

MINNESOTA HISTORIC PROPERTIES INVENTORY FORM

MAR 15 1982

HISTORIC NAME: Potter-Casey Company Building

COUNTY: Aitkin

CURRENT NAME:

CITY/TWP.: Aitkin City

LEGAL DESC.:

See page 2

ADDRESS:

East side Minnesota Ave.
between First & Second
Sts. NW

CLASSIFICATION: Building <u>X</u> Structure _____ Object _____ District _____	CONDITION: Excellent _____ Good <u>X</u> Fair _____ Deteriorated _____	SIGNIFICANCE: Local <u>X</u> State _____ National _____	THEME/S: Primary <u>Commerce</u> Secondary _____ Others _____
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OPEN TO THE PUBLIC: Yes X No _____ Restricted X

PRESENT USE:

VISIBLE FROM THE ROAD: Yes X No _____

Commercial Building

OCCUPIED: Yes X No _____

DATE CONSTRUCTED: 1902

ORIGINAL USE: Commercial Building

ORIGINAL OWNER: Potter Company

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: N.J. Holden

OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS: James P. Ryan & Richard J.
Fannemel; Box 346; Aitkin, MN 56431

ACREAGE: Less than one acre X

LOCAL CONTACT/ORG.: Aitkin County Historical Society,
316 1st Ave. NE; Aitkin, MN 56431

UTM REFERENCE:

Aitkin MN Quad. 7.5

FORM PREPARED BY: Mark Haidet

15 / 445840 / 5153280

DATE: February 1981

DESCRIPTION:

The Potter-Casey Company Building is located on the east side of Minnesota Avenue in the center of Aitkin's commercial district. The building ranks among the largest commercial structures in Aitkin and is the only turn-of-the-century business block to retain a significant degree of physical integrity.

The 1902 two story structure is constructed of light-colored brick highlighted by metal trimming and is covered by a flat roof concealed by a parapet. Second level fenestration consists of rectangular double-hung windows flanked at either end by polygonal bay windows on the street facade and arched window openings on the north and south facades. (Windows on the south facade have either been boarded over or replaced with glass block.) The front facade's primary decorative features include the polygonal bay windows, a prominent metal cornice with block modillions, triangular projections rising above the parapet at either end of the facade, and a metal belt course. Although the original storefront infill has been altered, the engaged brick pilasters separating the three storerooms remain intact.

The interior retains its original design integrity, including three commercial spaces on the street level and 21 rooms for office space on the second level. The second level features original oak woodwork including wainscoting throughout. The structure's full basement includes a vault where the Potter-Casey Company records are stored.

The present owners, who have expressed an interest in restoring the storefront infill, are committed to the preservation and adaptive reuse of the structure by the community.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The 1902 Potter-Casey Company Building, also known as the Washington Block, housed Aitkin County's leading mercantile establishment for many years. The Potter-Casey Company dates from the early 1870s when Colonel Warren Potter established a lucrative business supplying the basic material needs of both loggers and early Aitkin residents. The firm, known as Potter & Co., eventually established a branch store in Grand Rapids and engaged in various business ventures including hotel proprietorship, steamboating on the Upper Mississippi River, real estate, and logging. The Company erected the brick office building in 1902 both to expand its Aitkin store facility and to provide needed office space for Aitkin's business community. In 1903 Potter & Co. was reorganized and the name changed to Potter-Casey Company. The firm's significant role in the Aitkin community gradually diminished following the deaths of Patrick Casey, junior partner and general business manager, in 1910, and of Potter in 1914. The Company discontinued in the late 1930s. The building ranks among the finest extant turn-of-the-century commercial structures in the region.

Legal Description:

Lots Seven, Eight and Nine (7, 8 & 9) Less the South 109 feet thereof and Lot Ten (10) of Block Ten (10) of the Original Townsite of Aitkin except the following tract: Beginning at the Northwest corner of said Lot 10 of Block 10 of the Original Town, now Village of Aitkin; running thence East along the North line of said Lot Ten a distance of One Hundred (100) feet; thence running South a distance of Twenty-two (22) feet; and thence running West parallel to the North line of said Lot 10 a distance of One Hundred (100) feet to the line of Fourth Street in said Village of Aitkin; thence running North along the line of said Fourth Street, Twenty-two (22) feet to the point of beginning.

Bibliography:

Aitkin Age, 1902-1903.