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Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Omaha Power Plant Building

Other names/site number DO9:0066-010

Name of related multiple property listing N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & Number 505 Marcy Street

City or town Omaha

State Nebraska

County Douglas

Not for publication Vicinity

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 at the following level(s) of significance: national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

Michael J. Amel
Signature of certifying official/Title:

SHPO/Director

05-18-2015

Date

Nebraska State Historical Society

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting Official

Date

Title

State of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.
- determined eligible for the National Register.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): _____

Joe [Signature]
Signature of Keeper

7-1-2015

Date of Action

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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	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	Sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	Structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	Objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY: power plant

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)

Vacant/Not in Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions.)

Other: Early 20th century industrial

Materials (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick; Steel; Concrete

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Name of Property**County and State****Description**

Summary Paragraph (Briefly describe the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

The OPPD Power Plant building is located on an 11.5 acre site adjacent to the west bank of the Missouri River near downtown Omaha, Nebraska. The plant is bound by the Missouri River and Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad tracks to the east, OPPD Substation 1201 and a parking garage to the west, and the corporate headquarters for ConAgra Foods to the north. The property around the building is primarily gravel with some patches of paving and overgrown weeds present. The rail spur that once served the buildings has been removed. Automobile access to the site is from 4th and Marcy Streets, although historically the site was served by Jones Street to the north and Leavenworth Street to the south. Neither of these streets traverses the site presently.

The current buildings on the site were constructed over a period of approximately 31 years, from c. 1920 until 1951. Historically, they were part of a complex of buildings dating to 1889, when the first coal-fired power station was built on the site. Although the earliest portions of the complex were removed in the 1970s, the site on which they stood is included in the Omaha Power Plant property boundaries. The extant buildings on the site consist of three attached structures: a six-story with three-story penthouse combination office area and a boiler plant; a 40-foot tall turbine hall; and a three-story switchgear building. All of these are steel framed structures with concrete foundations and brick or metal cladding. On the interior, the buildings are connected via openings in their shared walls.

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable.)

Office & Boiler Plant (1948-1951)

The Office and Boiler Plant are combined within a six-story building with a three-story penthouse. This portion of the complex was constructed between 1948 and 1951. The Office Area occupies the west half of the building while the Boiler Plant occupies the east half and the penthouse. The six-story square main building and three-story rectangular penthouse was constructed as a steel frame building with brick cladding. The building abuts the turbine hall at its east façade.

At the six-story base, the south and west facades retain their historic appearance while the north facade is now partly clad in corrugated metal panels, due to the removal of the north half of the boiler plant and other parts of the complex in the 1970s. On the south and west facades, a concrete belt course provides a division between the two lower stories and the four upper stories. A poured concrete foundation wall runs along the base of both facades. The fenestration patterns on the first and second stories differ between the facades, while the top four stories share a similar appearance.

The main entry is located at the west end of the south façade. Stone blocks frame the opening, which is accessed from a short poured concrete stairway with integrated end posts. West of this are two openings infilled with brick masonry while to the east is a large opening fitted with a garage door and smaller openings containing plywood infill. Each opening is accented with a soldier course at the lintel and windows feature a stone sill. The second story of the south façade contains five rectangular openings spaced evenly across the building with narrow stone belt courses at the window lintel and sill. These window openings contain some glass block. The west façade has a large garage door opening at the first story, and five evenly spaced windows with glass block on the second story. Some of these glass blocks have been removed. The second story windows have stone sills.

The top four stories on both the south and west facades are divided into five bays by wide brick pilasters. At each level, large rectangular window openings containing glass block are separated by concrete lintels. One of the openings on the south façade and two openings on the west façade are infilled with brick and have a small aluminum window frames at their center. The only difference between the facades at these levels is the presence of a metal balcony on the south facade at the west end of the fifth story.

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At the penthouse level, wide brick pilasters divide the east and west facades into four bays and the north and south facades into two bays. All facades contain some paired 5 by 3 center pivot steel windows within the bays. Stone sills and concrete lintels separate the openings at each level. On the east façade, a doorway is located at the lowest level within one of the bays.

On the interior, a clay tile wall separates the Office Area from the Boiler Plant to the east. Concrete floors divide the six floors of the Office Area. A main stair tower runs up the entire six levels of the building at the south end, within the Office Area. A stair tower is also present in the northwest corner. Small office enclosures are present on the first and second floors of the Office Area. On the third through fifth floors, the Office Area is primarily open with some partition walls present. On the sixth floor, the Office Area is divided into two separate spaces. The Boiler Plant portion of the building has nine floors of steel grating punctured by portions of large boilers, pipes and ductwork. A freight elevator runs between the floors, extending from the ground level to the seventh story. Between some floors in the Boiler Plant section, stair towers are located at the east and north ends.

Turbine Hall (c.1920-1951)

The forty-six foot tall Turbine Hall was constructed in phases, with the extant portion built in three stages between 1930 and 1951. Today it is a long rectangular steel framed building with brick cladding. Its long axis is oriented in the north-south direction while the short axis is oriented in the east-west direction. The Hall abuts the Office and Boiler Plant Building at its west and the Switchgear Building at its east. The building was originally clad entirely in brick with a half-story poured concrete foundation wall and watertable. The brick walls at the north end of the building were replaced with corrugated metal wall panels following the removal of portions of the plant in the 1970s. Today the visible masonry facades at the south half of the building contain few openings at their bases with the majority of the openings found at the upper half of the building. On the west façade there is a door opening just above the water table that opens onto a metal platform and stairway leading to the ground level. On the south façade, a portion of the concrete foundation wall is interrupted by a large garage door opening which features a stone lintel. The east façade contains a doorway just to the south of where the Turbine Hall intersects with the Switchgear Building. The upper portion of all of these facades have large rectangular openings containing glass block windows, which are interspersed with brick pilasters, five of which are partially missing on the east and west façades. The portion of the east façade that is partially covered by the Switchgear Building has glass block transom windows.

The interior of the Turbine Hall is a large open space with concrete floors, brick walls, and steel trusses supporting the ceiling. Stairwells connect this building to the adjacent buildings, and to the basement below. Near the ceiling on the first floor, a gantry crane stretches from the east and west ends and slides from north to south along support beams. Beneath the main level is a basement with concrete floors and brick walls.

Switchgear Building (c.1920-1951)

As with the Turbine Hall, the Switchgear Building was constructed in at three stages between 1920 and 1951. Today the steel frame building is three stories tall, rectangular in form, and has brick cladding. The exception is at the north façade, which has a wall of corrugated metal panels that were added after the removal of a transformer room and other sections of the plant that were once present to the north of the Switchgear Building. The west façade completely abuts the Turbine Hall while the south and east facades are exposed. On the south and east façades, the first story is partially below grade and is clad by a decorative concrete foundation wall. The upper stories are clad in brick. A cornice featuring corbeled brick and a course of stone runs along the top of both facades.

The south façade is two bays wide. Doorways are located at either end of the facade. There are rectangular openings on the second story and arched openings on the third story that have stone sills.

The east façade is 22 bays wide. Fenestration patterns on the first and second stories differ at the north and south ends of this façade while the arched window openings on the third story match those found on the south façade. At the south end of the east façade, window openings penetrate the façade at all three levels and are spaced evenly apart. The first story windows have all been infilled while some of the industrial steel sash, multi-lite windows with hoppers at their base have been removed on the second and third stories. At the north end of the east façade, the first and second stories were historically attached to a two story ancillary structure that is no longer extant. A portion of the area once occupied by this ancillary structure today contains a small, one-story brick and concrete structure with disintegrating

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walls. Only a doorway at this level remains intact while at least three other openings present historically have been filled in.

At the middle of the third level there is a doorway encased by a metal stairway structure flanked by a metal chute. The stairway leads to the larger of two secondary buildings located at the east side of the Switchgear Building. Both of these secondary buildings have painted brick cladding and share a similar appearance to the main Switchgear Building. The larger structure is one-and-a-half stories tall while the smaller structure is two stories tall. The larger structure is surrounded by a poured concrete wall. An ironworks structure runs from the cornice of the main building and has beams that extend over the larger structure to the ground level. These secondary buildings are being demolished by the City of Omaha as part of a city-wide sewer separation project required by the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality.

