

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

425

**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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Willmar Tribune Building

other names/site number _____

2. Location

Street & number 311 Fourth Street SW not for publication N/A

city or town Willmar vicinity N/A

state Minnesota code MN county Kandiyohi code 067 zip code 56201

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Britta Bloomberg
Signature of certifying official/Title

Britta Bloomberg, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

3/27/07
Date

Minnesota Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet

 determined eligible for the National Register.
 See continuation sheet

 determined not eligible for the National Register.

 removed from the National Register.

 other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Edson H. Bull

Date of Action

5.15.07

Willmar Tribune Building
Name of Property

Kandiyohi County, Minnesota
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register
0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade: business

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade: professional

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

No style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

Limestone

roof Composition

other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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.)

X A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

X 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: N/A

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed on 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 #

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
X Other

Name of repository:

Kandiyohi County Historical Society, Willmar, MN

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Communications

Politics/Government

Period of Significance

1920-1957

Significant Dates

1920, 1928, 1950

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Lawson, Victor Emmanuel

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Alban, William Linley (architect)

Willmar Tribune Building
Name of Property

Kandiyohi County, Minnesota
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

Willmar, Minn.
1958, Revised 1994

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 15 338970 4998200
Zone Easting Northing

2

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

3
Zone Easting Northing

4
See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susan Granger and Scott Kelly

organization Gemini Research date January 15, 2007

street & number 15 E. 9th Street telephone 320-589-3846

city or town Morris state MN zip code 56267

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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. 470 *et seq.*). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it contains a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 120 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 National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1849 C. St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

7. DESCRIPTION

The Willmar Tribune Building, constructed in 1920, is located on the east side of Fourth Street SW about one-half block south of Litchfield Avenue in downtown Willmar. Willmar is located in central Minnesota's Kandiyohi County.

The Tribune Building is prominently situated near the center of Willmar's central business district. When the Tribune Building was completed in 1920, the Willmar Post Office stood immediately to the north and the hospital stood immediately to the south. (Both have been razed.) Today the Tribune Building is one of several well-preserved one-to-three story commercial buildings in downtown Willmar that date from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The former Great Northern railroad tracks and depot (now the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe Railroad) are located about two blocks north of the building, and U.S. Hwy 71 is located three blocks to the east.

The Tribune Building is a two-story commercial structure built of brick, tile, and reinforced concrete. The building was designed in an early 20th century commercial style influenced by the Classical Revival and Craftsman traditions. The architect was William L. Alban. The name of the builder is not known. The 40' x 100' building stands on a 50' x 150' lot surrounded by other commercial structures. A narrow bituminous-paved east-west alley runs along the south side of the building. There is a small bituminous-paved parking area at the rear of the lot.

The building's principal facades (west and north) are faced with textured reddish-brown brick. The brick is laid in geometric patterns to give the surface a rich texture. Most of the south wall is faced with gray common brick. Common brick was also originally exposed on the rear (east) wall.

The main facade features a classically-inspired composition of two outer brick pilasters supporting a brick entablature with a stepped parapet wall. Gray limestone forms the building's base, principal window sills, stylized pilaster trim, a band (which is black) near the top of the facade, and other detailing. The coping is gray limestone near the main facade and clay tile elsewhere. There was originally a flagpole on the roof near the front of the building. In the mid-20th century a tall vertical sign with large letters reading "Tribune" projected from the center of the main facade (later removed).

The Tribune Building has numerous window openings to provide abundant natural light and ventilation. (The Tribune wrote in 1920 that the building "stands apart from any other" so that "light and air is assured on all sides for all time to come" ("County-wide" 1920).) Near the main facade the window openings are wide and were originally filled with a "Chicago-style" configuration of a single large pane of plate glass flanked by 1/1 sash. On the second story these windows are topped by a transom. The windows that faced west were historically shaded by

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

rolled canvas awnings. On the first story these wide windows are intact. On the second story the sidelights and transoms are blocked with wood, but the framing elements are in place. The north and south walls of the building had rectangular 1/1 and 6/6 sash. Many of these openings retain their historic sashes, although some windows have been replaced. The rear elevation originally had segmental-arched window openings. The building has rectangular basement window openings, most of which are now filled with either wood or concrete block.

The main entrance, located at the center of the main facade, is sheltered by a slightly projecting brick and stone surround. A stone band at the top of the entrance surround bears the date "1920" and incised geometric detailing. (Above this surround, the modern, circular logo of Engan Associates is affixed to the building.) The building's main entrance originally had a single-leaf door flanked by glass sidelights with a glass transom. In later years the entrance appears to have had a double-leaf door and one sidelight. Today the entrance has a single-leaf glass-and-metal door with a glass transom and one sidelight. The entrance retains a pair of globe-style lamps affixed to the exterior wall. (Historic photos indicate that the glass globes were originally spherical and were changed to the current shape sometime before 1965.) Metal and glass display cabinets were added on either side of the main entrance circa 1960.

The south side wall originally had two single-leaf doors on the first story. The door in the third bay was originally topped by a metal beam for hoisting heavy supplies into the building. The beam has been removed. Both first-story doors are now filled with brick. In the east bay of the second story was a wider freight doorway that is now a window. This opening retains an original metal beam and hook for lifting supplies. The building's rear wall originally had a central double-leaf door on the first story and a single-leaf door on the second story that was accessed by an exterior stairway.

