

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received DEC 10 1986

date entered JAN

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

1. Name

historic Nelson and Albin Cooperative Mercantile Association Store

and or common Godahl Store

2. Location

street & number County Highway 6 N/A not for publication

city, town Nelson Township X vicinity of La Salle

state Minnesota code 22 county Watonwan code 165

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Nelson and Albin Cooperative Mercantile Association

street & number Route 3

city, town St. James N/A vicinity of state Minnesota 56081

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Watonwan County Courthouse

street & number 7th St. S. and 2nd Ave. S.

city, town St. James state Minnesota 56081

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date 1985-86 federal state county local

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

city, town St. Paul state Minnesota 55111

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	N/A
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Nelson and Albin Cooperative Mercantile Association Store, also known as the Nelson and Albin Store and the Godahl Store, is located in the unincorporated village of Godahl at the northern edge of Watonwan County. The building is situated on County Road 6 at the southwest corner of Godahl's only intersection and is surrounded by the village's approximately eight houses and vacant creamery. Behind the Store is the Cooperative's woodframe Warehouse. The nomination includes both of these contributing buildings.

The Nelson and Albin Store, built in 1894, is a two story, gable roofed, woodframe building sheathed in clapboard siding. The main (east) facade has a storefront with a recessed central entrance and large display windows situated beneath leaded glass storefront transoms. The main facade has two second story rectangular 2/2 windows and a false front with a cornice with brackets, topped by a simple pediment with a flagpole. To the north and rear of the main storefront is an 1896 L-shaped addition which has a storefront cornice, display window (now filled with clapboard), and leaded glass transom on the main (east) facade. The side and rear walls of the Godahl Store have rectangular 2/2 windows and single leaf doors and the building has a wood shingled roof. In addition to the 1896 enlargement of the store, records indicate that the building received some exterior remodeling in 1916. The store is in good condition with no major post-1916 alterations.

The Warehouse located west of the main store is one story woodframe 16' x 24' building built in 1895. The warehouse has a shed roof, clapboard siding, small windows, and both single leaf and large sliding doors. It is in fair condition.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1894-1895 Builder/Architect Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Nelson and Albin Cooperative Mercantile Association Store, built in 1894, is historically significant as the oldest continuously operating cooperative general store in Minnesota, as an important historical link to the development of rural commerce and farmers' cooperatives in the state.

Norwegian and Swedish immigrants began settling northern Watonwan County's Nelson Township and southern Brown County's Albin Township in the 1870's. Before the mid-1890's farmers in the area were isolated from established townsites, and the goods and services they provided, by at least a day's journey with team and wagon. Residents of both townships solved the problem themselves by banding together and cooperatively establishing a local general store. In April of 1894 a mass meeting was held at which the Nelson and Albin Cooperative Mercantile Association was formed, with approximately ten directors and incorporators, articles and by-laws written in Norwegian, and plans to sell capital shares at \$20.00 each. That summer, small contracts let to ten local men resulted in the construction of the Godahl Store building at the intersection of two dirt roads, across the road from a small creamery which the farmers had cooperatively established three years earlier.

The Godahl Store was completed in August of 1894 and stocked with a complete line of bulk groceries, clothing, dry goods, implements, and hardware hauled by team from the towns of St. James and LaSalle. Goods were sold in exchange for butter, eggs, chickens, hides, credit, or cash. In 1895 the Association built a woodframe warehouse behind the building in which to store nails, fencing, and heavy hardware. In 1896 the store was enlarged with an addition to the north and west.

Like many early rural stores, the Godahl Store was a primary link between local farmers and the rest of the state. It housed the local post office, acquired one of the area's first telephones in 1905, and later housed a lending library. The store and nearby creamery became a central meeting place for widely dispersed farm families who gathered there for meetings, social functions, and sporting events. The store and creamery also served as the nucleus for the tiny village of Godahl which developed around the two structures and eventually boasted a population of least 43 people.

The Godahl Store has continued to operate through the years, despite the fact that automobiles, paved highways, and supermarkets have largely decreased the need for the services of a local general store. In 1956, when the Godahl creamery closed, the Mercantile Association preserved the local sale of feed, seed, and fertilizer by acquiring the creamery building and taking over the sale of these supplies.

(See Continuation Sheet)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Godahl Community and Nelson and Albin Mercantile Association: Fourscore Years Since
1894. 1974.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property one-half acre

Quadrangle name Godahl Quad

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	5	3	6	8	7	9	0	4	8	5	0	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

Beginning at the Northeast corner of the Northeast Quarter, Section 2, Township 107N, Range 32W, thence running West 9 rods, thence South 9 rods, thence East 9 rods, thence running North 9 rods to the place of beginning.

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/Contract Historian

State Historic Preservation Office

organization Minnesota Historical Society

date February 1986

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 State Historic Preservation Officer

date 12/3/86

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

J. Alores Byers
Keeper of the National Register

date 1-7-87

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

**National Register of Historic Places
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Nelson and Albin Cooperative Association Store, Nelson Township
Watonwan County, Minnesota

Continuation sheet

Resource Count

Item number 7

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The Nelson and Albin Cooperative Association Store Nomination contains
two contributing buildings:

- Store
- Warehouse

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Continuation sheet Nelson and Albin Coop.
Mercantile Assoc. Store

Item number 8

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The Godahl Store is an important link in the history of the cooperative movement in the state. Established in 1894, the store is the oldest continuously operating cooperative general store in Minnesota. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, there are only two other cooperative general stores in the country which have earlier starting dates and which are still operating.*

The Godahl Store was included in a recent historic sites survey of Watonwan County conducted by the State Historic Preservation Office. The survey staff determined that the store is rare as an intact example of rural commercial architecture in the region. The Godahl Store fits within the State Historic Preservation Office's Agricultural Development and Railroad Construction Historic Context. Built during the era in which newly constructed railroads were vital to the economy of Watonwan County, the Godahl Store is significant to a full understanding of the context as an example of a commercial enterprise which was not directly associated with the railroad and stands in contrast with railroad-related commerce more obviously associated with the context.

*Letters to Melvin C. Nundahl, Store Manager, from Beryle E. Stanton, Director, Information Division, Farmer Cooperative Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Jan. 28, 1959, and Jane H. Click, Acting Head, History and Statistics Group, Farmer Cooperative Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Sept. 19, 1973, as reprinted in Godahl Community and Nelson and Albin Mercantile Association, 1974.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

Note: These changes apply to
Nelson and Albin Cooperative
Mercantile Association Store in
Watonwan County, Minnesota.

REFERENCE NUMBER: 86003599

STATE: MINNESOTA

COUNTY: Watonwan

RESOURCE NAME (HISTORIC):

CITY:

VICINITY OF:

ADDRESS: Co. Hwy. 6

CERTIFICATION DATE:

REMOVED DATE:

COMMENTS:

Nina M. Archabal
Nina M. Archabal
State Historic Preservation Officer

JUN 17 1988
Date