National Register of Historic Pla Inventory—Nomination Form

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

Name 1.

historic Northwestern Knitting Company Factory

and/or common Munsingwear Plant

Location 2.

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7. Description

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Describe the present and originai (if known) physical appearance

In its present form, the Munsingwear Plant consists of five major buildings constructed during the period 1904 - 1915 (see Plates 1 and 2). The buildings are variously linked by passageways. According to their traditional designations, the structures are known as Building 1, Building 4, Building 5, Building 6, and Building 7 - 7A (Buildings 2 and 3 were demolished in 1914 to make way for Building 7 - 7A).¹ With the exception of Building 5, which originally served as a power house, the structures share several Neo-Classical Revival details that help create the impression of a single, extended industrial plant. These unifying features include a slightly projecting cornice with scallop motif; a fretwork frieze; and fluted Doric columns at the principal entrances. The structures are further integrated by the use of white, pressed brick on the principal facades. Although much of the original sash was replaced by glass blocks during the mid-1960s, the plant has experienced little structural change since the completion of the last major building in 1915. 2 Each of the five major buildings at the site is briefly described below.

والمحلاة والأراد الإنسام

Building 1

Constructed in 1906, Building 1 is a flat-roofed, L-shaped structure measuring approximately 76 feet in width and 220 feet in length. It comprises five stories and The foundation work is stone; the exterior walls are brick; and the a basement. interior construction is reinforced concrete, with slab flooring, girders, and columns. In 1911 the flooring was strengthened with steel beams. In its exterior design, the building's Lyndale Avenue facade is divided into five bays with an entrance centered in the northernmost bay. The entrance was originally ornamented with a three-bay portico featuring fluted, Doric, concrete columns. The portico and columns were removed in the 1970s and replaced by a less ornamental entrance. Building 1 was originally used for yarn storage, napping, drying, winding, and knitting. NPS Form 10-900-a (7-81)

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Building 4

Measuring approximately 140 feet in width and 185 feet in depth, Building 4 is a flat-roofed structure consisting of five stories and a basement. The foundation work is stone; the exterior walls are brick; and the interior construction is reinforced concrete. The building was erected in two stages. The first three floors and basement of the eastern half of the structure date from 1904. The remainder of the building dates from 1912. The older portion utilizes an interior system of slab flooring, girders, and columns; the newer portion a system of flat-slab construction with mushroom columns. In its exterior design, the building presents Glenwood Avenue with a double facade. The eastern half consists of five bays, with the center-three bays forming a bowed projection. The western half displays five bays set back from the eastern half. The original covered entryway on Glenwood Avenue was removed in 1948 and replaced by the present The building was originally used as a company office and as a wareentrance. house for finished stock.⁴

Building 5

Measuring approximately 95 feet square, Building 5 is a one-story, flatroofed structure of brick and reinforced-concrete construction. The eastern half of the structure was erected in 1906 as a boiler house; the western half in 1912 as a generating room. At present, the building houses three oil- and gas-burning boilers that date from the period 1936 - 1940.⁵

Building 6

Measuring 150 feet square, Building 6 was constructed in 1910 as a flat-roofed, five-story structure with a full basement, two roof-top monitors, and an eightstory, tower wing adjoining its northeast corner. The exterior walls are brick, and the interior construction is reinforced-concrete with mushroom columns. The building also has a two-story, kitchen-and-fan-room addition flanking its northern facade that was apparently constructed in stages during the period

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Building 6 con't.

1910 - 1920. In its exterior design, the building's Glenwood Avenue facade is divided into eight bays, with a concrete pavilion extending along the central four bays. The pavilion features fluted, concrete, Doric columns. The Lyndale Avenue facade also consists of eight bays, augmented by three bays in the tower wing. The entrance on this facade is situated along the central bay of the tower wing. It is ornamented with a three-bay, concrete portico that incorporates fluted, Doric columns. The building originally housed an employees' cafeteria, and served a variety of manufacturing purposes, including pressing, ribboning, mangling, sewing, cutting, and knitting.⁶