Architect W. L. Alban's original plans for the building show a basement with storage rooms, restroom, cistern, and an elevator, which was located against the south wall. The basement held the stereo typography rooms, where stereotype plates used in newspaper printing were made. These were metal plates cast from a matrix that was molded from raised type. In 1951 the press was moved from the first floor to the basement (Alban 1919; "Tribune Acquired" 1965; "Initial" 1965).

Alban's plans for the first floor show four offices near the front, where the main staircase was located, a reporters' room, restroom, vault, storage area, and a large printing area which held the press until 1965. The floor of the printing area was built with two concrete-lined wells, or pits, over which the printing equipment was placed. The press pits allowed staff to get beneath the machines to load them with inked forms, adjust the ink flow and paper feed, and clean and service them. Later sources indicate the first floor housed the *Tribune's* press, principal offices, composing shop, mailing room, and job printing department (Alban 1919; "Tribune Acquired" 1965; "Initial" 1965).

Alban's plans for the second floor show an office, and a battery room, terminal room, and operating room – used for receiving and transmitting telegraphic information and for telephone

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

equipment. There was also a ladies' lounge with attached restroom, a men's restroom, and a janitor's closet. During early years the second floor had a small meeting hall used by labor unions and other groups. The *Tribune* advertising department was eventually housed on the second floor, as was the Lawson Library. The *Tribune* explained, "In the new fireproof building the editor [Lawson] will have a splendid place for his library where it will be available for reference, and a safe place for all the records and cuts of local subjects which have accumulated during 32 years of active newspaper work in the county" ("Tribune Soon" 1920). In his library Lawson collected hundreds of volumes on a broad range of topics, as well as thousands of newspaper clippings and other historical materials. The library was used by *Tribune* staff and was also open to the public during regular hours (Alban 1919; "Lawson Library" 1961).

In 1951 the Tribune Building was enlarged with a 24' x 40' one-story rear addition to accommodate a larger press, a Duplex rotary model, which was installed in the basement. The addition's north wall is faced with textured reddish-brown brick and the rear and south walls are faced with glazed hollow clay tile. The addition's rear wall had a single-leaf door (door later replaced) and a double-leaf door (opening later filled). The addition's rectangular window openings were filled with glass block, some of which remain.

In 1965 when the *Tribune* acquired a larger and faster press, a Duplex Unitube, it was installed in the north side of the basement in an area formerly used for paper storage. Beneath the 62'-long machine was a 68'-long, 5'-deep, 4'9"-wide concrete press pit, and adjacent to the press was a 21'-long by 4'-wide motor pit. When the new press was installed, the mailing room was moved from the back of the first floor to the front of the basement level to be closer to the press. The new mailing room space had been occupied for many years by Frank's Barber Shop. The paper storage area was moved to the south side of the basement, and the old press area on the first floor was adapted for more paper storage ("View" 1965; "Initial" 1965). At about the same time, a second story was built onto the Tribune Building's 1951 rear addition. The second story of the addition is faced with textured reddish-brown brick on the north wall and smooth concrete block on the rear and south walls. It has rectangular window openings and a second-story single-leaf door that is accessed by a simple metal exterior stairway.

In 1979 both the newspaper and the Tribune Building were sold to Forum Publishing Company of Fargo. In 1980, after the Forum moved the newspaper to another building elsewhere in Willmar, longtime *Tribune* owner O. B. Augustson bought the Tribune Building back. In 1981 Augustson gave the building to an organization called West Central Minnesota Youth for Christ, to serve as its headquarters.

In 2003 the Willmar Tribune Building was purchased by Engan Associates, an architectural firm established in Willmar in 1979. Engan Associates is in the process of renovating the building, which now serves as its headquarters and design office.

In general, the exterior of the building is well preserved. The interior has been extensively remodeled, although it does retain some simple, stained and varnished window and door casings on the second floor.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Willmar Tribune Building is eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and B in the areas of Communications and Politics/Government. The property is significant as the home for 60 years (1920-1980) of the *Willmar Daily Tribune*, a widely-read newspaper that served the city of Willmar and, after about 1940, much of west central Minnesota. The period of significance begins when the building was constructed in 1920 and ends in 1957 to reflect the continuing influence of the newspaper and its editor and publisher in the decade following World War II. The Willmar Tribune Building is also significant for its associations with an historically significant person, Victor E. Lawson, who owned the Tribune for more than 60 years and made numerous political and civic contributions to the region. The property is associated with the statewide historic context "Railroads and Agricultural Development, 1870-1940." The property has a local level of significance.

Overview of Willmar

Willmar, now a city of about 18,300 people, is the county seat of Kandiyohi County, located in central Minnesota. Willmar was platted in 1869 by the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad (later the Great Northern), which built its major track line through Willmar in 1869-1870 on its route from St. Paul to Moorhead. Willmar became an important railroad division point with a railroad roundhouse, switching yards, repair shops, and offices. A second rail line, the Willmar and Sioux Falls, began serving Willmar in 1886-1887.

