

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form

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This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Warehouses in Omaha

B. Associated Historic Contexts

Wholesale Jobbing in Omaha, 1875-1941

C. Geographical Data

Corporate limits of the city of Omaha, Douglas County, Nebraska

See continuation sheet

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

James A. Hanon
Signature of certifying official

October 21, 1991
Date

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Beth Boland

12/13/91

Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

Date

E. Statement of Historic Contexts

Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

Wholesale Jobbing in Omaha, 1875-1941

(portions of the following were excerpted from the National Register nominations for the Old Market Historic District and the Jobbers' Canyon Historic District)

Wholesale jobbing as a business practice was first developed in this country in the 1850's because of the new transportation and communications systems--the railroad and the telegraph. With the reliability and speed of movement of goods, the jobber, who purchased the goods directly from the manufacturer and sold directly to the store owner, was able to operate, confident in the dependable transport and arrival of goods. By the 1870's nearly all wholesalers had become jobbers. Because of the railroad and the telegraph it was no longer necessary for the jobber to be located on the East Coast near the importers and manufacturers. Jobbers moved west and located in Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis as well as other cities from the 1850's to 70's. Jobbers created large buying and selling networks; traveling salesmen went to the retail storekeepers for orders and traveled over a wide area of the country.

Wholesale jobbing began in Omaha about 1880 and the jobbers increased rapidly in number, building up a new section of downtown for wholesaling activities, i.e. the "Old Market" area. (NRHP, 1979) Omaha and all of Nebraska experienced a boom during the 1880's unparalleled in the early history of the state. The state's population doubled from 1880-1890. Omaha, the largest city in the state, took advantage of its unique position as the eastern terminus of the first transcontinental railroad to develop as a major distribution center for Nebraska and states westward to the coast. The "Old Market" area developed at this time, encouraged by the Union Pacific Railroad's policy to promote traffic and the national revolution in mass marketing which the new efficient transportation and communication systems had made possible.

The Board of Trade was established in 1877 to promote the commercial development of the city. Wholesaling and manufacturing were seen to be vital to the growth of Omaha. James F. Boyd, president of the Board, stated in his 1881 Annual Report, "We are endeavoring to make Omaha the great distributing point of the extreme west, and as far as possible the depot of purchases of the northwest and southwest sections (of the country). The railway facilities help us accomplish this. Today more than half of Colorado and New Mexico trade is through Omaha. Oregon and Idaho railroads are placed so wholesale merchants of Omaha can supply those towns. Manufacturing of all kinds are encouraged." The secretary of the Board of Trade stated in the same report that the future growth of Omaha was dependent on its being a distributing, manufacturing and wholesaling center for the areas

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to the west.

Omaha's prosperous jobbing trade, which had increased dramatically in the 1880's, experienced a severe setback in the 1890's as a great depression spread across the country. In Nebraska, farming -the success or failure of which largely affected Omaha business--suffered from extended drought and record low prices. The 1893 crop was almost totally destroyed. Discouraged settlers abandoned their homesteads. The population of cities and towns declined. The Union Pacific Railroad, critical to the wholesale business, went into receivership, losing control of all but 2,000 miles of its 8,000 mile system. "Drummers", as traveling salesmen for the wholesale trade were called, found no market for their products. Wholesale jobbing declined and stagnated as sales plummeted for all types of goods.

With the turn-of-the-century came a tremendous resurgence of Omaha's economy. The successful 1898 Trans-Mississippi Exposition helped to convince Omahan's that the depression was over and instilled in them a renewed sense of civic pride. A favorable wheat crop in 1897 marked a turning point for agriculture as it entered a new era of prosperity. The Union Pacific Railroad regained control of its branch lines, improved roadbeds and acquired more powerful locomotives for increased hauling capacities. Business was again booming in Omaha.

Part of the upturn in business can be attributed to a collective and aggressive solicitation effort on the part of the business community. One report by a local commercial organization at the time noted, "Omaha is awake, alert and reaching out eagerly for new business. The businessmen of the city are heartily cooperating in efforts to extend Omaha's trade to make this city the most important commercial and industrial center of the west."

The wholesale jobbing trade grew rapidly as the economy flourished in the early twentieth century. In 1890, prior to the depression, wholesale sales were \$47.2 M. When business revived in 1900, reported sales were \$62.5 M and grew to \$188 M in 1916. The emphasis placed on the jobbing trade by the Omaha World-Herald in its annual reviews after the turn-of-the-century attests to the importance of wholesaling to the city at that time. Typical of the reports is a lead story published on January 1, 1903 with the following headline: "ALL RECORDS BROKEN BY OMAHA

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TRADE--Remarkable Gain in Jobbing and Manufacturing Surprises Even Hustlers in the Wholesale District--Nearly 25% growth in the Omaha Market is Splendid Showing of a Year". The story goes on to attribute the increase to the hustling abilities of the trade's traveling men and to the extension of territory due to new transportation routes.

