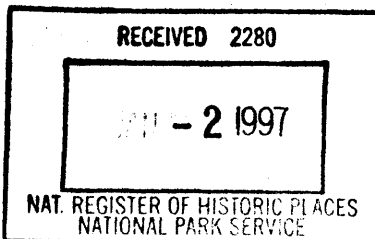


19

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 Owatonna City and Firemen's Hall

other names/site number Owatonna Fire Hall

2. Location

street & number 107 West Main Street not for publication N/A

city or town Owatonna vicinity N/A

state Minnesota code MN county Steele code 147 zip code 55060

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.)

Ian R. Stewart 12/12/96
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Minnesota Historical Society
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting 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): _____

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

1-31-97

Owatonna City and Firemen's Hall

Steele County, Minnesota

Name of Property

0370039

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	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)

Government: fire station, city hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Government: fire station

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian: Romanesque Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Limestone

walls Brick

Limestone

roof Composition

other

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is: N/A

- 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)

Architecture

Politics and Government

Period of Significance

1906-1946

Significant Dates

1907

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Keefe, William F. (architect)

Hammel Brothers and Anderson (builder)

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:

Steele County Historical Society

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 5	4 8 1 8 9 0	4 8 8 0 9 7 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

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 Susan Granger and Kay Grossman

organization Gemini Research date September 30, 1996

street & number 15 E. 9th Street telephone (320) 589-3846

city or town Morris state MN zip code 56267

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of 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.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1Owatonna City and Firemen's Hall
Owatonna, Steele County, Minnesota

7. DESCRIPTION

The Owatonna City and Firemen's Hall is located at 107 W. Main Street near the southern edge of downtown Owatonna. The building has a prominent site on the southern side of Main Street at its intersection with Park Square. It is one of a collection of public buildings, banks, and churches built around Owatonna's one-block-square Central Park. The building was originally flanked by a vacant lot to the west and the three story brick Metropolitan Opera House (built 1897, razed circa 1938) to the east.

The City and Firemen's Hall, built in 1906-07, is a three story Romanesque Revival style brick building. It has rectangular massing and an approximately 42-foot-wide main facade. The hall is about 132 feet deep and extends southward to the 16-foot alley which bisects the block. The main facade is faced with stretcher-bonded tan pressed brick with smooth pinkish-tan limestone trim. The main facade has square brick corner towers that project above the third story roofline. The larger tower, at the northwestern corner of the building, has a belfry with rounded-arched openings. There is a series of three rounded-arched window openings below the belfry. The smaller tower at the northeastern corner has semi-circular window openings at the upper level. Both towers have asphalt shingle-covered pyramidal roofs with metal finials. (The western turret has a ball finial and the eastern finial has a pointed finial.) Across the top of the building between the towers is a parapet wall on which lettering reading "19-Firemens Hall-06" is affixed. There are simple metal cornices at the top of each of the two towers and at the top of the parapet wall, and a simple limestone cornice at the top of the third story.

A series of large window and door openings dominates each story of the main facade. The openings are rounded-arched on the third story and rectangular on the first and second stories. The openings are divided by brick pilasters with limestone capitals and bases. The pilasters rest on a limestone beltcourse which forms a continuous sill for the window openings. The third story rounded arches are lined with molded brick with egg and dart detailing. The window openings originally contained double-hung one over one sash (with single-paned transoms at the third story). The window openings have recently been fitted with new multipaned fixed sash.

The two largest openings at the first story level were originally the vehicle entrances for the fire hall. They were originally fitted with hinged multipaned doors that were recessed slightly behind the facade. These openings have been converted to windows and fitted with new multipaned fixed sash and glass block. A small neon sign that reads "Fire Station" was installed circa 1940 at the center of the main facade at the top of the first story. The building's main pedestrian entrance is located at the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 2 Owatonna City and Firemen's Hall
Owatonna, Steele County, Minnesota

northeastern corner of the main facade. The entrance is marked by a large rounded arch built of radiating limestone. This entrance has been reduced in size with brickwork. There is a limestone panel with raised lettering reading "City Hall" above the entrance. A very small, one story, flat-roofed, concrete block and brick furnace room addition has been added to the western side of the building, just west of the main entrance.