Railroads brought tremendous population growth to the county as European immigrants and Old Stock Americans established farms and towns. Kandiyohi County's population rose from about 8,000 in 1874 to about 18,400 in 1900. In addition to agriculture, the county had an early tourism industry that developed along its pristine lakes, forests, and parks. Tourists came first by train and then on an increasing network of paved roads and highways. In the early-to-mid 20th century Willmar became the site of a state residential hospital, a community college, and other institutions. Agricultural processing and transportation industries developed. In 1949, for example, Earl B. Olson established the Farmer's Produce Company in Willmar. Later renamed Jennie-O, the company became Minnesota's leading turkey processor.

Early History of the *Willmar Tribune*

The *Willmar Tribune* was established in February 1895 by Dr. Christian Johnson, a local physician and political Populist. It was the 14th newspaper to be established in Kandiyohi County, and one of several launched in Willmar, then a city of 2,500. In April 1895, Victor E. Lawson – the young editor of the nearby New London Times – became the *Willmar Tribune*'s editor. Lawson remained active at the *Tribune* until nearly 1960. (Helping produce the first issues was Anton Jacobson, then a New London boy of 17. In 1965 the 87-year-old Jacobson

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

helped the Tribune observe its 70th anniversary.)

The *Willmar Tribune* was established as a liberal, Populist newspaper whose political philosophy was closely allied with the Farmers' Alliance, a late 19th century grassroots political movement that was particularly strong in Kandiyohi County. In 1905 Victor Lawson explained,

The People's Party [or Populist Party] movement, which was an outgrowth of the [Farmers'] Alliance, gave rise to a demand for a local paper which should voice the demands of the large element of farmers and businessmen who believed in the principles of this new movement. In the latter part of 1894 Dr. Christian Johnson made a proposition to the effect that if one thousand cash subscriptions were pledged he would start a new paper. This met with favor, and the leading People's Party men throughout the county volunteered to take up subscriptions. . . . At first little attention was paid to the news, the greater part of the space being devoted to a vigorous discussion of political questions. Businessmen of Willmar, New London, and Belgrade appeared as advertisers (Lawson et al 1905: 406).

The *Willmar Tribune* began as a four-page, weekly newspaper with 1,000 subscribers. The Tribune was printed on its own press equipment starting in June 1895. In 1898 Dr. Johnson retired as publisher and Victor Lawson and partner J. Emil Nelson became co-owners of the newspaper. For many years the *Tribune* was published on Wednesdays, a common practice for weekly newspapers. Publishing midweek allowed weeklies to more readily compete for readers with the Sunday editions of big-city papers (Mott 1962: 480).

In 1902 the Tribune company added a second newspaper, which lasted only six months. The *Minnesota Forum* was a weekly publication, edited by Lawson and "devoted to discussion of People's Party principles." The *Forum* was discontinued in December 1902, and a new Saturday edition of the *Tribune* "took its place" (Lawson et al 1905: 406). The *Willmar Tribune* was then published as a semi-weekly for about one year, but in 1903 returned to its weekly schedule. In 1907 Lawson became sole owner of the *Willmar Tribune*.

Lawson wrote in 1905, "Through the varying fortunes of political parties, the *Willmar Tribune* has been unchanging in its advocacy of certain political principles such as public ownership of transportation and transmission monopolies, bimetallism [a currency reform], direct government issue of money without intervention of national banks, popular election of senators, direct legislation, [and] an income and inheritance tax. In local affairs it has championed the cause of temperance, municipal ownership of public utilities, and the principle of cooperation" (Lawson et al 1905: 406).

During more than 60 years with the *Tribune*, Lawson editorially supported a succession of political causes including the Populist Party, the Prohibitionist Party, the Nonpartisan League, Farmer-Labor, and national third party movements. Historian Peter Twenge writes that Lawson "built the *Willmar Tribune* to the largest daily in west central Minnesota. But the *Tribune* was more than a business. Under Lawson's direction, it became a means for social change. As a

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

journalist and politician, Lawson championed such causes as temperance, the redistribution of wealth, and abolition of monopolies" (Twenge 1970: np). The newspaper's guiding spirit was reflected in the banner legend: "Equal rights to all. Special privileges to none."

The *Willmar Tribune* was not the first left-leaning newspaper in Kandiyohi County. The *Willmar Argus*, published from 1885-1901, had been founded to "advocate the just rights and demands of the farmers" and "fearlessly expose and denounce the oppressors of the farmers till the battle is won" (Lawson et al 1905: 406). Another newspaper, the *Alliance Standard*, was published in Willmar from 1891-1893 by local members of the Farmers' Alliance. After the *Alliance Standard* folded, many of its supporters became charter subscribers of the *Willmar Tribune*. These newspapers were among many founded during the industrial revolution to advocate the rights of workers and farmers at a time when considerable economic and political power was held by industries, railroads, business monopolies, and utility franchises nationwide.

The *Willmar Tribune* was founded at a time when "It took little or no capital to start a weekly in a small town," according to journalism historian Frank Luther Mott. "The [typical] plant consisted of an ancient Washington hand-press, or a newer hand-cranked cylinder press, with a few cases of type, an imposing stone [also called a plate], and perhaps a small foot-power press for job work. . . . With the assistance of a local boy as 'printer's devil,' and perhaps that of a stout laborer to turn the press-crank on publication day, the proprietor was his own editor and printer" (Mott 1962: 478).