The interior of the Switchgear Building is 22,000 square feet and includes a basement. Concrete floors and steel columns and beams run throughout the interior while partition walls of cinder block provide divisions between the various spaces. Electrical cabinets, switches and other equipment historically occupied these spaces.

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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:

- A** Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** Removed from its original location.
- C** A birthplace or a grave.
- D** A cemetery.
A reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- E** A commemorative property.
- F** Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Industry

Period of Significance

1920-1964

Significant Dates

1920

1925

1948-1951

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Burns and McDonnell Engineering Company

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Omaha Power Plant building is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at a local level under Criterion A for the widespread impact the facility had on the growth and development of electric service in Omaha. In addition, the plant's existing infrastructure embodies major growth periods in the history of electric service and reflects shifts in electric power preferences within the city. Construction of the campus began in 1889, with coal acting as the initial generating source.

In succeeding decades, the building was modified and expanded to better serve Omaha's growing electrical needs, incited both by waves of new residents and an increased demand for electric power. Between 1890 and 1950 Omaha's

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population nearly doubled while electrical use more than tripled.¹ As new homes, businesses and related infrastructure were added during the first half of the 20th century, the integration of electric power became a more general occurrence rather than a luxury reserved only for the rich and the most populated areas of the city.² Major additions to the original plant were constructed in the early 1920s and the late 1940s to early 1950s. These additions nearly doubled the size of the power plant and coincided with building booms that followed times of major international conflicts. While the oldest portions of the building are no longer extant, evidence of this early construction is still reflected in the existing plant.

The period of significance begins in 1889 with the construction of the original plant, and ends in 1964, or fifty years from the present. The property contains one resource for this site inventory, the Omaha Power Plant building, which is contributing and classified as a building.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Electric power arrived in Omaha in 1883 with the incorporation of the Northwestern Electric Light Company and their installation of 20 arc lights along the city's streets. An *Omaha World Herald* article from 1954 noted that this was just three years after Thomas Edison had perfected the incandescent lamp.³ Northwestern set up the city's first power house, in the Strang Building at the corner of 10th and Farnam Streets, but soon after moved its operations to the Woodman Linseed Oil Mills.⁴ Over the next year, more streetlights were electrified and service expanded to include the illumination of buildings. Commercial and manufacturing buildings received electricity first. The Union Pacific Railroad integrated electric lighting into its Omaha station in this first year, as did downtown buildings including the Strang, Omaha National Bank, First National Bank, and the Millard Hotel. Electric power quickly increased in popularity and the city's elite began to clamor for the service at their residences. In 1884, residential electricity came first to those living along South 10th Street in the upper-class district south of the Union and Burlington Stations.⁵ Over the next few decades, electric service slowly became the favored form of power, replacing gas illumination, which had been present in Omaha since 1868.

The popularity of electricity in its early years encouraged the establishment of competing electrical providers. These companies subsequently consolidated into one another, resulting in a series of private owners frequently holding a monopoly on this commodity for the next 60 years by securing franchise rights with the city. Calls for a public electric company began as early as 1892, when then-Mayor Richard C. Cushing proposed the city construct its own electric light plant so as to save on costs and ease the city's need to sign long-term contracts with private corporations.⁶ However, this plan did not come to fruition until 1945. In the intervening years, private electric companies like the Thomson-Houston Electric Light Company exerted control over electrical power in Omaha and propelled the advancement of the commodity's use amongst the citizenry through the construction of power plants, substations, and ancillary buildings, along with the installation of miles of cable.

In September 1885, the Thomson-Houston Electric Light Company established itself in Omaha, an offshoot of a larger organization headquartered in Boston.⁷ Shortly thereafter, the company reorganized as the New Omaha Thomson-Houston

¹ Nebraska Department of Economic Development, "Population of Nebraska Incorporated Places, 1860 to 1920," (updated 2010), accessed August 6, 2014, <http://www.neded.org/files/research/stathand/bsect5a.htm>; Nebraska Department of Economic Development, "Population of Nebraska Incorporated Places, 1830 to 1980," (updated 2010), accessed August 6, 2014, <http://www.neded.org/files/research/stathand/bsect5b.htm>; *Omaha World Herald*, "Electricity Began in Omaha in 1883, With Just 20 Arc Lights," May 9, 1954, accessed July 2014, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com>.

² *Omaha World Herald*, "Electricity Began in Omaha in 1883, With Just 20 Arc Lights," May 9, 1954.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Arthur C. Wakeley, ed., *Omaha: The Gate City and Douglas County, Nebraska* (Chicago: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1917), 153-154, accessed August 2014, <http://archive.org>; *Omaha World Herald*, "Electricity Began in Omaha in 1883, With Just 20 Arc Lights," May 9, 1954.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ *Omaha World Herald*, "Mayor Cushing's Message," January 6, 1892, accessed July 2014, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com>.

⁷ Wakeley, ed., *Omaha: The Gate City and Douglas County, Nebraska*, 153-154.

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Electric Light Company.⁸ In 1889, as the Thomson-Houston Company's breadth of service increased, they acquired a choice site adjacent to trackage of the Burlington and Missouri River railway on which to construct a large power plant.⁹ Coinciding with the construction of the plant, and likely an impetus for its development, the Thomson-Houston Company secured a franchise contract with the city to "light the principal streets with [over one hundred] brilliant arc lights."¹⁰ Leading the firm at this time was S.L. Wiley, the company president, Frank Warner, the secretary and treasurer, and A.G. Collins, the superintendent of machinery and head of construction of the plant.

The new two-story power plant was 118 x 135 foot brick building with a basement located at the foot of Jones Street. The 1890 City Directory described how this building was "supplied with machinery to furnish a capacity of 2,000 horse power for arc and incandescent service for stores, dwellings, etc."¹¹ The 1890 Sanborn map shows that the plant contained a repair shop and stock room, an engine room with two engines and a dynamo room at the east half of the building, and a large furnace room supplied by coal at the west half of the building.¹² Train tracks led directly to the building, leading in from the south and terminating at its northwest end. A March 1890 article in the *Omaha World Herald* declared it to be the largest electrical building of its kind in the United States with such innovative features as a sliding crane and an elevator run by electricity.¹³

By 1901, the Thomson-Houston Company had absorbed its competitors to become the city's primary electricity supplier. In this same year, the city began to call for the burial of "all electric wires used for light, heat, power, and other commercial purposes, except wires used for propelling street cars, and telegraph and telephone wires" in the downtown area.¹⁴ An electric light wire conduit ordinance was passed in 1902.¹⁵ After some debate, the Thomson-Houston Company secured the contract to continue as the city's main electric service provider in exchange for the removal of the overhead wires and their burial beneath the ground. A newspaper article from September 1902 noted that this "underground system has proved the better [in terms of public safety], as well as the up-to-date method."¹⁶ The first stage of the underground conduit system was laid near the company's Jones Street power house.¹⁷

In 1903, the Thomson-Houston Company gave way to the Omaha Electric Light and Power Company. This new provider, the book *Omaha: The Gate City* discusses, "took over the entire business, [power] plant, and good will of the Thomson-Houston Company."¹⁸ F.A. Nash, long-time president of the Thomson-Houston Company, became head of the new organization.¹⁹ The transfer of "good will" mentioned above appears to refer to the continuation of the city franchise for electric service. Within a court document from 1913, when the Omaha Electric Company took the City of Omaha to court following the city's threats to disconnect the company's wires, it was revealed that the contract between the electrical provider and the city included the city's receipt of "3 per cent of the gross earnings" and the company's agreement to oversee "the enlargement and improvement of the plant from time to time to meet the increasing demand for current for those [power, heat, and lighting] purposes."²⁰ The Omaha Electric Company lost this case, but continued to provide service to the city until 1917.

⁸ *Omaha World Herald*, "Darkness is Dispelled," March 16, 1890, accessed July 2014, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com>.

⁹ *Omaha World Herald*, "Electric Light," January 1, 1890, accessed July 2014, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com>.

¹⁰ *Omaha, NE, 1890 City Directory* (Omaha, NE: J.M. Wolfe & Co., 1890), 15-16.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps "Omaha, Nebraska," 1890.

¹³ *Omaha World Herald*, "Darkness is Dispelled," March 16, 1890.