The side and rear walls of the City and Firemen's Hall are constructed of six-course American-bonded cream-colored common brick. The walls have segmental-arched window openings with rockfaced limestone sills. Some of the windows are filled with one over one sash and some have been filled with either wood or glass block. The eastern facade has a segmental-arched pedestrian entrance near the southern end with a stucco-covered transom and a new steel single-leaf door. A fire escape stairway has been added to the third story of the eastern facade. The southern facade has two garage door openings with new garage doors and a pedestrian door with a new steel single-leaf door.

The first story of the building originally housed the fire engine room and horse stalls. The second story housed the firemen's living quarters, municipal courtroom, city council chambers, and three offices. The third floor housed an assembly hall known as the "Firemen's Hall" and a reception room.

The first and second stories of the interior have been remodeled recently and the third story is currently under renovation. The northern part of the first floor, including the engine room, has been remodeled into fire department offices. The rear of the first floor is a garage. The second floor still houses the firemen's living quarters and meeting room. Original interior features include a wide oak stairway (inside the main entrance) which leads to the second floor and a similar stairway with turned balusters that leads from the second floor to the third floor. Oak for the interior woodwork was cut from local trees (Curtiss-Wedge 1910:905). The basement of the building is used for storage.

The third floor of the building, currently under renovation, contains a large auditorium that is entered through a double-leaf paneled door. The hall comprises the southern two-thirds of the third story and is a large rectangular room lighted by a series of window openings (now filled) along the western and eastern walls. There are plaster-covered pilasters with simple capitals with dentils dividing these sidewall bays. The hall has a hardwood gymnasium-type floor and a balcony with a solid oak balustrade across the northern end. The northern part of the third story has a small ticket office and coat room north of the hall and a large reception room spanning the northern side of the building. The third floor rooms retain plaster ceiling decoration with egg and dart detailing and floral motifs,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3 Owatonna City and Firemen's Hall
Owatonna, Steele County, Minnesota

original doors, and Classically-inspired window and door frames of medium-stained oak. The frames have an entablature at the top with dentils. There is a similar original window frame on the second floor at the top of the entrance stairs.

The fire hall has a large engine house addition on the eastern side that was built in 1996 to replace an eastern garage addition that was built in 1938. The new addition is faced with peach-colored brick with smooth yellow limestone trim and has simple decorative brickwork near the cornice level. It has four garage doors. There is a concrete-paved driveway area in front of the new addition and a new metal flag pole at the northeastern corner of the property.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 1 Owatonna City and Firemen's Hall
Owatonna, Steele County, Minnesota

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Owatonna City and Firemen's Hall is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C (distinct characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction) in the area of Architecture, and under Criterion A (significance to the broad patterns of history) in the area of Politics and Government. Architecturally, the building is significant as an excellent representative example of the type of municipal buildings that were constructed throughout Minnesota near the turn of the century. The City and Firemen's Hall is significant as the building which served as the center for city government in Owatonna and as an important public facility. The property is significant within the statewide historic context entitled "Railroads and Agricultural Development 1870-1940."

Built in 1906-07, the Owatonna City and Firemen's Hall is typical of the type and design of municipal buildings that were constructed in Minnesota communities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These buildings were typically designed to house a city's fire department, police department, city council chambers, meeting rooms, and various city offices within a single structure. Such buildings were often located mid-block among commercial buildings within the business district of a city. There were sometimes separate entrances (often arched) for each municipal department along the street facade, and generally there was a bell tower located at one of the corners of the main facade. Many of these structures were designed in the Romanesque Revival and Richardsonian Romanesque styles, or in the Beaux Arts and Classical Revival styles that were inspired by the City Beautiful movement of the early 20th century (Gebhard and Martinson 1977:302).