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the number of American newspapers and their circulation rose sharply, increasing much faster than U.S. population itself. This growth is attributed to a number of social and economic factors, in addition to population growth. There were nationwide improvements in education. Social and cultural changes increased the number of women reading newspapers. Newsprint costs dropped after wood pulp replaced rags in paper manufacturing. Journalism became "professionalized" as universities added journalism education programs and as professional organizations for journalists were founded (Mott 1962: 549; Emery and Emery 1988: 189).

Victor Lawson and many of his contemporaries practiced what some historians have termed "new journalism." The phrase distinguished "modern" late 19th and early 20th century newspapers from those of previous eras when newspapers were often written in a literary style and had long, rambling stories and letters, as well as articles that provided more opinion or impression than fact. Such newspapers were sometimes elitist or moralizing. In describing the new style, historians Emery and Emery write, "The new papers were low priced, aggressive, and easily read. They believed in the news function as the primary obligation of the press; they exhibited independence of editorial opinion; they crusaded actively in the community interest; they appealed to the mass audience through improved writing, better makeup, use of headlines and illustrations, and a popularization of their contents" (Emery and Emery 1988: 194). In the new era, newspapers became increasingly competitive. News was handled more rapidly. Stories were more tightly-written, and the writing was more objective, relying on knowledgeable sources and facts. Many believed the newspaper's principal role was to impart accurate information and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

allow readers to draw their own conclusions. This new generation of newspapers used words like "Free" or "Independent" in their names (e.g., *Mankato Free Press* or *Ortonville Independent*) to emphasize that they were not under political or social influence.

Newspapers developed other "modern" characteristics, including being "empirical, professional, bureaucratic, commercial, [and] industrial," according to journalism professor David Paul Nord. Nord writes that successful modern newspapers were "designed for broad circulation across class, occupational, and neighborhood boundaries" and needed to appeal to a large community of readers to maintain circulation and advertising revenue in a local business climate. Although newspapers aimed to serve the "public's interest," they tended to uphold community order and to shy away from conflict. Instead, they tended to emphasize broad consensus, balance, social harmony, and fair, rational decision-making. Often, they saw themselves as impartial mediators in public controversies (Nord 2001: 5, 145-146). Newspapers still provided a public forum for the discussion of ideas (an historical role for American newspapers), but now they focused on becoming an "authority of facts." They usually downplayed "agitation" and discussion in favor of telling "interesting stories of occurrences" to a largely passive audience (Nord 2001: 6, 104).

One trend of the period – sensational journalism that used gory crime or juicy gossip stories to attract readers – was generally not seen in small town newspapers, according to Frank Luther Mott. He writes, "In [country] papers the gossip impulse was satisfied not by emphasis on crime and scandal as in urban centers, but by the more kindly and matter-of-fact record of social events, community enterprises, crops, visiting, sickness, births, weddings, and deaths. The increase in space given to country correspondence – newsletters from farming centers containing short items about the daily lives of the rural population – was one of the most important developments of the country press in [the years 1892-1914]" (Mott 1962: 589).

Newspapers like the *Willmar Tribune* were commonly referred to as "country papers" to distinguish them from newspapers being published in large American cities. (This phrase was used by Lawson's successor, O. B. Augustson, who referred to himself as a "country editor" ("Two Men" 1995).) The phrase was not meant to be pejorative, however. Mott writes, "Though many [country papers] were weak and impermanent, thousands were well established, with good plants, excellent financial rating, and several employees. The editor was usually one of the most important men in the town – a leader in public affairs and in the cultural life of the community" (Mott 1962: 478-479). According to Mott, country newspapers competed successfully with big-city newspapers by emphasizing local news. They often monopolized their territories even though larger city newspapers were available to those readers by mail (Mott 1962: 589).

From the beginning, the *Willmar Tribune's* circulation and readership increased steadily. Subscriptions rose from 1,000 in 1895 to 1,300 by 1905. By 1915 the newspaper's circulation was 3,000. Advertising revenues were also likely increasing, if the *Tribune* followed national trends. Even small local newspapers were seeing more profits from advertising during the period, including revenue from national companies that advertised their brands in small local papers.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

In 1916, Victor Lawson recruited his nephew O. B. Augustson to work at the *Tribune*. Augustson served as printer's assistant, reporter, and other roles until becoming editor in 1920. Victor Lawson remained publisher, and the two men worked together to guide the *Tribune's* content and development for the next several decades. A *Tribune* retrospective later explained, "Uncle and nephew were cut out of the same cloth: born of Swedish immigrants, hard-working, liberal, and deeply involved in their newspaper and community" ("Two Men" 1995).

Construction of the Willmar Tribune Building

In 1920 the *Willmar Tribune* moved to its fourth home, a building it would occupy for the next 60 years. Located near the center of downtown Willmar, the new Tribune Building was a handsome, two-story, \$45,000 structure designed by St. Paul architect William L. Alban. At the time the new building was constructed, Victor Lawson had just been elected to his first term as mayor of Willmar. The population of the city was then about 5,900 people.