With the rapid and large-scale growth of wholesaling came an acute demand for space. One observer, writing for the World-Herald in 1903, summarized the situation in this way: "I am told by several of the best informed businessmen in the city that buildings suitable for jobbing purposes are now very scarce; that houses recently organized and being organized here are waiting somewhat impatiently for an opportunity to spread their wings in larger quarters and are meantime chafing under the necessity of renting warehouses, more or less scattered, and unsatisfactory as well as expensive and unhandy." The story goes on to say that "it would cause general chagrin if some important addition to the houses now here could be prevented for lack of floor space, yet such would seem a contingency." A related article indicates how the problem also affected the recruitment of new businesses: "The crying need of the jobbing center is for more room and larger buildings to place stock in. It is known that there are several houses desirous of coming to Omaha to locate, but they can find no location, there not being a single building suitable for jobbing trade vacant in the city."

The post-1900 economic boom and the accompanying need for space for jobbers resulted in a flourish of warehouse construction after the turn-of-the-century. Most of these structures were located around the Old Market, the focus of the 1880's boom. The greatest concentration of large-scale early twentieth century warehouses was in the six square blocks located directly east of the Old Market, the Jobbers' Canyon National Register Historic District (razed, 1989). Collectively, the vast majority of all of the warehouses built in Omaha between 1875 and 1941--a period that includes both economic booms--were located in eastern downtown within an area generally defined by Capitol Avenue on the north, the Union Pacific mainline on the south, 16th Street on the west and 8th Street on the east.

Omaha jobbers handled a wide variety of wholesale products.

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Groceries, dry goods and hardware were always among the highest volume commodities sold. Following the economic depression of the 1890's--a period from 1900 to 1910 that has been described as "the golden age of agriculture in Nebraska"--agricultural implements joined the list of top products. Other wholesale goods that contributed largely to Omaha's economy were boots and shoes, rubber goods, produce and fruits, drugs, paper, boxes, sacks and bags, liquors, plumbing supplies, gasoline engines and furniture. Service oriented businesses found in the wholesale district included van and storage operations and printers.

Some of the earliest firms represented in the wholesale district were grocers. Steele, Johnson and Company--organized in 1868 in Council Bluffs, Iowa and St. Joseph, Missouri--expanded its operation to Omaha in the 1870's. The Paxton & Gallagher Company, the city's largest wholesale grocer, began with the 1879 partnership of William A. Paxton and Benjamin Gallagher. Another major wholesale grocer, the McCord-Brady Company, started business around 1880. Allen Brothers and Simon Brothers were two other wholesale grocery distributors.

W. J. Broatch, the pioneer hardware jobber in Omaha, began dealing in iron, steel and heavy hardware in 1874. The Baum Iron Company, which is still located in the wholesale district, was founded in 1888, and later merged with the successor of Broatch's company. Another hardware distributor was Omaha Bolt, Nut & Screw Company. Two major wholesale hardware firms, the Lee-Coit-Andreesen Company and the Wright & Wilhelmy Company, were represented by structures located in the former Jobbers' Canyon National Register Historic District (razed, 1989).

One of the largest jobbers to build in the warehouse district was the firm of M. E. Smith & Company, the leading manufacturer and wholesaler of dry goods in Omaha at the turn-of-the-century. The Smith Company, whose business interests encompassed the entire northwest of the United States, was organized about 1870 in Council Bluffs and moved to Omaha in 1886. The city's second largest wholesale dry goods firm, the Byrne & Hammer Company, was associated with a building lost with the Jobbers' Canyon demolition. Byrne & Hammer moved to Omaha in 1900 from St. Joseph, Missouri.

Agricultural implement dealers are well represented in the wholesale district. The Parlin, Orendorff and Martin Company

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formed in Omaha in 1880, a branch of the Parlin & Orendorff Company of Canton, Illinois, an extensive implement firm that did business throughout the United States. The Emerson-Brantingham Implement Company, established in Illinois in 1852, started a branch in Omaha in 1895. The Sattley Manufacturing Company and the Avery Manufacturing Company also distributed agricultural implements. Several implement dealers were located in the former Jobbers' Canyon Historic District and surrounding area. These included the John Deere Company, the cities largest agricultural implement dealer; the Kingman Implement Company; the J.I. Case Company; and the Nebraska Moline Plow Company.