Building 7 - 7A

Building 7 - 7A is essentially a rectangular structure measuring approximately 100 feet in width and 300 feet in depth. The building was erected in two stages. The earliest portion, located on the corner of Aldrich Avenue North and Third Avenue North, was constructed in 1912 as a four-story, brick- and- reinforcedconcrete tank house. At the time of its construction, the tank house stood just to the west of an 1890s-vintage factory building, which was demolished in 1914 to make way for a more modern structure. This new building was completed in 1915, and it consists of eight stories, with a one-story structure flanking its southern facade, and a eleven-story tower section adjoining the tank house. The 1915 building has brick exterior walls and reinforced-concrete interior construction. In its exterior design, the 1915 building displays five bays on its Lyndale Avenue elevation and eighteen bays on its northern elevation, which overlooks a parking area. This structure was originally used for waste storage, baling, bleaching, fleecing, cutting, sewing, and knitting.⁷

8. Significance

Period prehistoric 1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1699 1700–1799 1800–1899 1900–	Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric archeology-historic agriculture architecture art X commerce communications		ing landscape architectur law literature military music	re religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation other (specify)
Specific dates	1904 - 1915	Builder/Architect	See below.	
Statement of S	ignificance (in one paragr	aph) Building 1: Building 4:	C.A.P. Turner, o	ilder. & Chamberlain, archs.; cons. eng.;
		Building 5:	John Wunder, bu: 1906, 1912; Bertrand & John Wunder, bu:	& Chamberlain, archs.;

Building 6: 1910, John Wunder, builder.

Building 7-7A: 1912, 1914-1915, John Wunder, builder.

trade-mark name or brand of its product." ⁸

<u>Commerce, Industry, Invention</u> The Northwestern Knitting Company was incorporated in 1887 "for the purpose of carrying on a general business in the manufacture and sale of all kinds of knitted fabrics." After spending three years in rented quarters in the Minneapolis wholesale district, the firm moved its operations to the corner of Lyndale Avenue North and Third Avenue North, where it constructed a new factory building. Over the next quarter of a century, the company gradually expanded its facilities until, by 1915, its plant covered the entire square block bounded by Lyndale Avenue North, Third Avenue North, Aldrich Avenue North, and Glenwood Avenue. During this period, Northwestern Knitting Company became one of the nation's largest manufacturers of underwear. Since it marketed its products under the brand name of "Munsingwear," its factory was commonly called the Munsingwear Plant. In 1919, the firm reincorporated as Munsingwear Corporation, "primarily for the purpose of more closely linking together the name of the corporation and the

The Munsingwear Corporation is one of the few Minneapolis firms dating from the nineteenth century that achieved and maintained national prominence in its industry. During the period 1915-1950, Munsingwear ranked with such industrial giants as Pillsbury and Washburn-Crosby, two Minneapolis flour companies whose plant facilities are already listed in the National Register of Historic Places.⁹ To quote one observer in 1917: "The success of the Munsingwear Plant has been

9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached sheets.

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Commerce, Industry, Invention con't.

phenomenal . . , and outside of the flour mills, none is better known than this, or is a greater source of civic pride."¹⁰ And another in 1935: "Almost as closely allied with the city of Minneapolis as our milling industry, is . . . the world's largest manufacturer of underwear -- the Munsingwear Corporation."¹¹

There is good reason to compare Munsingwear with the Minneapolis flour milling industry, which was founded in the 1850s and 1860s at the Falls of St. Anthony by such families as the Washburns, the Morrisons, and the Pillsburys. Like most of the city's first settlers, these early milling families were from New England, and, to quote one historian, "their dreams of of future glory were New Englanders' dreams. In their eyes, the new milling district was destined to become a major center for textile manufacturing, as well as for lumbering and flouring."¹² Although the waterpower at the Falls of St. Anthony soon proved to be most profitable for flouring and lumbering, two prominent millers -- Clinton Morrison and Charles A. Pillsbury -- helped keep the city's textile dream alive by becoming the first financial backers of the Northwestern Knitting Company, which opened a hand-powered operation in a warehouse on Third Avenue North in 1887. Apparently Pillsbury's support was particularly crucial, for the new knitting company quickly adopted several of his corporate flour-milling strategies, including an insistence on technological innovation, the promotion of a single brand name, and the use of imaginative advertising.

