

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received JUN 26 1986  
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Municipal Lighting and Waterworks Plant

and/or common "A" Street Power and Water Station/"A" Street Pumping Station

2. Location

street & number 2901 "A" Street n/a not for publication

city, town Lincoln n/avicinity of

state NE code 031 county Lancaster code 109

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant

4. Owner of Property

name City of Lincoln

street & number 555 So. 10th Street

city, town Lincoln n/avicinity of state NE

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds

street & number 555 So. 10th Street

city, town Lincoln state NE

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Nebr. Historic Buildings Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date on-going  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Nebraska State Historical Society

city, town Lincoln state NE

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>n/a</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The "A" Street Power and Water Station in Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska, is a flat-roofed, Neo-classical Revival style structure of red brick with limestone and buff-brick trim. Large, metal-frame windows dominate the primary (north and east) and rear (south) facades; the west side is windowless. From the exterior, the north portion of the building appears to be divided into two stories while the south part has an additional, unadorned attic story above the entablature. The interior consists principally of a large, single volume in the north part and a taller single space to the south. The exterior has a high degree of integrity. The most of the operating machinery has been removed from the industrial-type interior.

The "A" Street Power and Water Station stands on the south side of "A" Street in Lincoln, Nebraska, facing north and east to portions of Antelope Park. There is an abandoned railroad right-of-way adjacent to the site on the west.

The principal (north and east) facades are treated similarly, with a high, limestone watertable, red pressed brick walls, large, round-headed windows, buff-brick pilaster caps and architrave, limestone cornice, and stepped parapet. The north, entrance facade measures approximately 185 feet long and consists of ten bays, with the three bays at either end grouped into a slightly projecting entrance pavilion with a higher parapet and a central doorway. The lower level windows across the north and east facades are rectangular, while those on the second level have semicircular arched tops, except for the side windows on the entrance pavilions, which are rectangular on both the first and second levels. Wide brick piers mark the corners of the building. Between the window bays are pilasters, which like the piers have banded rustication on the lower portions. The pilasters have buff brick caps, which are topped by an architrave of the same material. The frieze of the full entablature is red brick and unornamented, except for limestone lozenges above each pilaster. The cornice is limestone and the parapet is red pressed brick.

The east facade, measuring approximately 116 feet long, follows the Neo-classical Revival style treatment of the north side, without the entrances or pavilions. At the southernmost three bays, the building has a high, plain attic story above the cornice, with large rectangular windows (now boarded up). There is no attempt in the design of the building to incorporate this frankly industrial, original element into the Neo-classical Revival treatment of the major facades.

The south, rear facade is of common red brick and has none of the decorative elements of the north and east sides. The rear has ten bays of large, rectangular, metal-framed windows on three levels; the top windows are infilled with boards. The second bay from the west corner contains a large, roll-up metal door; the third bay from the west and the second from the east have pedestrian doors cut through parts of the sills of the large windows in those locations. The rooftop features of the building, which are most visible from the south side, include three metal smokestacks rising from the "attic" story and a large metal tank located near the roof's edge at the center of the south side.

[SEE CONTINUATION SHEET.]

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The windowless west facade repeats most of the decorative elements of the north and east sides, although the watertable extends only the length of the corner piers. The three southern bays are faced with red pressed brick, except on the lower portion where a rectangular area of light brown brick, laid in a different pattern, shows the location of a small building formerly attached to the west wall of the station. The four northern bays are stucco-covered, corresponding to the location of an earlier powerhouse with which the present building shared a wall. A painted wall sign on the stucco portion reads "MUNICIPAL WATER-LIGHT & POWER."

On the interior, the north four bays consist of one large volume which formerly contained the generators. A large open pit in the floor gives access to water valves and other equipment on the lower level. The three southern bays of the building is another large space which contained boilers and coal handling equipment. Most of the machinery from both the north and south rooms has been removed.

South of the main building is a one-story brick outbuilding which served as a garage and workshop. It was clearly built in two stages, but its exact relation in date of construction to the main building is unclear.

"A" Street Station has a high degree of integrity on the exterior. The few changes to the principal facades are new aluminum frame doorways on the north side and a few window air conditioners on the north and east. The south doors appear to have been inserted or at least altered subsequent to the original construction. The west side is the most changed, due to the removal of earlier structures which originally adjoined it. Historic photographs of the building show different numbers of smokestacks, ranging from a single metal stack on the main building in 1923 to four matched stacks in 1934. The interior has been altered by the removal of equipment, but otherwise retains its plain, industrial-type finishes.

