Victor Swenson

street & number 777 Marquette Ave. 309 12 St. S.  
Minneapolis, MN Benson, MN 56215

city, town N/A N/A vicinity of state N/A

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Swift County Courthouse

street & number 14th Street and Idaho Avenue

city, town Benson state Minnesota

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Minnesota Statewide Historic Sites Survey  
has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1983-84  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office, Fort Snelling History Center

city, town St. Paul state Minnesota



## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1878 **Builder/Architect** Probably Sabin S. Murdock

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Sabin S. and Mary A. Murdock House, built in 1878 on Clara Avenue, is historically and architecturally significant as the home of Sabin S. Murdock, the proprietor of Murdock, Minnesota, and represents the efforts of a single individual to conceive, found, and promote a rural Minnesota community. The Murdock House is important as the oldest building standing in Murdock and as the largest and most architecturally significant Victorian house in the town.

Sabin S. Murdock, a man of Scottish and English descent who was the son of a physician, was born in New England in July of 1830. He married Mary Ann Peck in New York state in 1852. The couple had six children born between 1853 and 1876. Little is known about Murdock's early career, but in 1871 he and a partner, E. M. Deane, both "well known and enterprising businessmen", established the St. Paul Harvester Works just east of the St. Paul city limits.<sup>1</sup> The St. Paul Harvester Works, a farm machinery manufacturing company, was operated by the partnership for two years and then assumed by a joint stock company with Deane as president, Murdock as vice president, and H. L. Pilkinson as secretary-treasurer. The company grew to become a leading St. Paul industry, and by 1881 the firm employed 300 men at facilities which were located on a 100 acre site. In 1892 the factory became the Walter A. Wood Harvester Works. It is not known how long Murdock remained with the company, but he probably had left St. Paul by circa 1877.

In 1876 Murdock purchased about 3,000 acres of land from the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad in Dublin Township, Swift County, apparently as a speculative venture. Convinced that the area could support another commercial and trade center along the St. Paul and Pacific line between DeGraff and Kerkhoven (about eight miles apart), Murdock and a partner, Joseph Schaaf of Carver, platted the town site of Murdock on their land in July of 1878. Although Schaaf is named as co-proprietor of the town on the official plat, he apparently did not live in Murdock and probably remained simply an investor.

The townsite platted by Murdock and Schaaf consisted of twelve city blocks. Murdock's house, built in 1878, was the first building erected in the new town which was described in an August, 1879, edition of a local newspaper as containing ". . . an unfinished elevator and two yawning cellars in the center of a prairie, the only house then finished being that of S. S. Murdock, situated to the left of the railroad track and in rather a desolate looking field."<sup>2</sup> Murdock's house was followed by a round elevator built by Murdock in 1878-79. The St. Paul and Pacific apparently opposed the platting of Murdock and refused initially to build a depot there. The company agreed to lay a railroad siding only on the condition that S. S. Murdock pay the the agent's salary. A depot, presumably financed by S. S. Murdock, was built in 1879 and in 1880 the St. Paul and Pacific began to control operation of the depot and lengthened the side tracks.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

<sup>1</sup>Leading Industries of St. Paul, Minnesota (New York: Reed and Co., 1881).

<sup>2</sup>Benson Times, August 15, 1879.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Benson Times, August 15, 1879, February 4, 1880, and May 8, 1900.  
Murdock, 1878-1968, 90th Anniversary Book. Murdock Commercial Club, 1968.  
Leading Industries of St. Paul, Minnesota. New York: Reed and Co., 1881.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

## 10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property Less than one

Quadrangle name Murdock Quad.