From the beginning, Munsingwear assumed a pioneering role in the American garment industry. The company's founder, George Munsing, had invented a method and cotton of plating woolen fibers with silk to take the "itch" out of woolen underwear. Patented in 1888, the company first used this process in manufacturing a fullfashioned, two-piece, knitted underwear suit styled after the red-flannel suits in vogue at the time. The plating idea proved successful, and the company was encouraged to try still another innovation. In 1891 it patented and manufactured the first one-piece union suit (see Plate 3). Instead of the bulky, uncomfortable undergarments available up until that time, customers could NPS Form 10-900-a (7-81)

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now purchase a single, sleek piece of underwear that kept them warm without irritating their skin. By 1912, Munsingwear had become the nation's leading producer and distributor of underwear for the entire family, with annual sales in excess of six million garments. The company was justified in its advertising slogan: "Don't say underwear, say Munsingwear."¹⁴

In 1912 Munsingwear began to acquire factories in other parts of the country, and by 1950, it owned a total of twelve plants located in Arkansas, Iowa, Massachussets, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The Minneapolis plant, however, remained the company's home base and largest manufacturing facility. With the completion of Building 7 - 7A in 1915, the Minneapolis work force included approximately 1,700 employees, prompting the <u>Minneapolis Journal</u> to observe that Munsingwear contributed to the support of one out of every forty households in the city.¹⁵

After the First World War, Munsingwear began to experiment with new fabrics and products. The company pioneered in the use of rayon in the early 1920s, and eventually diversified into hosiery, sleepwear, high-fashion underwear for women, and sportswear (see Plate 4). Establishing the apparel industry's first research-and-development laboratory at the Minneapolis plant in 1933, Munsingwear continued its innovative tradition by inventing and manufacturing the nylonreinforced, T-shirt neckband, the Kangaroo pouch for men's briefs, and the first permanent-press golf shirt. By the mid-1960s, the Minneapolis plant had become the country's largest integrated knitting mill for men's sportswear, handling all manufacturing processes from yarn to finished product. When a deteriorating national economy forced the company to close its Minneapolis plant in 1981, Munsingwear acknowledged its long Minneapolis tradition by maintaining its corporate offices in the city. As chief executive officer Raymond Good explained at the time, "Our roots here are nearly a century old, and it's important for us to stay here."

Engineering

The Munsingwear Plant is significant for its role in the development of reinforced-concrete technology. Although reinforced concrete was occasionally

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used in Minneapolis buildings during the 1880s and 1890s, the material had always appeared in conjunction with structural steel. In 1904 the newly completed Building 4 of the Munsingwear Plant became the city's first, pure, reinforcedconcrete building. "The building is the wonder of the public generally," observed the <u>Minneapolis Journal</u> of January 21, 1905. "To the unitiated, it has seemed impossible that a building could stand without steel or wood framework." Building 4 had an immediate influence on local construction practices. As the <u>Journal</u> of September 9, 1905 noted: "Since the Northwestern Knitting warehouse was built of pure concrete, without steel beams or pillars, interest in the new form of using the material has been intensified until now nearly every new structure has some form of concrete in its makeup."

The structural system of Building 4 was designed by the Minneapolis engineer C.A.P. Turner. In 1905, shortly after the building's completion, Turner introduced a new method of reinforced-concrete construction that is generally credited with having revolutionized American building technology. In <u>American Building</u>, Carl W. Condit describes Turner's innovation in the following way: "The flatslab system invented by Turner greatly increased the economy of concrete construction by eliminating the girders and beams. . . .The distinguishing feature of the flat-slab frame is the flaring column capital, or mushroom capital, a conical spreading out of the cross-sectional area to reduce the concentration of shearing stress around the circular disc where the slab meets the column"¹⁵ (see Plate 5).

In designing Building 4, Turner apparently experimented with several new features that presaged flat-slab construction. Most notably, he used a streamlined column-girder-and-slab system that eliminated the need to stiffen the slabs with ribbing (see Plate 6). He also used vertical reinforcing rods that "bent outward at the top of the column so as to penetrate the girder concrete and tie the column and girder together."¹⁶ These reinforcing rods gave the column capitals a slightly flared appearance that foreshadowed the shape of the true mushroom column (see Plate 7). In 1912 Building 4 received an extensive addition that expanded the original floor space. This new construction was built with mushroom columns. Building 4 therefore offers a unique opportunity to examine on the same floor of one structure the progression of Turner's engineering art (see Plates 8,

and 9).