¹⁴ *Omaha World Herald*, Electric Light Wire Conduit Ordinance, March 5, 1902, accessed July 2014, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com>.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Omaha World Herald*, "Burying the Wires Under Omaha Streets," September 28, 1902, accessed July 2014, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com>.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Wakeley, ed., *Omaha: The Gate City and Douglas County, Nebraska*, 153-154.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ FindLaw.com, U.S. Supreme Court Case: "Omaha Electric Light and Power Co. v. City of Omaha, 230 US. 123 (1913)," accessed August 2014, <http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/getcase.pl?court=US&vol=230&invol=123>.

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During their tenure, the Omaha Electric Company served 200,000 persons with 560 miles of pole lines in an area that included Greater Omaha, Florence, Benson, Fort Crook, Bellevue, and Council Bluffs; the Omaha & Lincoln Railway Light Company was also a major customer. In addition to the main power plant, the company maintained four substations. In a 1916 advertisement, the company celebrated its role as “one of the dynamic factors in the growth and development of this metropolitan neighborhood.”²¹ Sanborn maps from 1890 and 1918 show that during their tenure at the Jones Street station, the Omaha Electric Company left the original 1889 main power plant building generally intact, except for the construction of a small one-story addition at the south (rear) façade. A number of ancillary structures were then built further south of the main building, including a large reservoir, an oil house, a work shop, and a number of storage buildings. Within the main plant, much of the machinery appears to have been removed and replaced, with upgrades including four new engines and six generators. Major changes to the main building did not come until after the Nebraska Power Company acquired the property of the Omaha Electric Company in 1917.

The Nebraska Power Company was organized in April 1917, and at the time was “engaged in the operation of electric service companies in various parts of the country.”²² George H. Harries, formerly the president of the Omaha Electric Company, became the president of this new service provider, indicating the possibility of a linkage that existed between these companies despite their different names.²³ A main goal of the new company was to encourage more widespread use of electric light and power. Primary targets for this campaign included outside industries that could potentially relocate to the area and members of nearby farming communities.²⁴ Shortly after the Nebraska Power Company took over ownership, they began an advertisement campaign to increase electricity use amongst the general public. One of these ads praised the low cost of electric service as contrasted with the quality of light capable of being distributed, which had greatly advanced with the “invention of and the improvements made in the Mazda lamp.”²⁵ Another encouraged the use of electric irons as the “sensible...quick and clean” way to iron.²⁶

The effect of this concentrated marketing campaign appears to have paid off for the company. By 1925, Nebraska Power boasted 54,000 customers, more than double the number of customers served in 1910. In this year J.E. Davidson, general manager of Nebraska Power Company, proclaimed, “A power and light company is a true barometer of a city’s growth.”²⁷ Between 1920 and 1926, the company undertook a large scale building campaign, spending eight million dollars on improvements. These upgrades included additions and improvements to the main power plant, including landscaping around the plant to improve its attractiveness to passing train passengers; the construction of a new central substation at 20th and Howard; a new storeroom, garage and distribution headquarters at 34th and Leavenworth; two additional substations at 20th and Vinton and 27th and P; the purchase of the electric building at 17th and Harney; and new cable and line extensions.²⁸

Newspaper articles indicate that the Jones Street power plant received extensions in 1920, as well as between 1924 and 1925. Specific details on the nature of the 1920 enlargement are not known. Aspects of the 1925 addition were detailed in a March 1925 *Omaha World Herald* article, which discussed how “three thousand piles were driven to strengthen the

²¹ *Omaha World Herald*, “Omaha Electric Light and Power Company” advertisement, May 28, 1916, accessed July 2014, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com>.

²² *Omaha World Herald*, “Electric Light Co Announces Its Sale,” June 10, 1917, accessed July 2014, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com>.

²³ *Omaha World Herald*, “Omaha Electric Light and Power Company” advertisement, May 28, 1916; *Omaha World Herald*, “Electric Light Co Announces Its Sale,” June 10, 1917.

²⁴ *Omaha World Herald*, “Electric Light Co Announces Its Sale,” June 10, 1917.

²⁵ *Omaha World Herald*, “Electric Light Costs Less Than Ever Before” Nebraska Power Company advertisement, July 3, 1917, accessed July 2014, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com>.

²⁶ *Omaha World Herald*, “Isn’t This Cool Way The Sensible Way to Iron” Nebraska Power Company advertisement, July 16, 1917, accessed July 2014, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com>.

²⁷ *Omaha World Herald*, “52,000 Customers of Power Company Now,” April 30, 1925, accessed July 2014, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com>.

²⁸ *Omaha World Herald*, “Power Extensions to Cost 3 Million,” March 9, 1924, accessed July 2014, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com>; *Omaha World Herald*, “Nebraska Power Company to Spend Million, 1926,” January 1, 1926, accessed July 2014, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com>.

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foundation of the building.”²⁹ Materials used included “five hundred thousand bricks, 5 thousand barrels of cement, and 4 hundred tons of steel.”³⁰ Once complete, “a twenty thousand kilowatt turbine, a two thousand horsepower boiler and all necessary auxiliaries” were installed. The cost for the addition and new machinery totaled 2.1 million dollars.³¹

The 1934 Sanborn map shows that, by this period, the Jones Street plant had grown to triple its original size. The building had been added on to on all of its facades except for its front façade, which faced onto Jones Street. This larger, improved plant boasted all the latest in electrical technology. It included a general storage room within the west half of the 1889 building and a portion of the Turbine Room and Transformer Room in the east half of the 1889 building. Directly west of the original building, there was now a narrow 2-story Machine Shop. At the south end, from west to east, there was now a Boiler Room comprised of three 2-story buildings of varying heights, some of which contained rooftop structures; the remaining portion of the Turbine Room; and the Switchgear Building. Attached to the east end of the Switchgear Building, from north to south, was a 2-story Transformer House with an Office on the second story, a 1-story Screen House, and a fenced Transformer Yard. By this time, the reservoir had been moved to a spot adjacent to the northeast end of the plant and the train tracks now ran to the south end of the Turbine Room.³²

The use of electricity continued to expand in the succeeding decades, and with it came extensions, updates, and new additions to the company’s holdings, including the main power plant. The Nebraska Power Company was the last private company to hold control over electric service in Omaha. By January 1945, after much controversy, the Nebraska Power Company, through its parent company American Power and Light, sold its holdings to a non-profit group, the Nebraska Electric Committee, Inc.³³ This group in turn held the property until the legal formation of a municipal power structure occurred. One year later, in December 1946, a group of citizens succeeded in securing the passage of a legislative bill that established Omaha’s first city-run power company, the Omaha Public Power District (OPPD). OPPD went into full operation in 1947.³⁴ Shortly thereafter, OPPD sold the Council Bluffs and Iowa lines owned by their predecessors.³⁵

In 1945, an *Omaha World Herald* article noted that the Nebraska Power Company, then owned presumably by the Nebraska Electric Committee, Inc., made 500,000 dollars’ worth of improvements to the Jones Street station.³⁶ More improvements came under the new leadership of OPPD. In OPPD’s first annual report, the company noted that World War II had forced a cessation of any facility expansions, despite the growth in service users during those years. With the war over by September of 1945, the company embarked on an 18.5 million dollar expansion program. Burns and McDonnell Engineering Company of Kansas City, Missouri were retained as the consulting engineers for this program. The Jones Street Plant, along with many of the ancillary buildings scattered throughout Omaha, would be expanded and upgraded in the coming years.³⁷

From 1948 to 1951 OPPD expanded the Jones Street station with extensions to the Boiler Room, Turbine Room, and Switchgear Building. Two new coal-fired generating units of 38,000 and 44,000 kilowatts were installed, bringing the plant’s generating capacity to 189,000 kilowatts.³⁸ The Boiler Room Extension added over 9000 square feet of space to this portion

²⁹ *Omaha World Herald*, “52,000 Customers of Power Company Now,” April 30, 1925.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps “Omaha, Nebraska,” 1934.

³³ Omaha Public Power District, *Annual Report*, 1947, Archives of the Omaha Public Power District; *Omaha World Herald*, “A Fateful Hour,” January 1, 1945, accessed July 2014, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com>.