Commission merchants handling mainly fruits or vegetables were concentrated along Howard Street from 10th to 11th and north and south from 11th and Howard. Most fruit and produce dealers were adjacent to the former Public Market (north side of Jackson Street between 10th and 11th), from which the "Old Market" area derives its current name. One wholesale produce jobber, Kirschbraun & Sons, constructed a warehouse several blocks from the Old Market for its operation in 1917.

There were a great many commission merchants who worked in the "Old Market" through the years. The firms were generally small and often family operations. Only a few, such as Ernest Meyer, Samuel Gilinsky, and Peter Rocco, owned their own buildings; most rented storefronts. The commission merchants provided a strong ethnic flavor to the "Old Market" portion of the wholesale district by the concentration of Jewish and Italian merchants, particularly after the turn-of-the-century when immigrants began working as peddlers or hucksters and wholesalers.

Only a few of the wholesalers were also manufacturers, as was typical nationally. Rarely were Omaha jobbers involved in manufacturing the products they sold. Among the manufacturers were Iler and Company (liquors); M. E. Smith and Company and Byrne and Hammer Company (dry goods); Omaha Cold Storage Company (frozen foods); Kirkendall Boot Company; Morse-Coe Shoe Company; and a number of printing companies.

A number of warehouses were built as branch houses for large companies located in other cities. This was particularly the case during the post-1900 building boom period. Among those

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organizations to build branch facilities in Omaha were John Deere, Fairbanks-Morse, the Crane Company, U. S. Supply, American Radiator, Brunswick-Balke-Collender, Anheuser-Busch, the Emerson-Brantingham Company and the Parlin-Orendorff and Martin Company.

Many warehouse structures were owned by investors who rented space to both large and small wholesalers. Most of the investors were early settlers of Omaha who were financially successful and who invested in real estate. Several of the earliest investors had lived in houses on the property in the 1860's and '70's, then built commercial blocks there in the '80's. The major Omaha investors were Samuel D. Mercer (see Mercer House, Omaha, NRHP), Peter E. Iler, Ezra Millard, Catherine Nash, Andrew J. Poppleton and John Creighton. Other major investors were Frederick L. Ames and Joseph Gahm, both of Boston.

The following are other notable jobbers who built in the wholesale district, and their products. (Companies whose buildings were destroyed in the demolition of the Jobbers' Canyon National Register Historic District and in part of the Old Market National Register Historic District are marked with an asterisk).

Pumps and plumbing supplies

A.Y. McDonald Company
Crane Company*
U.S. Supply Company*

Furniture

Beebe and Runyan Company
Dewey and Stone Furniture Company*
Smith Brothers Company*

Sacks/bags/boxes

Eggers-O'Flyng Company
Bemis Bag Company

Paper

Marshall Paper Company
Carpenter Paper Company*

Scales, industrial machinery

Fairbanks-Morse Company*

Radiators, boilers

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American Radiator Company*

Windmills

Dempster Mill Company*

Office fixtures/billiard tables & supplies

Brunswick-Balke-Collender Company*

Boots, shoes

Kirkendall, Jones Company

Morse-Coe Shoe Company

China

Omaha Crockery Company*

Drugs, paints

Richardson Drug Company*

Rubber goods, belts, hoses

Z.T. Lindsey and Company

John Day Rubber Company*

Liquors, beer

Anheuser-Busch Company

Willow Springs Distillery*

Iler and Company*

Dairy products

Fairmont Creamery Company

Harding Cream Company*

Macaroni, noodles

Skinner Manufacturing Company

Pianos, instruments

Hospes Music Company

Storage, moving

Bushman Company

Omaha Van and Storage Company

Printing

Western Newspaper Union

National Printing Company

F. Associated Property Types

I. Name of Property Type Warehouses in Omaha

II. Description

FUNCTION/FORM

The primary function of warehouse buildings in Omaha was to provide space for the storage and distribution of finished products, and to a lesser degree, to provide for the storage of raw materials and associated space for light manufacturing. This basic function changed little over time. While it appears that a few warehouse owners-- most often the earlier, smaller operations--engaged in limited retail business, the vast majority of warehouses housed operations that were strictly wholesale.

The simple, rectangular form of the standard warehouse was

III. Significance

The warehouse is the primary property type associated with the historic context "Wholesale Jobbing in Omaha, 1875-1941". The warehouse property type is significant in the area of commerce (Criterion A) for association with the wholesale jobbing industry in Omaha, historically an important distribution center for goods shipped throughout the west by rail. Omaha's extant warehouse buildings--many built to house the city's largest and most notable businesses--represent the development of the jobbing trade, a major element in the economic history of the city.