Quadrangle scale 7.5

### UTM References

A 

1	5	3	1	2	3	8	0	5	0	1	0	4	4	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

### Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susan Granger, Field Assistant

organization State Historic Preservation Office  
Minnesota Historical Society

date March 1984

street & number Fort Snelling History Center

telephone (612) 726-1171

city or town St. Paul

state Minnesota 55111

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Russell W. Fridley

title Russell W. Fridley  
State Historic Preservation Officer

date 6/27/85

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

date 8-15-85

for Melora Byer  
Keeper of the National Register

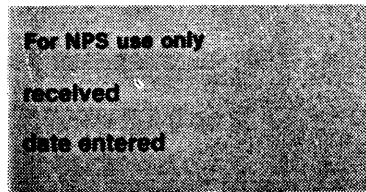
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
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Continuation sheet S. S. and M. Murdock House Item number 8, 9

Page 1

Item #8 (Significance) continued:

By the late summer of 1879 Murdock boasted a depot, an elevator, several stores, a wagon shop, a school, and three hotels. By February of 1880 the village included 440 acres of platted land including 240 from Murdock, 120 from Schaaf, and 80 acres in the form of two additions owned by other parties. Sabin S. Murdock was extremely influential in the early affairs of the community. In addition to initially owning most of the town-site, he owned and operated his own farm, the elevator, and a large stable. Murdock officiated at the town's gala Independence Day celebration in 1880, and the community recognized Murdock's fiftieth birthday with a town celebration on July 12, 1880. Murdock's children were also active in political and social affairs and Murdock's son William served as fourth mayor of the village in 1887-88.

Sabin S. and his wife Mary probably moved into their newly completed house in 1878. The house may have been designed by Murdock, and, although simple in form, contained elements of high Victorian style popular at the time. The house was located on a farmstead at the east edge of the platted town with a barn, chicken house, corn crib, granery, and shed. Most of these buildings are still standing. The 1880 Federal Census reports that Murdock and his wife lived in the house in that year with four of their sons and one daughter and her husband, a clergyman. In addition, four male farm laborers and four young women listed as "servants" lived with the Murdocks. In 1885 the couple lived with three of their sons and four male and two female employees. It is not clear how long the Murdocks remained in the community. Sabin S. Murdock was appointed State Railroad Commissioner by Minnesota governor Lucius F. Hubbard in April of 1885, a position he held until January of 1887. S. S. and Mary Murdock apparently moved back to St. Paul sometime between 1885 and 1891, and in 1893 Murdock moved to Phoenix, Arizona, where he died in May of 1900 at the age of 70.

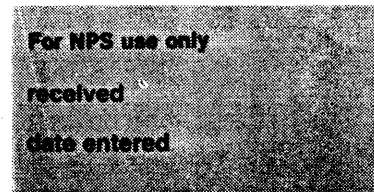
The Sabin S. and Mary A. Murdock House was included in a fifteen month historic sites survey of seven west central Minnesota counties conducted in 1983-84 by the State Historic Preservation Office. The survey staff determined that the Murdock House is the largest and most architecturally significant Victorian house standing in Murdock, and that the house is west central Minnesota's best known example of an individual town proprietor's home which continues to stand as one of the largest, oldest, and most visually outstanding residences in the community.

Item #9 (Bibliographical References) continued:

State of Minnesota 1885 Census, population schedules.  
U. S. Government 1880 Census, population schedules.

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Continuation sheet S.S. and M. Murdock House      Item number      10

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Item #10 (Geographical Data) continued:

Verbal boundary description and justification:

That part of Block 1 of Bresnahan's Addition to the Village of Murdock described as follows: beginning at a point on the NEly boundary line of said Block 1, 120 feet Southeast from the extreme Northerly corner of said Block, thence running in a SWly direction and in parallel with the NWly boundary line of said Block 1 a distance of 300 feet to the SWly boundary line of said Block 1, thence in a SEly direction and following the SWly boundary line of said Block 1 a distance of 200 feet to a point, thence in a NEly direction and in parallel with the SEly boundary line of Block 1, 300 feet to the NEly boundary line of Block 1 thence in a NWly direction and following the NEly boundary line of Block 1, 200 feet to the place of beginning.

Also including that part of Lot 4 of Block 1 of Bresnahan's Addition to the Village of Murdock described as follows: beginning at the Northwest corner of Lot 2 of said Block 1 thence SEly along the Northern boundary of said Lot 2 a distance of 60 feet thence at right angles NEly a distance of 100 feet to a point on the NEly boundary line of said Lot 4 then at right angles NWly along the NEly boundary line of said Lot 4 a distance of 60 feet thence at right angles SWly a distance of 150 feet to the point of beginning.

Sabin S. and Mary A. Murelock House  
Clara Avenue, Murdock, Minnesota