³⁴ Douglas County Historical Society, “Archives Record: Omaha Public Power District,” accessed July 2014, www.omahahistory.org; Omaha Public Power District, “History,” accessed July 2014, http://www.oppd.com/AboutUs/Company/22_000593.

³⁵ *Omaha World Herald*, “Electricity Began in Omaha in 1883, With Just 20 Arc Lights,” May 9, 1954.

³⁶ *Omaha World Herald*, “Nebraska Power Directors Tour Jones Street Station,” January 16, 1946, accessed July 2014, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com>.

³⁷ Omaha Public Power District, *Annual Report*, 1947-1956, Archives of the Omaha Public Power District.

³⁸ *Omaha World Herald*, “Jones Street Plant Largest of Three OPPD Facilities,” September 24, 1954, accessed July 2014, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com>; *Omaha World Herald*, “OPPD Approves Cost-Share Plan,” April 18, 1975, accessed July 2014, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com>.

Omaha Power Plant BuildingDouglas, Nebraska**Name of Property****County and State**

of the building and incorporated an office wing into a new five story structure, which had an additional four-story penthouse over the Boiler Room wing. The Turbine Hall extension added nine bays to that portion of the plant that shared the general appearance of the existing Turbine Hall. The Switchgear extension added on four bays to that section that matched the appearance and form of the existing Switchgear Building.³⁹

By 1954, the Jones Street station remained OPPD's largest power plant, although two additional plants in North Omaha and South Omaha allowed the public utility to better serve its 102,946 customers with a combined generating capacity of 290 megawatts. This amount of power was a significant increase from the two 44 kilowatt engines that first served the city back in 1883, when electricity was first introduced as a power source.⁴⁰ An *Omaha World Herald* article from September 1954 did note that OPPD would also frequently purchase power from nearby providers by this time, rather than use the lower-efficiency units still present at their own plants due of the steep expense of running the older generators.⁴¹

Electrical use continued to grow, and with it came advancements in electrical generation capabilities. Fifteen years after OPPD's formation, the Douglas County Historical Society notes, the "demand for energy [had] increased [by] 165.5%."⁴² During the 1960s, OPPD's reach expanded to include a 2500 square mile radius encompassing six counties. The sharp rise in electrical use necessitated the construction of additional generation facilities. By this point, national preference was shifting away from coal, which mainly powered the Jones Street Plant, and toward oil and nuclear power generation. Nuclear power, which was viewed as cheaper, cleaner, and safer than fossil fuels, was a relatively new energy source that had been discovered in the 1930s but only arrived at commercial markets in the late 1950s.⁴³

In 1968, OPPD began construction on the Fort Calhoun Nuclear Power Plant. At the same time, increased concerns about air and water quality led the Environmental Protection Agency to institute stricter emission controls. The high cost associated with updating the Jones Street Plant to align with these new regulations incited OPPD to begin the process of decommissioning the building. This involved modernization and demolition of certain portions of the plant during the early 1970s. The final phase took place in 1975 at a cost of nearly 1.5 million dollars and resulted in the demolition of all of the portions of the building constructed before 1920, including the original 1889 plant. The land now sits vacant directly north of the extant power plant, and metal panels cover the openings where the remaining portion of the plant once connected to the older sections.⁴⁴ For the next decade the plant continued to provide energy through the two generators installed in the post-war period. However, it provided nowhere near the power it once generated as the city's main electrical plant. The generators were decommissioned in 1985 and thereafter the building was primarily used for storage.⁴⁵ The portions of the Omaha Power Plant building that remain, which include the Boiler Plant and Office, part of the Turbine Room, and the Switchgear Building, along with the visible evidence of removal of earlier portions of the plant are physical manifestations of the growth and shifts in electric power generation within the city of Omaha and the surrounding counties. Modifications made to the site and building during its 125 year history are still reflected in the existing buildings and exemplify the rapid expansion of electrical use over the course of the 20th century, which was coupled with advancements in power generation technology and altered perceptions about the industry's impact on the environment. Located adjacent to the Missouri River, on a site chosen by one of Omaha's first electrical pioneers, and added on to over the years by subsequent owners as demand necessitated, this portion of the plant retains much of its historic integrity, capable of telling a broader story about the birth and rise of electrical use in Omaha.

³⁹ Omaha Public Power District, *Annual Report, 1947-1956*, Archives of the Omaha Public Power District; Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps "Omaha, Nebraska," 1934 & 1962.

⁴⁰ *Omaha World Herald*, "Electricity Began in Omaha in 1883, With Just 20 Arc Lights," May 9, 1954; *Omaha World Herald*, "Jones Street Plant Largest of Three OPPD Facilities," September 24, 1954.

⁴¹ *Omaha World Herald*, "Jones Street Plant Largest of Three OPPD Facilities," September 24, 1954.

⁴² Douglas County Historical Society, "Archives Record: Omaha Public Power District."

⁴³ U.S. Department of Energy Office of Nuclear Energy, Science and Technology, "The History of Nuclear Energy," accessed July 2014, http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/The%20History%20of%20Nuclear%20Energy_0.pdf.

⁴⁴ *Omaha World Herald*, "OPPD Approves Cost-Share Plan," April 18, 1975; *Omaha World Herald*, "OPPD Testimony: Bid Law Leads to 'Rationed Darkness,'" February 1, 1973, accessed July 2014, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com>.

⁴⁵ Omaha Public Power District, Realty Fact Sheet, "OPPD Site Information."

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9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

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1917. Accessed August 2014, <http://archive.org>

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 # _____
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other (Name of repository)
Omaha Public Library

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

Omaha Power Plant Building _____ Douglas, Nebraska _____
Name of Property County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 11.5 USGS Quadrangle Omaha North

(Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates. Delete the other.)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

- | | | | | |
|----|----------|-------------------------|-----------|-------|
| 1. | Latitude | <u>See Attached Map</u> | Longitude | _____ |
| 2. | Latitude | _____ | Longitude | _____ |
| 3. | Latitude | _____ | Longitude | _____ |
| 4. | Latitude | _____ | Longitude | _____ |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)
POWERHOUSE LOT 2 BLOCK 0 LT 2 478013 SQ FT SEE LEASED LAND #3000 7026 27

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)
The boundary of the property follows the legally recorded boundary lines and includes the existing power plant buildings as well as the site of earlier buildings.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Caitlin Kolb and Christina Jansen, Assoc. AIA
organization Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture date July 2014
street & number 1516 Cuming Street telephone 402-341-1544
city or town Omaha state Nebraska zip code 68102
email ckolb@alleypoyner.com and cjansen@alleypoyner.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO for any additional items.)

Omaha Power Plant Building Douglas, Nebraska
Name of Property **County and State**

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property Omaha Power Plant
City or Vicinity Omaha County Douglas State Nebraska
Photographer Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture Date Photographed As Indicated

1. Photograph No. 1: Looking Northeast. Photographed on March 5, 2015.
2. Photograph No. 2: Partial East Façade Looking West. Photographed on March 5, 2015.
3. Photograph No. 3: Partial East Façade Looking Northwest. Photographed on March 5, 2015.
4. Photograph No. 4: Partial North and East Facades Looking Southwest. Photographed on March 5, 2015.
5. Photograph No. 5: Partial West Façade Looking East. Photographed on March 5, 2015.
6. Photograph No. 6: Partial North Façade Looking South. Photographed on March 5, 2015.
7. Photograph No. 7: Partial West Façade Looking Northeast. Photographed on March 5, 2015.
8. Photograph No. 8: Office and Boiler Plant – 6th Floor, Southeast Corner, Looking Northwest. Photographed on March 5, 2015.
9. Photograph No. 9: Office and Boiler Plant – 8th Floor, Looking South. Photographed on March 5, 2015.
10. Photograph No. 10: Switchgear – 3rd Floor South End, Looking South. Photographed on March 5, 2015.
11. Photograph No. 11: Turbine Hall – 1st Floor, Looking South. Photographed on March 5, 2015.