Municipal buildings such as Owatonna's were often stylistically conventional but designed to be monumental symbols of civic pride. The Romanesque Revival style had been used in Minnesota since the 1880s for courthouses, city halls, college buildings, and other structures of significance, but the style's popularity was waning by 1906-1907 when the City and Firemen's Hall was built. A conservative city council may have been responsible for choosing the design, and it is possible that the building was designed to reflect the Romanesque Revival of the Steele County Courthouse which had been built in the next block to the east in 1893 (listed on the NRHP 6-3-76). The architect's use of light, tan-colored brick and limestone for the exterior of the firehall was fairly modern, however, and reflected movement away from the dark red and brown brick and stone used in the Victorian era. The fire hall's bold rounded arches, limestone trim, dominant corner towers, and prominent location were designed to add another notable public building to Owatonna's collection. The construction of such public buildings was often promoted by a community's business leaders who believed that civic improvements and public buildings attracted businesses and instilled

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 2Owatonna City and Firemen's Hall
Owatonna, Steele County, Minnesota

confidence in investment (Zurier 1982:127).

The design of buildings like the Owatonna City and Firemen's Hall reflected their function. The fire department required a first floor engine house to store the horse-drawn steam-powered fire engines and other equipment. Horses, which had often been housed in separate stables in fire houses built earlier in the century, were bedded within the fire hall near the engines to eliminate the time it took to lead them from a stable. (In some fire stations horses were even placed in stalls facing the engines so that they did not have to be backed out and turned around when the alarm bell rang (Zurier 1982:98-99).) Harnesses for the horses were often housed in a first floor tack room.

The living quarters for firefighters were sited on the second floor of fire houses to separate the men from the horses. The link between the living quarters and the engine room was the famous firemen's pole, which was invented in 1878, and which was a feature of the Owatonna building. The city government required several offices, meeting rooms, and a highly visible public entrance, located at the building's northwest corner. Finally, the Owatonna building included an auditorium on the third floor that was used for both public functions and as a gymnasium for the firemen's physical training.

The City of Owatonna, current population about 20,000, was founded on the banks of the Straight River in southeastern Minnesota in 1854. The community flourished as an agricultural trade center when railroad service arrived after the Civil War. Several local manufacturers and large insurance companies were also established at the turn of the century and became major employers. During the era that the City and Firemen's Hall was built Owatonna had become a dairying center, adopting the nickname "Butter Capital of the World".

Like many Minnesota fire departments, the Owatonna Fire Department began as a volunteer organization that was organized to respond to a serious threat. Wesley writes,

Fires were of frequent occurrence in Owatonna, and the total aggregate loss was a crushing burden for the little city. Sooner or later fire visited almost every kind of establishment. At one time or another it was a dwelling house, a grocery, a barn, a brewery, a hotel, a photograph shop, a foundry, a mill, a school, a cream station, a cooper shop, or an old log house that was burned (Wesley 1938:62-63).

The first fire fighting unit was a hook and ladder company organized in 1868. The company did not have its own structure, however, so "its equipment was scattered from house to house and the organization passed out of existence" (Wesley 1938:62-63). A new volunteer fire department was organized in 1875

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 3 Owatonna City and Firemen's Hall
Owatonna, Steele County, Minnesota

and named the "Spring City Fire Department," apparently deriving its name from the natural mineral springs in Owatonna which were then being promoted by local businessmen and the City for their healing qualities.

The Spring City Fire Department was a social as well as a civic organization and members derived benefits similar to those found in fraternal groups. The department required a one dollar membership fee from each of its volunteers and the firemen were not paid for their service. M. R. Strong was elected the first fire chief and I. W. Burch was elected secretary. Charles H. Randall was elected as the second fire chief, serving from 1877-1879. The company used two 80-gallon chemical wagons which had been purchased by the City from the Champion Fire Extinguisher Company of Louisville, Kentucky. The fire department used these wagons until 1890.

The city council disbanded the all-volunteer department in 1884 and replaced it with a paid organization over which the City would presumably have more control. This action officially ended the era of the volunteer fire "club" in Owatonna, but the fire department continued to be a strong organization. The new Owatonna Fire Department was first led by S. S. Green. Each fireman was to be paid 25 cents for each meeting he attended and one dollar for each fire call answered. Apparently worried that these wages would attract too many men, the city council authorized pay for no more than 40 members. Uniforms were provided and a new hose cart was added to the fleet. The hose cart had 600 feet of hose that was attached to one of Owatonna's four pumps. The pumps were located a few blocks apart at the corner of Bridge and Oak streets, the corner of Rose and Cedar, in the city park, and on Vine Street just west of Cedar (Steele County Historical Society 1983 and Owatonna Evening Journal, Sept. 11, 1906).