The *Willmar Tribune* had three previous locations, all in downtown Willmar. For the first two years, 1895-1897, the newspaper was located in rented space in the Gilger Block on Pacific Avenue (razed). In 1897 the *Tribune* moved to its own quarters, a newly-constructed building on Fourth Street that was owned by Victor Lawson and a partner, F. F. Nelson (razed). At first the newspaper occupied only the second floor of this building, but in 1901 it expanded to occupy both floors. The same year, J. Emil Nelson became Lawson's partner as owner of the building. In 1907 the *Tribune* moved to its third headquarters, a building on Benson Avenue (razed), which it occupied until 1920.

Publisher Victor Lawson financed the construction of the new Willmar Tribune Building by organizing a cooperative association in 1919 called the Tribune Building Association. The goal of the project, according to a 1920 announcement, was to sell 1,000 shares at \$50.00 each so a new building could be erected that would "become cooperatively owned and its permanency assured as a temple dedicated to truth and the securing of justice to the common folks" ("Tribune Soon" 1920). The campaign was successful and "hundreds of personal and Tribune friends" collectively contributed \$50,000 for the project. Each received one vote in the organization. The group's first president was John B. Bosch, a local farmer and member of the Nonpartisan League who later became a national leader in the Farmers' Holiday movement during the Depression. (Bosch's farmstead in Kandiyohi County was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987.) The Tribune Building Association paid shareholders a seven percent dividend throughout its existence. In 1959 all outstanding shares were retired and the newspaper itself (the Tribune Printing Company) became sole owner of the building ("Tribune Acquired" 1965).

In 1920 a small line drawing of the completed Tribune Building became a permanent part of the newspaper's masthead.

For many decades, some space in the Tribune Building was rented to other businesses such as commercial offices, a shoe repair shop, and a barbershop. The newspaper first occupied the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

entire building in 1965 ("Tribune Acquired" 1965; "Initial" 1965).

The new building was a nice improvement over prior facilities, and its completion brought technological improvements for the newspaper. In the Benson Avenue building the *Tribune* had been using a hand-fed Cottrell press that took 14 hours to print the newspaper's 3,500 copies. When the new building was completed in 1920, Lawson equipped it with a 25-year-old flat bed press purchased from a newspaper in Mankato. The press, installed on the first floor of the building, was made by Duplex, a leading maker of presses for small newspapers. It used 36"-wide continuous rolls of newsprint. A *Tribune* article explained, "What the new home will mean to the *Tribune* will soon be apparent to our readers after the change has been made. In the matter of presswork, for instance, we are now laboring under a great handicap. Instead of running two pages at a time beginning early in the week, our new press will be automatic, taking paper from a roll, printing both sides, cutting and folding same into sections ready to mail, at a speed which will enable us to have the press work on the ordinary paper done in less than two hours." According to the article, "The expert will be here shortly from Battle Creek, Michigan, to set up our new press, which has been in storage here since last spring." The improvements would allow the staff more time to work on advertisements, thereby better serving those customers, according to the article ("Tribune Soon" 1920; "Tribune Acquired" 1965).

The newspaper's Pearl job press, along with other equipment, was moved from the Benson Avenue building to the new building. Lawson had brought the Pearl press from New London to Willmar shortly after the *Tribune* was established in 1895. It was used to print letterheads, envelopes, handbills, and other job printing work, an important source of revenue for the Tribune Printing Company ("Only Living" 1961). Since 1911 the *Tribune* had been using linotype typesetters, machines that replaced tedious hand-setting of type for both newspapers and commercial job printing. By World War I linotypes were standard for "all but the most poorly equipped" newspapers (Mott 1962: 601). In 1927, with circulation at 3,500, the *Tribune* was using four linotypes. More were added in subsequent years.

Willmar Daily Tribune Launched

By the early 1920s the *Willmar Tribune* was the second-largest rural weekly in Minnesota, ranking behind the *Long Prairie Leader*. Completing the new Tribune Building and acquiring better equipment not only demonstrated the *Tribune's* success, but it also enabled the newspaper to take its next big step – becoming a daily publication ("Tribune Acquired" 1965).

In January 1928, after the building had been occupied for seven full years, Lawson and Augustson unveiled the *Willmar Daily Tribune*. A brief *Tribune* history (likely written by Augustson) later explained, "[The daily] was a small paper. Every effort had to be made to encourage far more advertising than in the weekly to meet the extra costs. Also you recall the Depression was on in this farm area. It was a tough period in which to launch such a new enterprise" ("Tribune Acquired" 1965). The daily was published Monday through Saturday, with the Wednesday issue generally the largest. Until 1950 the *Tribune* also continued to publish a weekly edition of the newspaper, which included the week's news highlights.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

In announcing the launch of the daily, the *Tribune* explained to its readers:

There will be a noon mail edition printed about one o'clock. This will be sent out to villages that must be reached on these noon [sic] trains. Then at about 4:30 the evening edition will be printed. This will be distributed in Willmar city, before supper, and go out on the Willmar routes in the morning and be mailed out to villages in the county that can be reached by night trains and go out on their respective routes in the morning. Newsboys will deliver the papers to Willmar homes between 4:30 and 6 o'clock. As subscriptions are paid in advance to the *Tribune* office the boys will do no collecting whatsoever. Their attention will be for delivery only (quoted in "Tribune Moves" 1995).