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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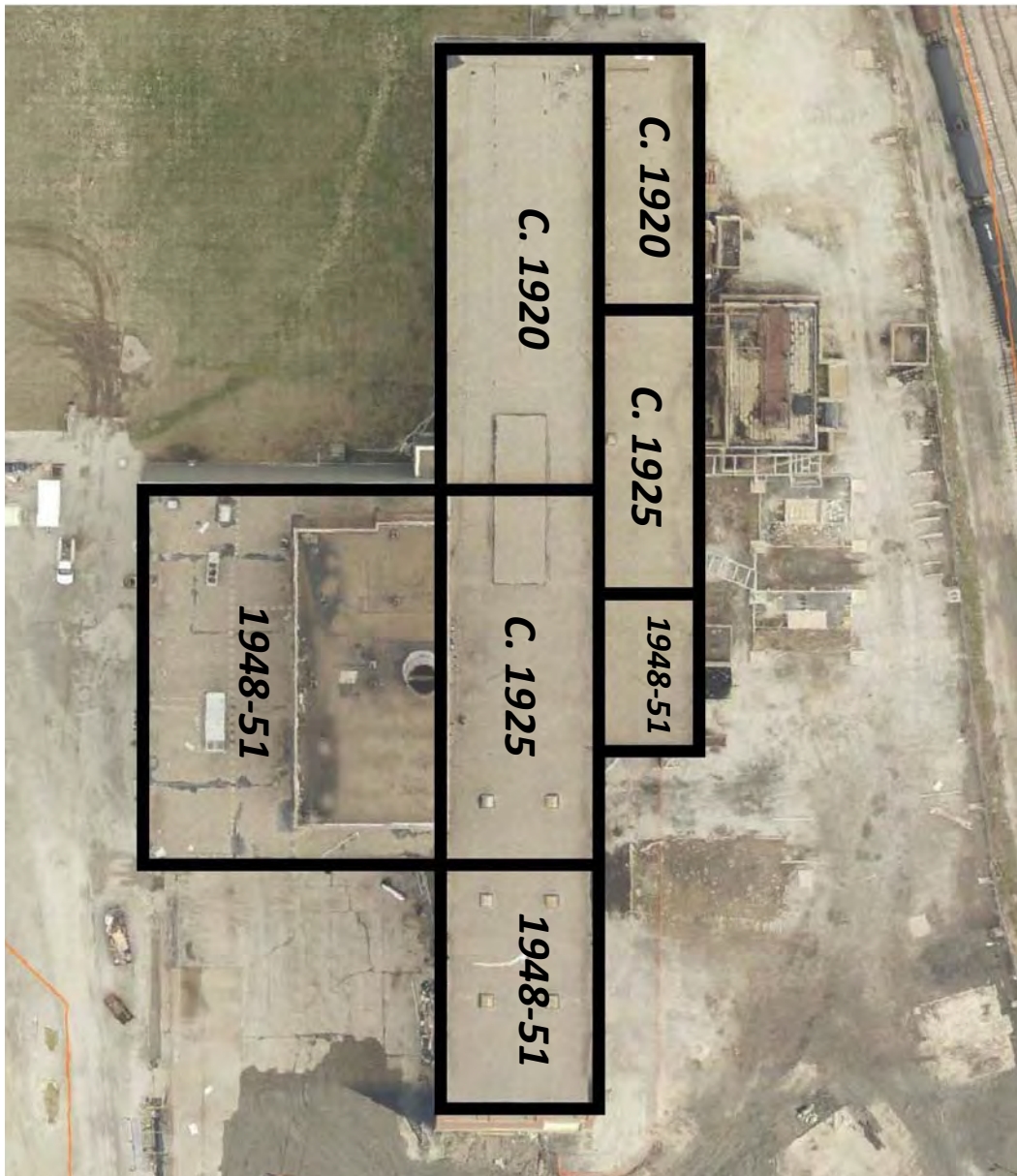
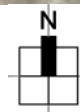


Figure 1: Omaha Power Plant. Construction phases. No scale.
Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture, 2014.



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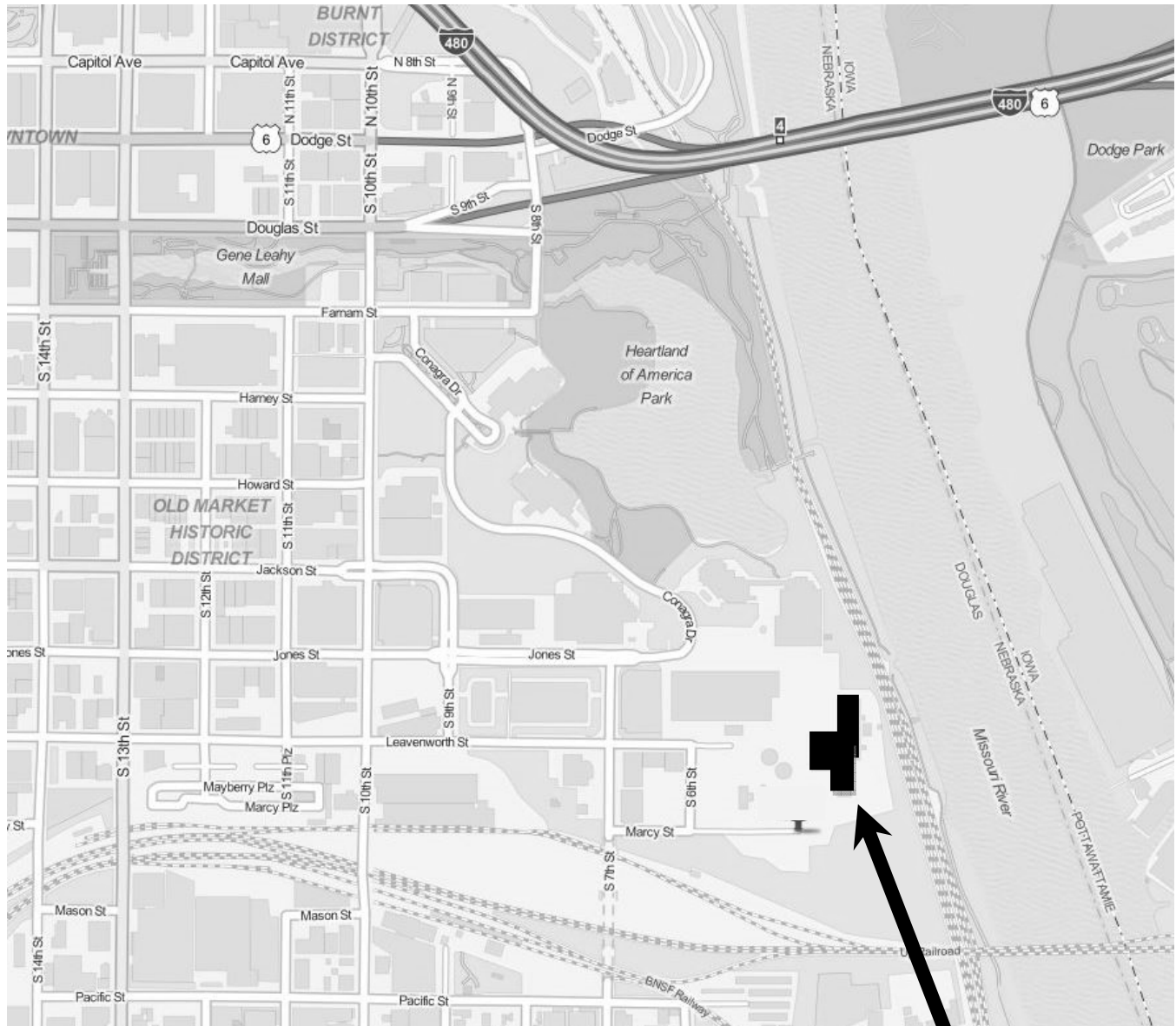
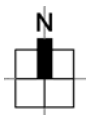


Figure 2: Omaha Power Plant Vicinity Map. Building is located adjacent to the Missouri River between Jones and Marcy Streets and Fifth Street. Source: MapQuest, 2014



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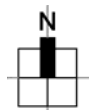
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Figure 3: Omaha Power Plant Legal Boundary Map. Building is located adjacent to the Missouri River between Jones and Marcy Streets and Fifth Street. Dashed line represents property divisions. Source: Douglas County DOGIS website. <http://www.dogis.org/> Accessed August 7, 2014.