Architecturally (Criterion C), the warehouse is a significant property type in Omaha formally, functionally, technically and aesthetically(see description section). Omaha's tradition of warehouse construction is unmatched in the state and is rivaled in the midwest only by cities such as Kansas City and

IV. Registration Requirements

Warehouse structures, i.e., structures that were built to provide space for the storage and distribution of products, or for light industry, or that were built to house services traditionally associated with warehouse districts such as printing and cold storage, are considered eligible for the National Register if they:

- are associated with businesses significant in the wholesale jobbing trade in Omaha between 1875 and 1941; or
- represent the structural or stylistic subtypes outlined in this nomination; or
- represent the work of a master.

Warehouse structures must also possess a high degree of integrity, which means that a building must:

- be located on its original site, and
- display a high percentage of its original materials and features if it is one of many of its type. (A lesser degree of original materials and features is allowed if the

See continuation sheet

See continuation sheet for additional property types

G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

The multiple property listing for warehouses in Omaha includes all known warehouse structures in and around eastern downtown Omaha, the location of the vast majority of late nineteenth and early twentieth century structures of this property type in the city. The listing is based on data contained in the Omaha/Douglas County Historic Building Survey, which consists primarily of information gathered from building permit records, Sanborn maps, plans on microfilm and survey photographs.

The typology of significant property types is based on function and association with wholesale jobbing. The property types identified are associated with the single context of Wholesale Jobbing in Omaha, 1875-1941, and were selected for their close association with the theme and their illustration of functions, formal types and structural types related to wholesale jobbing. The requirements for integrity were based on a knowledge of the condition of existing properties.

See continuation sheet

H. Major Bibliographical References

Architectural working drawings on file (microfilm) at the City of Omaha, Permits and Inspections Department.

Bostwick-Frohardt Photography Collection, owned by KMTV and on permanent loan to Western heritage Museum.

Chatfield, Penelope; Kidd, Daniel; Murphy, D. National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form. Old Market Historic District, Omaha, Douglas County, Nebraska. Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1979.

City of Omaha building permits.

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: Omaha City Planning Department

I. Form Prepared By

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dictated primarily by its utilitarian function, its structural system and the lot size and configuration. In order to make maximum use of their commercial locations, warehouse builders tended to fill every inch of the building site. Buildings varied considerably in size, ranging from 22' wide, one and two story structures to eight story, one-quarter and one-half block configurations.

Generally, structures were built directly on the property line and abutted one another from side to side, forming continuous block-long walls that distinctly defined the limits of the street and gave the street a sense of enclosure. Only the street facing elevations of warehouses were embellished. Abutting walls were blank and rear walls were strictly utilitarian in detail. Roofs, concealed by parapets on all sides except the alley side, were flat.

A number of warehouses of the 1880's boom period were built as investment properties--some intended for single occupancy and others for two or more tenants. Multi-tenant buildings were generally subdivided with a series of interior bearing walls, each space having its own separate street access. After the turn-of-the-century it was more common for warehouses to be built, owned and occupied by a single company. Although these buildings were generally much larger than the multi-tenant buildings, they usually had only one relatively small entrance.

STRUCTURE/TECHNOLOGY

The light-joist wood framing employed by some of the builders of warehouses in Omaha during the last quarter of the nineteenth century was extremely susceptible to fire. As fire insurance costs increased, adequate fire protection became a major design consideration, not only in the area of structure, but also related to equipment and detailing. Omaha's late nineteenth and early twentieth century warehouses are representative of the structural evolution of warehouse architecture at the time, particularly as it relates to fire protection.

Most of Omaha's historic warehouses can be placed in one of four general structural categories: light-joist construction; mill construction; concrete frame construction; and hybrids, which are systems that are transitional in nature, combining elements of more than one type of construction. Most hybrid systems involve

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the use of concrete in combination with steel or tile and occur primarily between the mill and concrete frame traditions.

Survey data , which includes both extant and non-extant structures, indicates that light-joist and mill constructed warehouse buildings in Omaha date from the late 1870's to about 1918. The 1905 Crane Company Building--the first warehouse building to use concrete for its fireproofing qualities--marked the beginning of a period that saw a steady increase in the use of concrete in warehouse construction.

Most hybrid structural systems are found in warehouses built between 1905 and 1920--a period when wood systems were phasing out and concrete systems were gaining in popularity. The transition was not, however, a step-by-step progression from one structural system to another. For example, the John Deere Building(razed,1989)--undoubtedly Omaha's most significant concrete frame warehouse--was built relatively early, in 1908, while mill construction continued for another ten years.