# 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1921-1922 **Builder/Architect** W. J. Assenmacher Co./Fiske & Meginnis

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

"A" Street Power and Water Station is locally significant in the area of architecture as a little-altered municipal/industrial building, designed in the Neo-classical Revival style by Fiske and Meginnis, a prominent local partnership especially active in municipal commissions in the 1920s (Criterion C). The builder was W. J. Assenmacher Co., a leading local contractor. The facility is also locally significant in the area of government for its representation of a major expansion of the city's involvement in electrical generation, before public power became the statewide norm (Criterion A).

Lincoln's municipal waterworks date to 1881, when voters approved a bond issue to build such a utility. Many of the early wells dug by the city were quickly abandoned, when their water proved too saline for potability. The "greatest water supply discovered in the city," as described in a 1934 Water Dept. report, was the Mockett Well at 29th and "A" Street. This was first dug in 1892 and was subsequently enlarged to serve as the city's main water source from the early 1900s until the Ashland, Nebr. wells were brought into the system in 1932.

Municipal involvement in electric power began three decades after the city waterworks. A private utility began generating electricity to power streetcars in 1884, but not until 1904 did voters authorize a municipal electric plant which supplied power for pumping water and for street lights. Its site was adjacent to the waterworks of the Mockett Well on "A" Street. In 1913 the city authorized sale of power to consumers, in direct competition to the private utility, and enlarged the "A" Street plant from approximately 250 kilowatt (KWH) capacity to 1500 KWH.

Even this substantial increase was dwarfed by the construction of the current building in 1921-22. A major expansion of the "A" Street facilities became a possibility in 1919 and 1920, when two bond issues were approved for water system and municipal lighting improvements. Litigation and a depressed bond market interfered with construction plans, but in the spring of 1921 the City Council voted to accept a design for a new, combined pumping station and power house, with a generating capacity that reached 8,900 KWH. This 36-fold increase in the city's electric generating capacity between the early 1910s and early 1920s corresponds to a significant period of population growth, as the city grew from 44,000 residents in 1910 to 55,000 in 1920 then burgeoned to 76,000 by 1930 (including annexations).

The architects for the new water and power plant were Fiske and Meginnis, who had other major municipal commissions in the '20s such as the Prescott Elementary School of 1922 (LC13:D6-3) and the Whittier Junior High School of 1923 (LC13:D10-99). Ferdinand C. Fiske (1856-1930) was the senior partner, having practiced in Lincoln since 1890. He was the architect of Barr Terrace (1890-91, LC13:C8-27), which was listed on the National Register in 1979, and

[SEE CONTINUATION SHEET.]

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Lincoln, NE

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A 

1	4	6	9	6	1	1	5	4	5	1	8	8	8	5
Zone			Easting					Northing						

B 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

C 

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D 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET.

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

state	n/a	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Edward F. Zimmer, Ph.D./Historic Preservation Planner

organization Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Dept. date April 25, 1986

street & number 555 So. 10th Street telephone (402)471-7491

city or town Lincoln state NE

## 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 James A. Hanson

title Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

date June 10, 1986

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

Entered in the  
National Register

date 7-24-86

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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of several houses in the Mount Emerald and Capitol Additions Historic Residential District, listed in 1980. Harry W. Meginnis (1877-1943) came to Lincoln as an employee of Fiske in 1901 and worked here seven years before moving to Indianapolis. He return in 1914 as Fiske's partner, an association that continued until the older man's death.

In a letter of January 1921 to city officials regarding the "A" Street Station, H. W. Meginnis suggested that "This design is such that either a dark or light material may be used to very good advantage. If a dark brick should be used with a trimming of stone or terra cotta the body of the building may be of brick, using stone for the base course and stone or terra cotta for bases and caps of the pilasters and for the cornice and coping...." This pattern of dark walls and light trim was followed, even though Meginnis' letter went on to express a slight preference for a light building. The construction contract was let in Sept. 1921 to W. J. Assenmacher Company, which bid a price of \$102,000 for the project. Contract provisions included commencement in ten days after signing, completion within six months, and an extra sum of about \$4,000 for protecting the existing pumping station during construction, then demolishing it within the new structure, while keeping it operational at all times. With machinery, the original cost of the building reached \$150,000.