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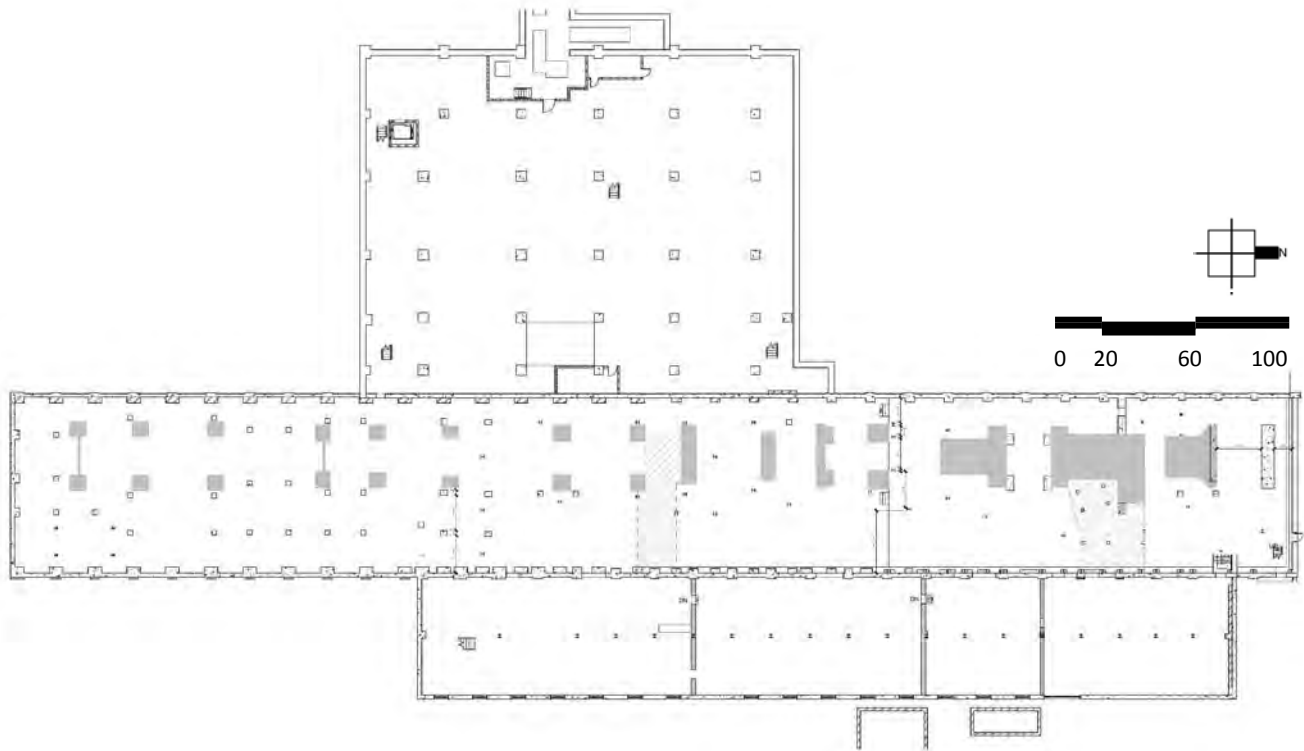


Figure 4: Basement Floor Plan. Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture, 2014.

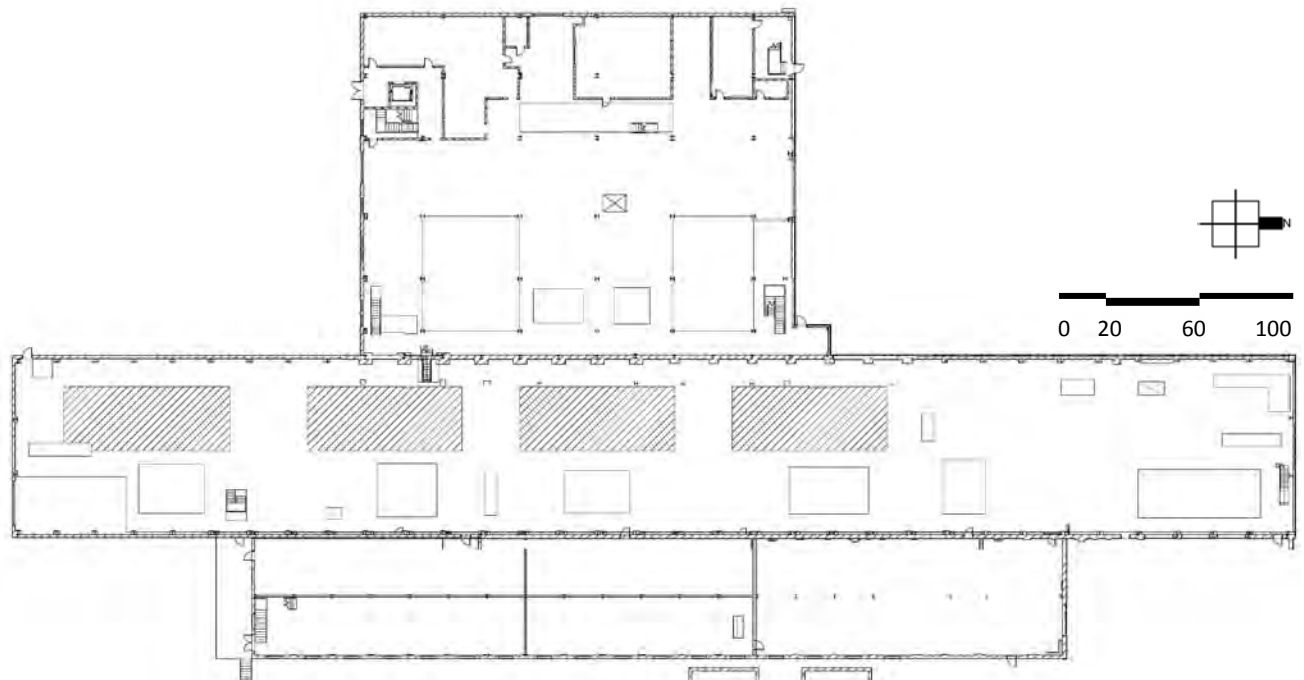


Figure 5: First Floor Plan. Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture, 2014.

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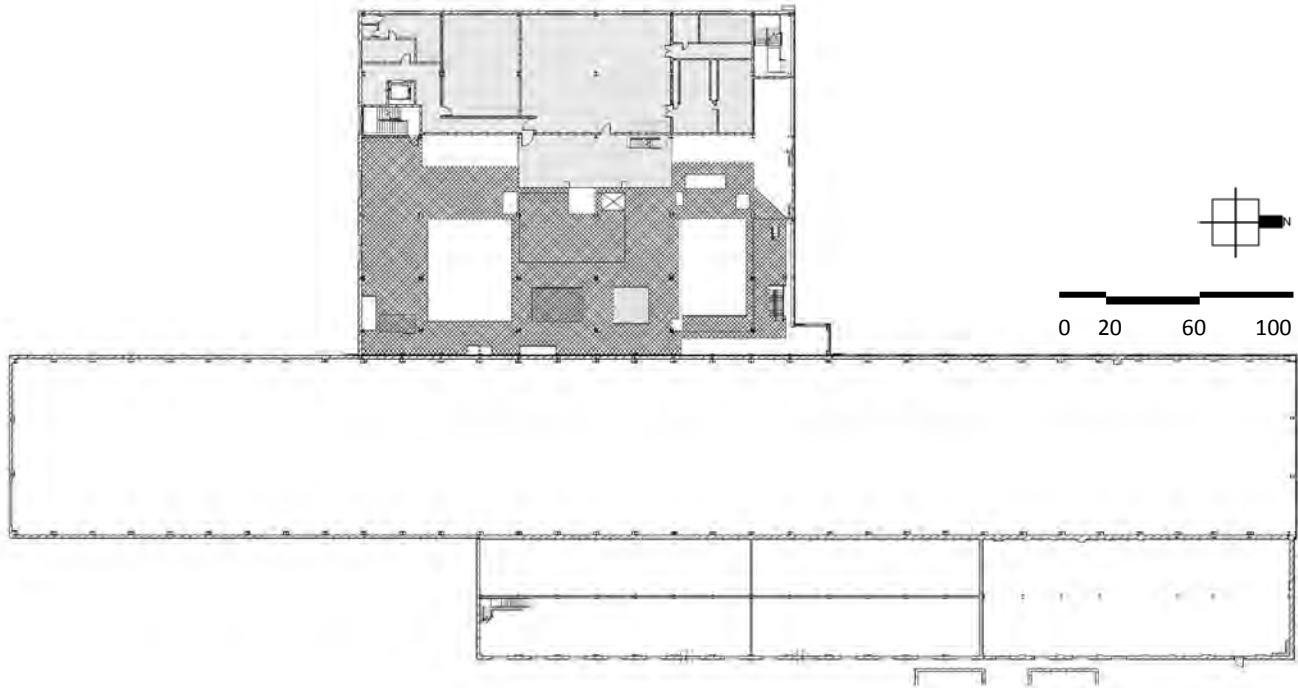


Figure 6: Second Floor Plan. Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture, 2014.