The *Willmar Daily Tribune* joined about 1,900 daily newspapers being published in 1928 in 1,400 different American cities (Emery and Emery 1988: 335). It was established at a time when the newspaper industry was expanding, despite increasing competition from radio and the crushing economic effects of the Depression. Between 1914 and 1940 the combined circulation of U.S. newspapers grew by 200 percent while the U.S. population increased 30 percent. Advertising dollars – which accounted for up to two-thirds of newspaper revenues during the period – fell off during the Depression, but circulation did not drop proportionately. Mott explains, "People had to have newspapers, [even] though banks closed, their savings vanished, and they went on relief" (Mott 1962: 676).

***Tribune* Content**

For decades the *Willmar Daily Tribune* served a critical function in the community as one of the principal purveyors of news and information to local residents. This role was shared by other local newspapers, which were all smaller than the *Tribune*, by larger city newspapers to which a few local residents subscribed, and by radio, which became a popular source of news in the 1920s. Television began to serve Willmar in the 1950s.

National and world news came to the *Tribune* via the Associated Press (AP) beginning about 1920. The AP transmitted information to member newspapers via dedicated telegraph lines. In 1914 the first teletypewriter – also called a teletype machine – was invented, and in the early 1920s a general purpose teletype was introduced. It is not known when the *Willmar Tribune* began to use the teletype, but it was likely circa 1920. The newspaper upgraded its teletypes periodically so that news bulletins could be received and printed more quickly ("Tribune Moves" 1995; Augustson "Editorial" 1965).

The *Willmar Daily Tribune* and *Willmar Weekly Tribune* contained a mix of local, state, national, and international news, always with an emphasis on local news. The use of photos in the paper was rare before the 1920s and then began to increase, becoming more common in the 1940s. Sports and comics were added around the time the daily was launched in 1928, feature stories gradually increased, and a small amount of syndicated material was used. The *Tribune's* content appears to have been typical for a small town newspaper. Journalism historian Mott writes,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

“Ever bound to its community by ties of the greatest intimacy, the country weekly [or daily] in [the period 1915-1940] developed to a higher degree than in earlier years its code of ‘community service.’ Promotion of highway improvement, parks, schools, public buildings, and village festivals was part of such programs. The local editor was usually a dominant figure in the war loan drives of 1917-18 and in the measures taken to meet the bank crisis of 1933” (Mott 1962: 729). In the country newspaper, “general miscellany declined and the columns were crowded with local news. Special departments devoted to school news, sports, farm news, churches, clubs, and society, [along] with a signed humor column, became prominent” (Mott 1962: 730).

Both Lawson and Augustson avoided sensationalism in favor of more substantial reporting and writing. A *Tribune* writer later explained, “Lawson’s stamp on the newspaper was unmistakable. He believed strongly in local news, yet he was also interested in broader socio-economic issues. For many years the pages of his newspaper promoted the cause of the farmer and the laborer, economic and banking reform, and prohibition” (“Two Men” 1995). The article said about Augustson, “His reign was marked by continuing emphasis on local news,” and “Contemporaries described him as one of the last old-style independent newsmen. Like his uncle, he was known for being liberal and progressive Again, like Lawson, he had a long record of community service” (“Two Men” 1995).

During World War II the *Willmar Daily Tribune* was an important source of information as it carried daily front-page news of the war and local stories about the home front. During the war all newspapers grappled with wartime hardships as shortages developed in labor, power, transportation, and supplies. Newsprint was rationed from 1943-1946. On the labor front, more women began working at American newspapers to replace men serving in the armed forces and defense industries. In general, the mid-1940s through mid-1950s were profitable years for newspapers, even though newspapers competed with radio for advertising dollars and with magazines and new “pocket” paperback books for general readers (Mott 1962: 780, 783, 786; Emery and Emery 1988: 622).

In 1947 Victor Lawson formally retired from the *Tribune*, although he continued to serve on the board of directors, to write editorials, and to be an almost-daily presence at the newspaper. He maintained his office and library in the building.

In the 1940s the *Willmar Daily Tribune* continued to expand its coverage and readership, becoming a major regional daily newspaper. It was one of about 1,700 dailies nationwide. The *Tribune* circulation rose to over 5,000 in the mid-1940s, and to 8,000 in December 1950. (Willmar’s population was then about 9,400.) After the mid-1950s, the *Tribune* was Willmar’s sole newspaper, a trend typical nationwide as industry consolidation shrank the number of newspapers in most smaller communities to one. In 1958 circulation was 10,500 and by 1965 it had reached 13,500.

West Central Minnesota Daily Tribune

By 1950, two-thirds of *Tribune* readers lived outside of the city of Willmar. This led to two

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

changes in the newspaper: In 1950 the *Tribune* dropped the weekly edition entirely. And it gave the daily a new name – the *West Central Minnesota Daily Tribune* – to reflect its increasing news coverage, circulation, and influence. The new name was a mouthful, and according to a colleague, Augustson was teased by fellow editors because his was “the longest newspaper name in the state” (Macklin 1987; “Tribune Changes” 1995; Kandiyohi 1970: 298).