A variety of important fire safety measures began to be incorporated into warehouses built in Omaha after 1900, including enclosed elevators and stairwells, fireproof doors, automatic sprinkler systems, standpipes, drainage scuppers, and metal window frames.

In most instances the structural systems utilized in warehouse construction were easily expanded, and additions to existing buildings were fairly common. The side or end walls of some reinforced concrete frame warehouses left elements of the structural system exposed--such as beam supports at the columns--in order to accommodate future additions.

STYLE

Aesthetically, Omaha's historic warehouses exemplify the issue of stylistic appropriateness faced by designers of factories and warehouses in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. "Realism"--a design philosophy championed by architects Russell Sturgis and Peter Bonnett Wight calling for rational, unornamented industrial buildings--was emerging at the time as an important alternative to historicism in architectural design. Both schools of thought are well represented by warehouses in Omaha. The most popular historicist styles for warehouses from

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the 1870's to about 1920 were Italianate, from approximately 1875 to the turn of the century; Richardsonian Romanesque, from approximately the mid-1880's to 1900; and Renaissance Revival, from the early 1890's to almost 1920. "Realistic" style buildings--those that exhibit the modernistic characteristics prescribed by Sturgis and Wight--followed the lead of the important and pivotal 1905 Crane Building and continued to be built through the 1920's and 30's. It was during this period that some warehouse designers solved the dilemma of style by mixing a "realist" approach with historicism. In these solutions historicist features are often simplified or stylized.

It can be stated, generally, that the historicist styles were associated with wood framed buildings and that most concrete frame structures were "realistic" in style. Two notable exceptions were the mill-constructed, "realistic" Fairbanks-Morse Building (razed, 1989) and the concrete frame, Renaissance Revival style, John Deere Annex Building (razed, 1989).

ASSOCIATION

The warehouse property type is primarily associated with the wholesale jobbing industry, a major component in the commercial development of Omaha. The majority of warehouses were constructed during one of two economic boom periods; the first in the 1880's and the second during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Warehouses were built predominately in the east-central portion of the city, adjacent to the railroad yards and rail service on the perimeter of the central business district.

Most warehouses eligible for the National Register as representatives of the wholesale commerce context and the warehouse property type are located in the area described above. A number of warehouses are presently listed in the National Register either individually or as part of the Old Market National Register District.

While many good representatives of the warehouse type remain, a substantial number of structures have been demolished for major downtown development projects during the past 15 to 20 years. The most significant loss of warehouses--some having been the finest representatives of their type in the state--came with the recent demolition of the Jobbers' Canyon National Register Historic District.

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Although the condition of extant warehouses varies considerably, it appears that virtually all are structurally sound and many retain the majority of their original features. The relatively good condition of Omaha's older warehouses is probably due to their construction: they were built with durable materials such as heavy timber, brick and concrete, and they were designed for heavy, industrial use. The most common building condition problems--based primarily on cursory inspection of the exteriors only--appear to be deteriorated roofs, windows and mortar joints. The most likely threat to the preservation and physical character of Omaha's extant warehouses are further major downtown redevelopment projects and the insensitive rehabilitation of individual warehouse structures.

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Minneapolis. Omaha warehouses gain additional significance in architecture for the representation of the evolution of industrial building design in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the areas of structural technology, aesthetic appropriateness and fire safety; and for association with the city's most prominent architects.

ARCHITECTS:

Virtually all of Omaha's most important architects designed warehouse buildings. Foremost among them are John Latenser, Thomas Kimball, George Fisher, Harry Lawrie and John McDonald. Kimball, probably the states most renowned architect, designed St. Cecilia's Cathedral, the Omaha Public Library and was architect-in chief--along with his partner, C. Howard Walker--for the 1898 Trans-Mississippi Exposition. John Latenser is known for many important works, including the Douglas County Courthouse, the Brandeis Department Store building and approximately 35 school buildings, including Central High School. George Fisher and Harry Lawrie, and the father and son partnership of John and Alan McDonald, are also notable for a number of Omaha's finest structures.

Firms that designed early warehouses are Dufrene and Mendelssohn, Smith and Lederbrink, and Fowler and Beindorff. Other local architects that did warehouses include Henry Voss, Charles Cleves, Frederick Clarke, Jacob Nachtigall, George Prinz, William Stockham, Frederick Henninger, Henry Raapke, James Allan, and Frederick Stott. Two important non-local architects, Albert Kahn--a nationally known industrial architect-- and Issac Hodgson, also did Omaha warehouse buildings.

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property is one of only a few remaining of its type or if
the property is unique.)

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