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1 See Story of Munsingwear, p. 26; Insurance Maps of Minneapolis, Minnesota, vol. 2 (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1912), updated to c. 1923, plate 132, in Minneapolis Public Library; Site Plans of the Munsingwear Plant in Minneapolis, unpublished, 1937, in Box 7, Munsingwear Papers, Minnesota Historical Society; Minneapolis Building Permit I402, 1914, Minneapolis Inspections Department.

2

The glass-block infill was apparently authorized by Building Permit B385694, 1963.

3

"\$100,000 Factory for Minneapolis," <u>Minneapolis Journal</u>, Apr. 4, 1906, 1:4; Building Permits B67631, 1906; B68221, 1906; B91846, 1911; <u>Insurance Maps of</u> <u>Minneapolis, Minnesota</u>, vol. 2 (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1912), plate 132; Jeffrey A. Hess, Interview with Richard Kaminski, Munsingwear Facilities Manager, Dec. 10, 1982. For a photograph of the original entrance portico, see <u>Munsingwear</u> News, 5 (Apr. 1, 1920), 13.

4

Building Permits, B60131, 1904; B97089, 1912; "New Concrete Building," <u>Minneapolis Journal</u>, July 30, 1904, 8:4; "Concrete is a Success," <u>Journal</u>, Jan. 21, 1905; <u>Improvement Bulletin</u>, 19 (Aug. 6, 1904), 10; "Northwestern Knitting Company Announces Improvements to Cost \$150,000," <u>Journal</u>, Feb. 27, 1912, 1:6; Munsingwear, Inc., <u>Annual Report, 1948</u> (Minneapolis: Munsingwear, Inc., 1948); <u>Insurance Maps of Minneapolis, Minnesota</u>, vol. 2 (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1912), plate 132. The Minnesota Historical Society has a photograph, dated 1905, of the original, three-story segment of the building (Audio-Visual Collection, MH5.9/Mp3.1m/p51).

5

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7 Building Permits, B96213, 1911; I402, 1914; B110910, 1914; "Knitting Works to Build Eight-Story Addition to Plant," <u>Minneapolis Journal</u>, Mar. 22, 1914, 10:1; <u>Insurance Maps of Minneapolis, Minnesota</u>, vol. 2 (1912), plate 132; <u>Insurance Maps</u>, vo. 2 (1912, updated to c. 1923), plate 132; <u>The Success of Well Doing</u> (Minneapolis: Munsingwear Corp., 1921), pp. 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 32, annotated copy in Box 7, Munsingwear Papers.

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10

William C. Edgar, "The Story of Munsingwear," <u>Minneapolis Golden Jubilee</u> (Minneapolis: 1917), p. 58. Edgar is an especially authoritative source, since he was publisher of the nation's most influential flour-milling, trade journal, The Northwestern Miller.

11

"Minneapolis Industries: The Munsingwear Corporation," <u>Minneapolis Shopping</u> News, Mar. 11, 1935.

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"A Growing Industyr," <u>Minneapolis Journal</u>, June 2, 1891, 2:1; <u>Story of Munsingwear</u>, pp. 7, 11, 17; <u>A Company of Firsts -- Patents and Progress</u> (Minneapolis: Munsingwear, Inc., n. d.), p. 1.

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17

Conit, <u>American Building</u> (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1969), caption for illustration 89 and p. 243; see also Henry J. Cowan, <u>Science and Building</u> (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978), pp. 82-85.

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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

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Continuation sheet

Item number 10

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Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

Parcel 1

That part of the East Half of the Southeast Quarter of Section 21, Township 29, Range 24, lying east of the East line of Wilber's Addition to Minneapolis and west of the West line of "The Northwestern Knitting Co.'s Addition to Minneapolis," south of the South line of Morse Street as platted in the plat of "Stinsons Addition in Minneapolis: and north of a line drawn from the Southwest corner of Lot 5, "The Northwestern Knitting Co's Addition to Minneapolis" to the Southeast corner of Lot 7, Wilber's Addition to Minneapolis, according to the recorded plats thereof.