In the post-war period the *Tribune* – along with many American newspapers and other business sectors – began to make long-overdue capital improvements that had been postponed by Depression and war. In 1951 the Duplex flat bed press, acquired in 1920, was replaced by a 26'-long Duplex tubular or rotary press. The used rotary press was purchased from a newspaper in Kankakee, Illinois, for \$45,000 and shipped to Willmar in two trucks. It could print 15,000 sheets an hour and allowed the *Tribune* to use one color in addition to black. The new equipment prompted construction of a one-story addition to the rear of the building. Like the flat bed model, the rotary press was installed on the building's first floor.

In 1953 the *Tribune* added photo engraving equipment, which allowed the paper to publish more photos of higher quality. The Fairchild engraver scanned a photograph or drawing placed on a revolving cylinder and transferred the image to a sheet of plastic held on a second cylinder by engraving tiny holes in the plastic. Ink then penetrated the holes in the printing process. The *Tribune* boasted, “Very few newspapers in the state, daily or weekly, have facilities such as ours for the making of newspaper engravings. . . . With our new engraving plant it will be possible for us to give picture coverage of any event up to within a few hours of press time, and we are able to use many, many more pictures than heretofore” (quoted in “Tribune Changes” 1995).

Newspaper Industry Consolidation

After World War II, the number of independent newspapers began to decline, but the *Tribune* remained a family-owned enterprise. Since the late 19th century, publishers had been buying multiple newspapers. Some of the nation's most important chains had been founded by men like E. W. Scripps, William Randolph Hearst, and Frank A. Munsey. A notable Midwestern chain, the Lee group, developed in the 1890s with a few small daily papers in Iowa and by 1959 owned nine dailies in Iowa, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Missouri, and Illinois, as well as radio and television stations. The trend toward consolidation accelerated after World War II. During the 1940s, for example, the Cowles brothers bought the *Minneapolis Times* and merged it with the *Minneapolis Star*. This left Minneapolis with only two daily newspapers, the *Morning Tribune* and the *Star*, both owned by the Star and Tribune Company with John Cowles as president (Mott 1962: 554, 648-649, 775-776).

According to historian Elizabeth MacIver Neiva, in 1953 the 1,785 daily newspapers in the United States were owned by 1,300 separate publishers who largely “saw themselves as guardians of age-old editorial standards and viewed their papers as local institutions, not as commercial enterprises. But by 1980, the number of independent newspapers had shrunk to just over 700. Large, publicly-traded media conglomerates now dominated the industry, and chief executives had replaced family patriarchs as arbiters of newspapers' content and editorial focus”

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

(Neiva 1996: 1). In a scholarly article on the subject, Neiva quotes the *Tribune's* O. B. Augustson who describes being pitched by potential buyers who "took me to the top of the mountain and said 'Look before you are all the kingdoms of the world. All this is yours if you'll just sell me your paper'" (quoted in Neiva 1996: 39).

The *West Central [Minnesota] Daily Tribune* was featured in a 1977 study of the American press conducted by the Press Association of Sweden. The Swedish group's director, Tell G. Dahldorf, visited Willmar to study the *Tribune* as an example of an independent rural daily – a much smaller newspaper than the other American publications Dahldorf was reviewing. In an article on the Willmar newspaper, published in Sweden, Dahldorf reported that the *Tribune* had recently received a top journalism award "as the newspaper containing the most news" and that news, rather than fancy format, was its focus and strength. Dahldorf wrote, "O.B.A. welcomed me into the editor's office, a room unchanged from the time the former editor was succeeded by his nephew now decades ago." Dahldorf further set the stage: "He sits in his open office which has an open door to the composing room where the linotype machines are in use. The papers on his desk are placed in small piles held in place by slugs of printers' lead" (Dahldorf 1977).

On the subject of newspaper consolidation Dahldorf wrote, "The large newspaper chains have tried time and again to purchase the *West Central Daily Tribune*. O.B.A. has been offered as much as four million dollars. But the publication is dedicated to serve its community, and the guidelines which will insure its continuation in the spirit of its founder, Victor E. Lawson, have long since been established." Dahldorf quoted Augustson as saying that the large chains, "are lacking in that they do not have a soul. . . . They are not interested in the real news that builds up cities and communities, their concern is to make profit and not to use the new media as a servant to the people. . . . They are not a living part of the community and, above else, the personal element is lost. Readers and workers become only unimportant numbers" (Dahldorf 1977).

Dahldorf also wrote, "O.B.A. is convinced that the 'human' approach brings the best results as it gives a larger dimension for local events. The large city dailies give too much space to the syndicated material, and often too much space for advertisements. Preferable then to operate on less income but to print a better community newspaper. Augustson has no thought of altering his philosophy" (Dahldorf 1977). Dahldorf also quotes Augustson as saying, "The right of our people to be informed is what we are here to defend" and ". . . it is our responsibility to print unpopular truths even for our constituency to read. There can be no question but that our loyalty remains with the small operator, the common man. After all, these people are America" (Dahldorf 1977).

More Recent *Tribune* History

In 1960 Victor Lawson passed away and O. B. Augustson became owner and publisher of the *West Central [Minnesota] Daily Tribune*, as well as editor.