The previous city fire hall was a two-story engine house located at 125 West Main Street, about 120 feet west of the current fire hall. By 1889 this building had been expanded to the east with an addition to house the hook and ladder truck. This building also served as the city hall. At the turn of the century the fire department owned two hose carts, 1758 feet of two and one-half inch hose, and one hook and ladder truck. (After the new City and Firemen's Hall was constructed in 1906-1907, the former fire hall became a warehouse and, by 1915, was razed.)

The fire department apparently took an aggressive role in securing their new headquarters. Curtiss-Wedge writes,

In the spring of 1905, the Owatonna fire department began agitating, with characteristic vigor and energy, the question of a suitable city and firemen's hall to take the place of the antiquated structure then in use. The firemen early showed a willingness to do more than their part, offering a contribution amounting to \$4,500, provided the City agreed to

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 4 Owatonna City and Firemen's Hall
Owatonna, Steele County, Minnesota

erect a building to cost not less than \$16,000 (Curtiss-Wedge 1910:903).

The firemen's \$4,500 donation included a building site which the fire department had purchased for \$3,500 and \$1,000 in cash. In its proposal to the City, the department also agreed to loan the City money for two years to purchase fire equipment. The firemen would be given a perpetual lease to the third floor of the building. The fire department then circulated a petition asking residents to support a \$15,000 bond issue. A special election was held on September 19, 1905, and the issue passed. However, a month later, "the legality of the bonds was challenged in the courts by a tax-payer, and they were declared illegal on account of the loose manner in which action was taken in ordering the special election" (Curtiss-Wedge 1910:903-904). Another petition was circulated, a new election was held in March, and the bond issue again passed.

By May of 1906 the Owatonna City Council had hired architect William F. Keefe, sold the municipal bonds to a Minneapolis investment company, and advertised for construction bids. The council awarded the bid in July to the low bidder, Hammel Brothers and Anderson.

Architect William F. Keefe is not well known in the state. He may have been in practice in St. Paul during the late 19th century where he designed a house built in the 1890s at 650 Summit Avenue. He maintained an office in Austin circa 1904-1911 and then apparently moved back to St. Paul. He is known to have designed the Benjamin Hanson House in 1919 at 2163 West Marshall Avenue, a duplex in 1922 at 863-865 West Linwood Avenue, and, also in 1922, his own house and office at 1205 Summit Avenue, all in St. Paul.

Hammel Brothers and Anderson, which bid \$19,643 for the construction of the hall, was one of Owatonna's most prominent contractors. The firm was also well-connected. Louis F. Hammel had served eight years as a city alderman and six months as acting mayor in the years before the fire hall was constructed, and one of his partners, Cyrus K. Anderson, had also served six years as an alderman. Hammel was elected mayor in 1909, two years after the building was completed. Brothers Louis F. and John L. Hammel had worked in their father's contracting firm in Owatonna until 1889 when their father died and they formed Hammel Brothers. Cyrus K. Anderson, a bricklayer who was also the son of an Owatonna contractor, joined the firm to form Hammel Brothers and Anderson. Among their many projects in the city was the construction of the Owatonna Public Library (1899, listed on the NRHP 6-7-76).

The elaborate festivities that celebrated the laying of the cornerstone and the opening of the building attest to the City's hope that the city and fire hall would be a new local landmark.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5 Owatonna City and Firemen's Hall
Owatonna, Steele County, Minnesota

A cornerstone-laying ceremony was held September 8, 1906, at which Fire Chief E. M. Twiford presented the City with the deed to the property and \$1,000 in cash. The local Masonic order hosted the ceremonies. The local newspaper reported,

The laying of the cornerstone of the new city and fire hall last Saturday afternoon proved a most impressive ceremony. In spite of the heat and the fact that the crowd was unprotected from the rays of the sun, the ceremony was witnessed by a large number of people who posted themselves about the building, perching on lumber piles and wherever they could find a good view. The exercises opened with an impressive procession from Masonic Hall to the new building, the Owatonna Fire department in uniform escorting the members of the Minnesota Grand Lodge of Masons and the local Star in the East lodge, led by the Owatonna Military Band (Owatonna Evening Journal, Sept. 11, 1906).