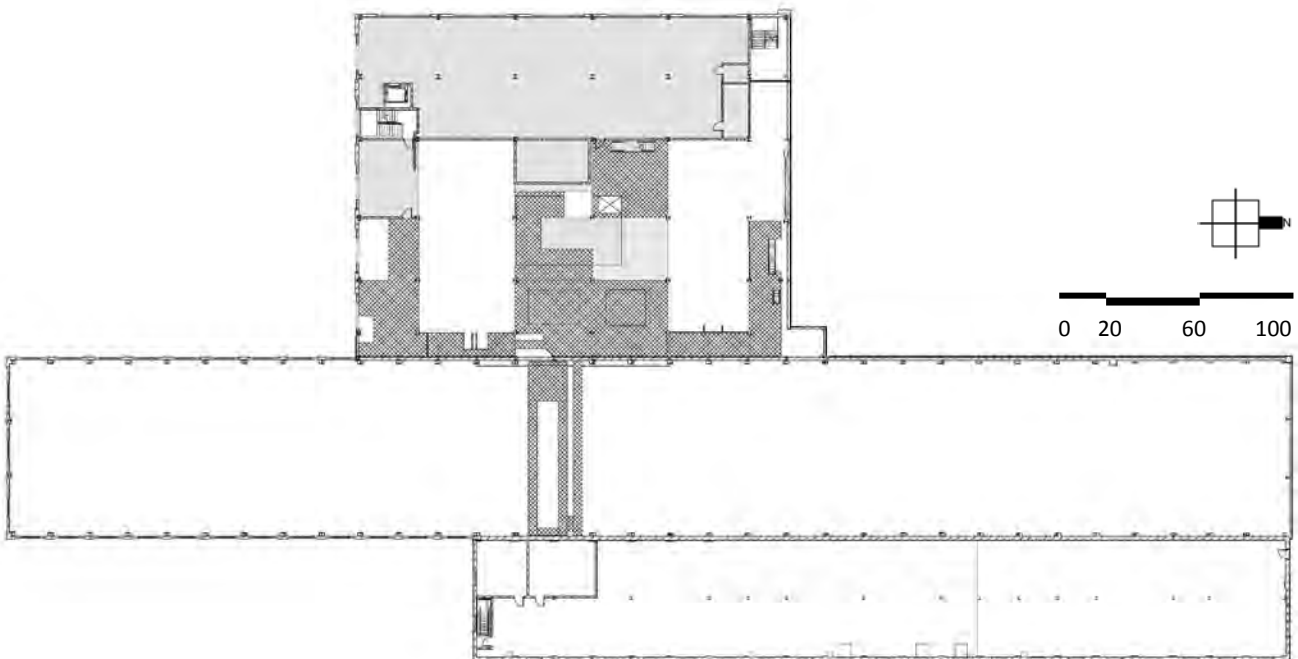


Figure 7: Third Floor Plan. Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture, 2014.

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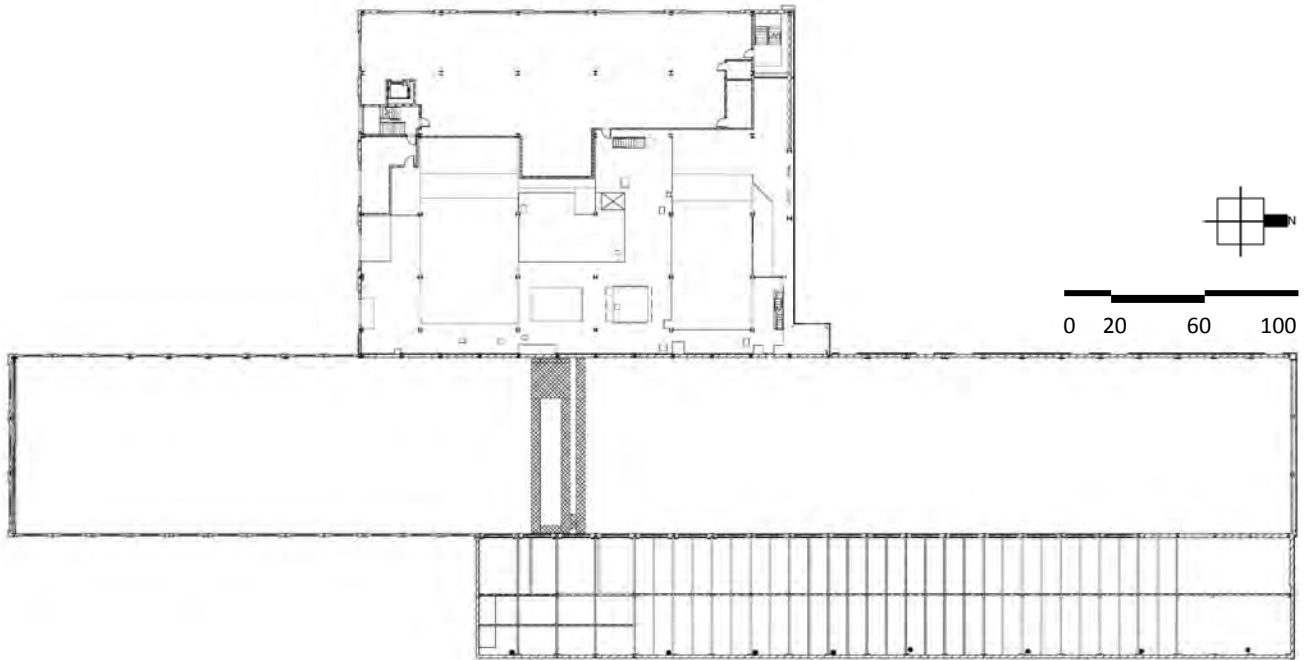


Figure 8: Fourth Floor Plan. Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture, 2014.

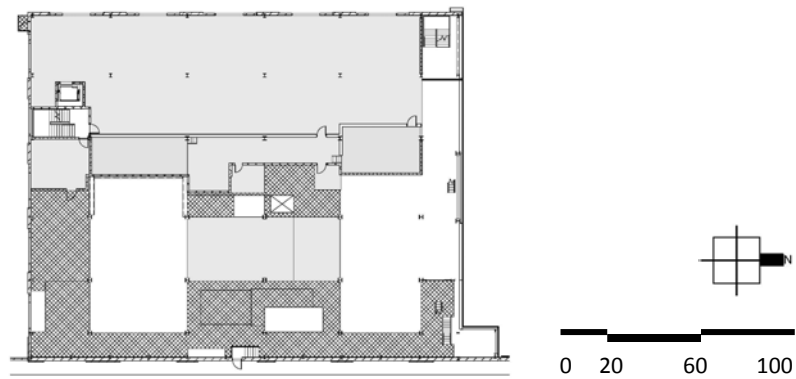


Figure 9: Fifth Floor Plan. Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture, 2014.

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Figure 10: Sixth Floor Plan. Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture, 2014.

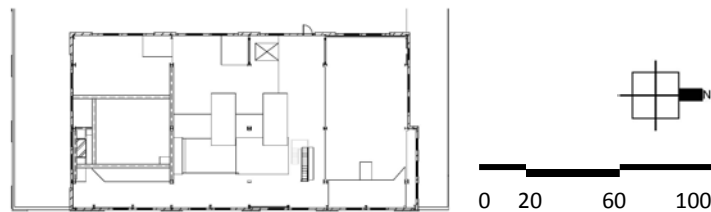


Figure 11: Seventh Floor Plan. Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture, 2014.