Parcel 2

That part of the East Half of the Southeast Quarter of Section 21, Township 29, Range 24, lying south of the South lines of Lots 3 and 18, Auditor's Subdivision Number Nine (9) and north of the North line of Lot 1, "The Northwestern Knitting Co.'s Addition to Minneapolis," west of the West line of Lyndale Avenue North and east of a line drawn parallel to and 264 feet west of the East line of Section 21, Township 29, Range 24, according to the recorded plat thereof, according to the Government Survey thereof.

Parcel 3

Lots 1 to 3, inclusive, and lot 5; Lot 4 except that part which lies southeasterly of the following described line: Beginning at a point on the Southerly line of said Lot 4, distant 30 feet westerly of the Southeast corner thereof; thence run northeasterly to a point on the East line of said Lot 4, distant 30 feet north of the Southeast corner thereof and there terminating, in "The Northwestern Knitting Co.'s Addition to Minneapolis."

Parcel 4

Lot 4 except the South 70 feet thereof, and all of Lots 5 and 6, except the South 60 feet thereof, Block 1 in McFarlane's Addition to Minneapolis, together with that portion of the West 1/2 of the alley between Lots 3 and 4 of said Block 1, lying between extensions across it of the Northerly line of said Lot 4 and the Northerly line of the South 70 feet of said Lot 4, according to the plats thereof on file or of record in the office of the Register of Deeds in and for said Hennepin County.

Parcel 5

The East 20 feet of Lots 1 to 4 inclusive, Block 6, "Stinsons Addition to Minneapolis, according to the recorded plats thereof.

Parcel 6

That part of vacated Aldrich Avenue North (formerly Austin Street) lying between extensions across it of the North line of Lot 1, Block 6 and the South line of Lot 4, Block 6, "Stinsons Addition to Minneapolis," according to the recorded plats thereof.

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Verbal Boundary Description and Justification con't.

Parcel 7

Continuation sheet

Lots 1, 2 and 3 except that part of said Lots which lies easterly of a line run parallel with and distant 3 feet westerly of Line 1 described below:

Line 1:

From the Southeast corner of Lot 3, Auditor's Subdivision No. 9, run north on the East line of said Lot 3 for 26 feet; thence deflect to the left at an angle of 90 degrees 00 minutes 00 seconds for 3.95 feet to the point of beginning of Line 1 to be described; thence deflect to the right at an angle of 89 degrees 59 minutes 51 seconds for 48 feet; thence deflect to the left on a tengential curve having a radius of 1883.86 feet and a delta angle of 5 degrees 06 minutes 41 seconds for 168.06 feet; thence deflect to the left on a tangential curve having a radius of 190.99 feet and a delta angle of 21 degrees 52 minutes 58 seconds for 72.94 feet and there terminating,

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Lots 18 to 25, inclusive, Auditor's Subdivision Number Nine (9), according to the table recorded plats thereof.

Parcel 8

That part of vacated Third Avenue North (formerly Morse Street) as dedicated in the plat of "Stinsons Addition to Minneapolis" lying west of a line drawn parallel to and 264 feet west of the East line of Section 21, Township 29, Range 24 and east of a line drawn parallel to and 20 feet west of the Extension south of the East line of Lot 4, Block 6, "Stinsons Addition to Minneapolis," according to the recorded plats thereof.

Parcel 9

That part of wacated Third Avenue North dedicated in the plat of Wilber's Addition to Minneapolis lyging east of a line drawn parallel to and 20 feet west of the East line of said Addition, according to the recorded plats thereof.

Parcel 10

Lots 1 to 12 inclusive, Wilber's Addition to Minneapolis, together with vacated Center Alley as shown upon the plat of said Addition.

Parcel 11

Lots 1 to 4 inclusive, Block 12, "Stinsons Addition to Minneapolis," according to the recorded plats thereof.

Parcel 12

Those parts of Lots 1, 2, and 3, Block 1, McFarlane's Addition to Minneapolis and the East half of the vacated alley in said Block 1, lying northwesterly of a line drawn parallel with and 15 feet northwesterly of the center line of the most Northerly railroad track now crossing said Lots and alley, except that part of said Lot 1 lying northeasterly of the line described as follows:

Beginning at a point on the East line of said Lot 1, distant 30 feet south of the Northeast corner thereof; thence run northwesterly to a point on the North line of said Lot 1, distant 40 feet westerly of the Northeast corner thereof and there terminating,

all according to the recorded plat thereof.