The Firemen's Relief Association, which had been organized in 1895 to provide benefits for sick and disabled firemen, sponsored a dance following the ceremony at which funds were raised for the building's completion.

One year later, in October of 1907, an opening ceremony, military band concert, grand ball, and banquet attended by 600-700 people marked the grand opening. Curtiss-Wedge wrote three years later:

The opening of this magnificent City and Firemen's Hall, October 5, 1907, will be long treasured in the minds of the citizens of this city. Every business, profession and trade, every degree of affluence, every class of society, was represented, and all mingled happily together in the festivities of the occasion, which formally introduced Owatonna's new civic home and the headquarters of one of its leading official organizations to the public (Curtiss-Wedge 1910:904).

The firemen became the new building's most visible occupants. When costs to complete the new building rose above the budget, the firemen continued to raise funds, eventually contributing more than \$6,000. By 1910, there were 25 members on the fire department. Their equipment consisted of a combination hose and chemical wagon, two hose carts, a hook and ladder truck, and approximately 2,800 feet of hose (Steele County Historical Society 1983). Four years after the completion of the building, the state firemen's convention was held on the third floor in June of 1911. Annual firemen's dances were also held, as were banquets and other large-scale public events.

The Owatonna City and Firemen's Hall continued to serve as the headquarters of city government until 1976 when the city offices were moved from the building. Today, the fire department is still in residence and public support for the building continues. The City sponsored a reuse study in 1994

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6 Owatonna City and Firemen's Hall
Owatonna, Steele County, Minnesota

which recognized the significance of the building and explored possibilities for its rehabilitation. The building was renovated and its fire department facilities upgraded in 1996 in a major construction project that is nearing completion.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1 Owatonna City and Firemen's Hall
Owatonna, Steele County, Minnesota