Assenmacher came to Lincoln around 1905 with the contract to build Lincoln's second Federal Building and Post Office (LC13:C9-110). His firm also had major contracts for the State Capitol construction in the 1920s and built many other large and small, public and private structures.

The "A" Street Station is uncommonly intact for a utility building of the 1920s, probably due to its ambitious original scale and the existence in the city of competing private (and eventually another public) electric utilities. The fine materials and Neo-classical Revival styling are as much an expression of the building's municipal ownership as of its industrial function, although the designers did not subordinate the functional requirements to the stylistic, as can be seen in the plain attic story that extends above the classical entablature on the southern part of the building.

The building was designated a Lincoln Landmark on April 8, 1986. A historically certified adaptive reuse project for the Landmark is planned, calling for forty-one residential units within the structure.

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County-City Building, Lincoln, 50:304, 347, 353, 377, 386; 51:423.

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1923, pp. 9, 27.

"Fiske Rites to be Wednesday" (F. C. Fiske obituary), Lincoln Star, 1-27-1930,  
1:6, 4:6.

Annual Report, Lincoln Water and Light Department, 1934, 1935.

"W. J. Assenmacher Killed...", Lincoln Sunday Journal & Star, 12-1-1940, 1:7.

Who's Who in Nebraska, Lincoln: Nebraska Press Association, 1940, (H. W.  
Meginnis, 720).

"Harry Meginnis Dies..." (H. W. Meginnis obituary), Lincoln Star, 2-23-1943,  
1:7 and 8, 14:5.

Copple, Neale.

Tower on the Plains, Lincoln: Journal and Star Newspapers, 1959.

"Cooling Tower Demolished, 'A' Street Station," Lincoln Journal, 1-4-1975, 8:3.

SEE also Lincoln Star, 2-14-1921, p.1; 2-15-21, p.4:7; 2-22-21, p.3:2; 2-28-21,  
p.1:8; 3-9-21, p.1:8; 3-10-21, 1:7; 9-26-21, p.1:6; 10-17-21, p.1:7;  
11-14-21, p.1:7; 11-28-21, p.1:3.

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The Municipal Lighting and Waterworks Plant is located on an irregularly shaped tract described as follows:

Referring to the Northwest corner of Lot 6, Block 1, Zehrunge and Ames Addition to the City of Lincoln located in the Northwest Quarter of Section 31, Township 10 North, Range 7 East; thence in an Easterly direction on an assumed bearing of N 90° 00' 00" E on the North line of Lots 5 & 6 in said Block 1 a distance of 95.85 feet. Thence Right in a Southerly direction on a bearing of S 0° 00' 00" W on a line perpendicular to the North line of said Block 1 a distance of 18.81 feet to the point of beginning. Thence in an Easterly direction on a bearing of N 90° 00' 00" E on a line 18.81 feet South of and parallel to the North line of said Block 1 a distance of 203.95 feet to a point on the East line of said Block 1. Thence deflecting Right in an East-Southeasterly direction on a bearing of S 80° 24' 35" E a distance of 114.04 feet. Thence in a Southerly direction on a bearing of S 00° 00' 00" W on a line parallel to the East line of said Block 1 a distance of 63.14 feet. Thence in a Westerly direction on a bearing of S 90° 00' 00" W a distance of 110.40 feet. Thence in a Southerly direction on a bearing of S 0° 00' 00" W a distance of 38.38 feet. Thence in a Westerly direction on a bearing of S 90° 00' 00" W a distance of 107.40 feet. Thence in a Southerly direction on a bearing of S 0° 00' 00" W a distance of 102.15 feet. Thence in a Westerly direction on a bearing of S 89° 48' 40" W a distance of 69.08 feet. Thence in a North-Northwesterly direction on a bearing of N 16° 52' 21" W a distance of 101.71 feet. Thence in a Northerly direction on a bearing of N 0° 00' 00" E on a line perpendicular to the North line of said Block 1 a distance of 125.57 feet to the Point of beginning and containing a calculated area of 0.95 Acres more or less.

These boundaries include the Power and Water Station and the outbuilding/garage south of it. There are no other above-grade, historic structures associated with this complex, although one abandoned subterranean reservoir east of the building is included within the boundaries.