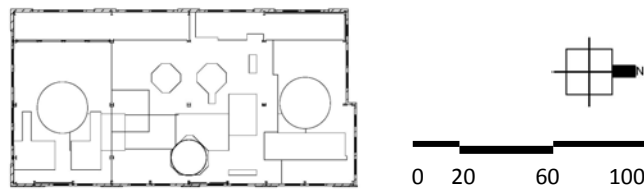


Figure 12: Eighth Floor Plan. Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture, 2014.

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Figure 13: Ninth Floor Plan. Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture, 2014.

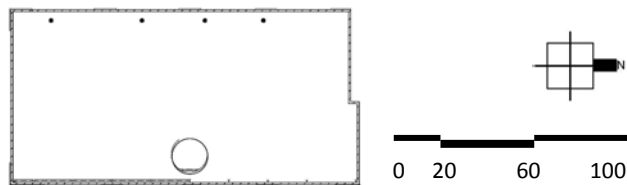


Figure 14: Roof Plan. Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture, 2014.

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Figure 15: Omaha Power Plant. 1951 c. Ernest Bihler photographer.
Image courtesy of Omaha Public Power District.

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Figure 16: Omaha Power Plant. Turbine Room. April 1961.
Image courtesy of Omaha Public Power District.

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Figure 17: Omaha Power Plant. April 1973. Kriss and McCallum photographers.
Image courtesy of Omaha Public Power District.

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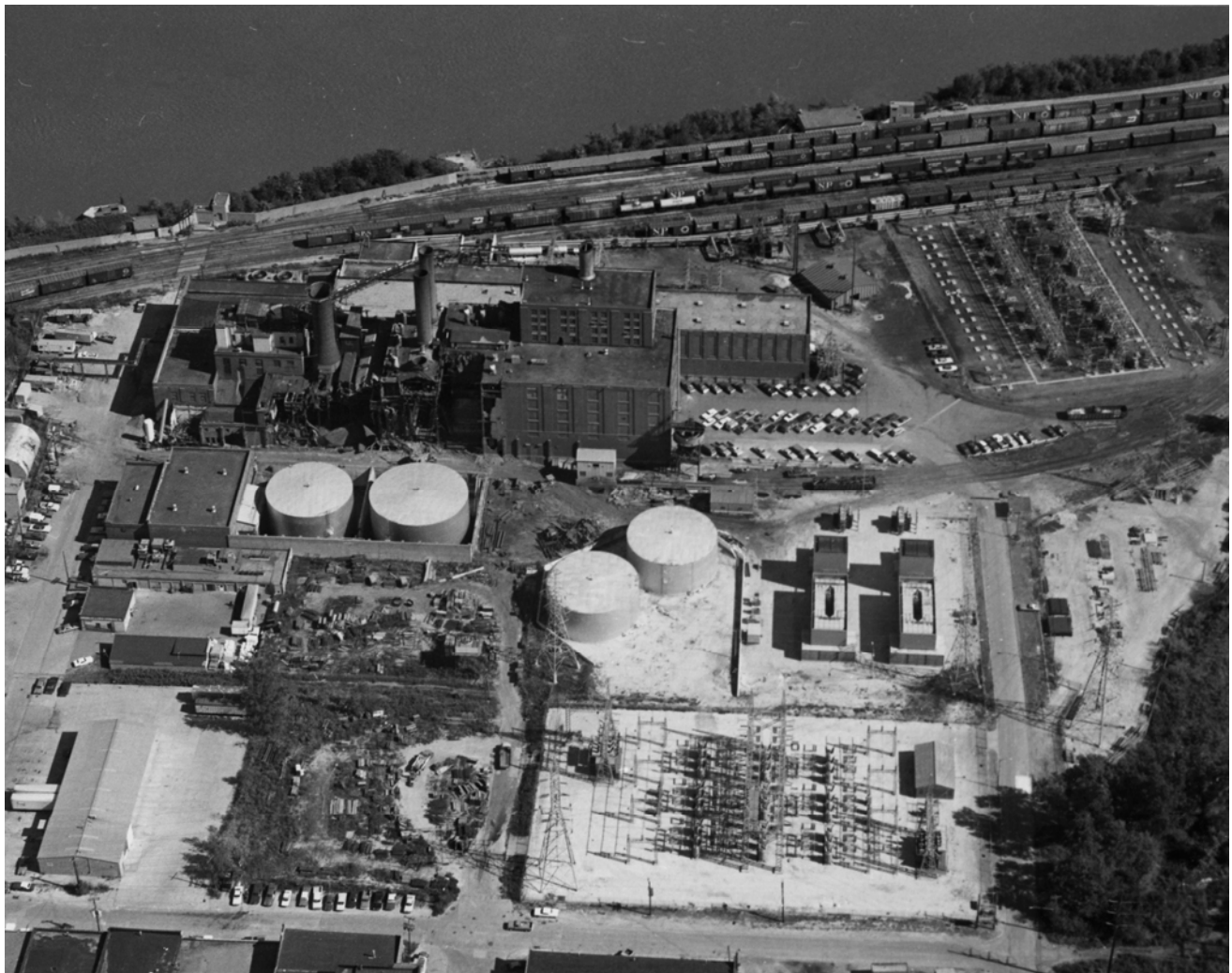


Figure 18: Omaha Power Plant. October 1975. Kriss and McCallum photographers.
Image courtesy of Omaha Public Power District.

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Figure 19: Omaha Power Plant. Aerial view. October 1976. Kriss and McCallum photographers.
Image courtesy of Omaha Public Power District.

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Figure 20: Photo Site Key. Blue arrows are exterior photos. Orange arrows are interior photos. See photo list for captions and floor numbers for interiors.

Omaha Power Plant Building

505 Marcy St.
Omaha, Douglas Co.,
Nebraska

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates:

- A) 41.253395, -95.922545
- B) 41.253457, -95.921559
- C) 41.253601, -95.921535
- D) 41.253613, -95.921335
- E) 41.250305, -95.920165
- F) 41.250617, -95.922105
- G) 41.251775, -95.922122
- H) 41.252220, -95.922510

Datum: WGS84



Omaha Power Plant Building


505 Marcy St.
Omaha, Douglas Co.,
Nebraska

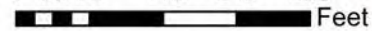
Latitude/Longitude Coordinates:

- A) 41.253395, -95.922545
- B) 41.253457, -95.921559
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- D) 41.253613, -95.921335
- E) 41.250305, -95.920165
- F) 41.250617, -95.922105
- G) 41.251775, -95.922122
- H) 41.252220, -95.922510

Datum: WGS84

Legend

 Property Boundary

0 35 70 140 210 280
 Feet

1:2,000



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, i-cubed, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community, Esri, HERE, DeLorme, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors



NOTICE
HARD HATS ARE
REQUIRED ON
THIS JOBSITE
AT ALL TIMES!
Style

KEEP OUT
UNLESS AUTHORIZED
STOP





















UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Omaha Power Plant Building

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEBRASKA, Douglas

DATE RECEIVED: 5/22/15 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 6/12/15
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/27/15 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 7/07/15
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 15000394

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 7-1-215 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Primary source of Power for Omaha in first half of 20th Century
Demolition of some sections diminishes integrity, but sufficient
form, masonry, Design, etc remain to recognize its function &
its Expense reflects its centrality to energy production

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept A

REVIEWER J. Gabbert DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N see attached

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



RECEIVED 2280

MAY 22 2015

Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

May 19, 2015

J. Paul Loether
National Register—National Historic Landmarks Programs
National Park Service
1201 "I" Street NW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20005

RE: Omaha Power Plant Building
505 Marcy, Omaha, Douglas County, Nebraska

Dear Mr. Loether:

The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the above referenced property to the National Register of Historic Places. This form has met all notification and other requirements as established in 36 CFR 60.

If you have any questions concerning this nomination, please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ruben A. Acosta". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Ruben A. Acosta
National Register and CLG Coordinator
Nebraska State Historical Society

Enclosure

1500 R Street
PO Box 82554
Lincoln, NE 68501-2554
p: (800) 833-6747
(402) 471-3270
f: (402) 471-3100
www.nebraskahistory.org