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10

Page 1

Owatonna City and Firemen's Hall
Owatonna, Steele County, Minnesota

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

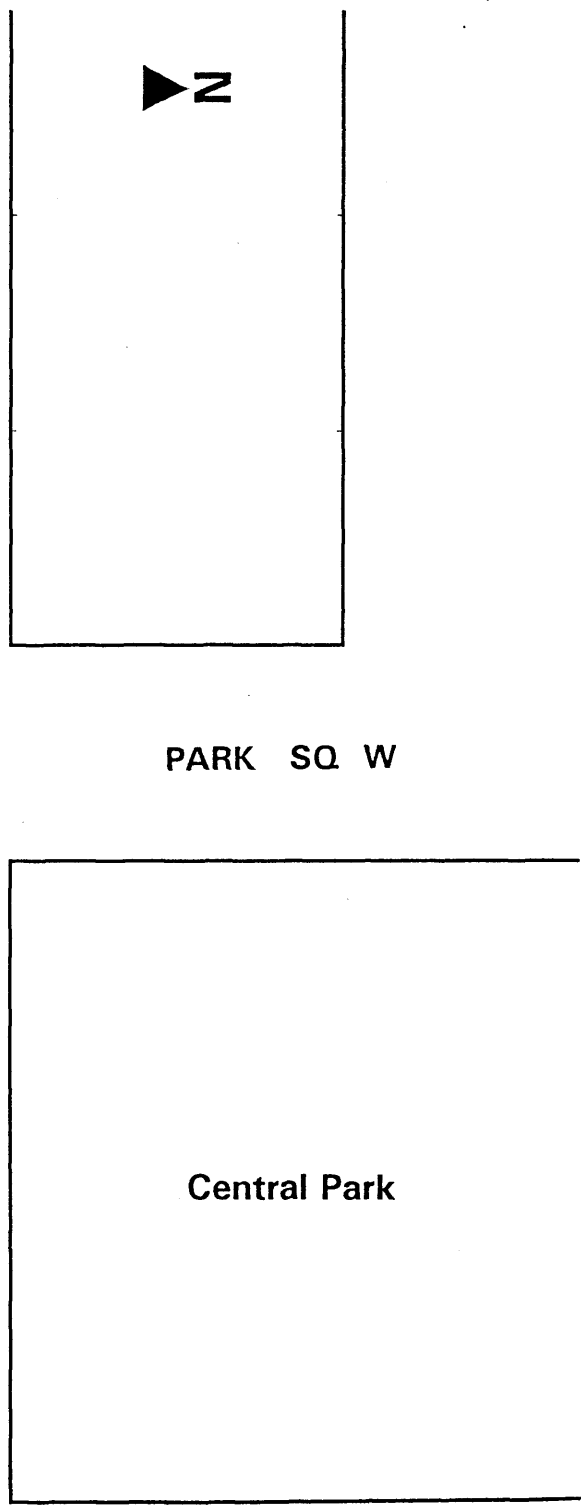
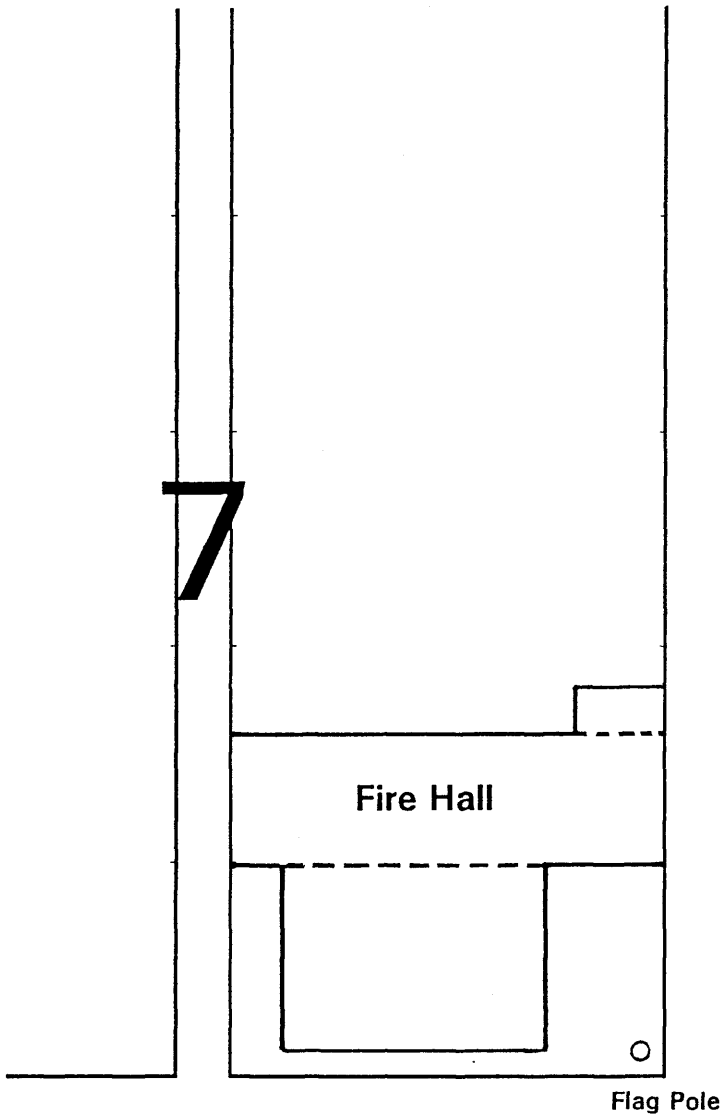
Verbal Boundary Description:

Lot 1 and East 55 feet of Lot 2, Block 7, Original Town of Owatonna.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary of the nominated property includes the parcel of land currently occupied by the Owatonna City and Firemen's Hall.

Owatonna City and Firemen's Hall
Owatonna, Steele Co., Minnesota



CEDAR AVE S

MAIN ST W

PARK SQ W

Central Park

PARK SQ E

Flag Pole

Courthouse

SCALE 1" = 59'