Circulation in 1961 climbed over 11,000, according to an article that explained, "the *Daily Tribune* at present has a circulation in Willmar city and its rural routes of 3,800. In Kandiyohi

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 11

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

County the total circulation is 6,600. In the outside extra trade area the *Tribune* circulation is 4,700, making a grand total circulation of 11,300." The newspaper was then devoting "particular attention" to "the outside trade area of 4,700 which the *Tribune* seeks to expand and develop even more through greater news coverage" ("Commercial" 1961).

In 1964 the *Tribune* added a morning addition for farm subscribers, in addition to continuing its daily evening edition. The morning edition was printed at 7:00 a.m. and then taken in eight trucks to 35 towns in the area for distribution via rural mail carriers. In 1965 the *Tribune* was printing about 5,000 copies of the morning addition and about 8,400 copies of the evening edition. The extra morning edition was printed from 1964-1969 ("Initial" 1965).

In 1965 the *Tribune* acquired a larger and faster press, known as a Duplex Unitube, which was capable of printing 30,000 sheets an hour. It was shipped to Willmar in six trucks from Albany, Georgia, and installed by staff from Chicago's Goss Printing Company in a process that took two months. The *Tribune* had last replaced its press in 1951.

The 1965 press could print three colors in addition to black. Using the new press, the *Tribune* printed its first full-color photo in September 1965 and its first tabloid-style advertising insert the following month. In 1965 the *Tribune* also sped up the teletypes that received material from the Associated Press. The transmission rate increased from 54 to 66 words per minute, a 22 percent improvement. In 1967 the *Tribune* added a second photo-engraving machine, a Photo Lathe, which transferred photographs and line images to thin zinc plates which were then inked for printing (Augustson "Editorial" 1965; "Tribune Has" 1967).

In 1965 the *Tribune* was one of about 19 daily newspapers in Minnesota. The paper's circulation continued to expand, despite competition from radio and television. Dahldorf wrote in 1977, "In and around Willmar it would be difficult to find a home or a person who does not read the *West Central Daily Tribune*, for its coverage is practically 100 percent" (Dahldorf 1977). The author explained that many area residents read the Sunday edition of either the leading St. Paul or Minneapolis paper, but few read Twin Cities papers on a daily basis, choosing instead to read the *Tribune*.

In September 1976 the *Tribune* celebrated its 80th birthday by hosting a visit from Jack N. Anderson, a 1972 Pulitzer Prize-winning, investigative reporter for the *Washington Post*, who for many years was America's most widely-read newspaper columnist. Anderson's column was one of the few syndicated materials that the *Tribune* published on Augustson's watch.

Family Ownership Ends

In 1979 – when O. B. Augustson was 81 years old and still editing the paper after more than 60 years – he sold the *Tribune* to Forum Publishing Company, owners of the *Fargo Forum*. In his remarks announcing the sale, Augustson said, "Mr. [Bill] Marcil of the Forum and I have an understanding and a close working relationship which will continue with me as editor and manager-emeritus and as consultant to the new general manager which the Forum will be

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 12

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

sending to Willmar in the near future.” He also said, “I am also happy that the new owners are a newspaper family, like the ‘family’ in the *Tribune*” (“Sale” 1995).

In 1980 Forum Publishing shortened the newspaper’s name to the *West Central Tribune* and moved the entire operation from the Willmar Tribune Building to a plant in the city’s industrial park. The aging printing equipment was not moved, and the *Tribune* converted from letterpress, or “hot metal” typesetting, to offset printing. It was the last major newspaper in the state to fully make the conversion. Augustson’s colleague Bill Macklin later wrote, “Having grown up in the era of printing when headlines were set a letter at a time in a metal tray, O.B.A. was loyal to the old way. He was reluctant to go to offset printing and word processors – to which most non-metropolitan newspapers converted starting in 1960” (Macklin 1987).

Nationwide, delayed conversion to modern presses was not that uncommon among large newspapers, in part because presses were so expensive and in part because conversion was resisted by labor unions because it meant loss of jobs for pressmen. In 1980 there were still 439 daily newspapers in the U.S. using letterpress printing (Emery and Emery 1988: 643). The *Tribune*’s final day of letterpress printing was observed by film crews from local and national television stations and from the Minnesota Historical Society, which gave a grant to the Kandiyohi County Historical Society to make a documentary film on the *Tribune*’s letterpress process (*Letterpress* 1980).

In 1982 the *West Central Tribune* converted from evening to morning-only publication. The newspaper’s circulation in 1995 was 17,000.

Other Employees

Victor Lawson and O. B. Augustson were joined by dozens of men and women who helped produce the *Tribune*, working as reporters, feature writers, sportswriters, proofreaders, photographers, typesetters, printers, advertising salesmen, layout artists, circulation staff, carriers, and others. In the 1930s, for example, the newspaper’s masthead listed the following staff: Lawson; Augustson; H. A. Hengstler, City Editor and Sportswriter; Florence Freeberg, Bookkeeper; Reuben Bengtson, Advertising; Eben E. Lawson, Cartoonist and Special Contributor; J. V. Lawson, Job Printing Manager; Emil Aspaas, Circulation Manager; and George H. Hillerman, Printing Foreman. A few of the longtime employees are listed below:

Emil Aspaas began working at the *Tribune* in 1917 as a reporter. He was circulation manager in 1930 and west central news editor in 1960. In 1967 Aspaas was inducted into the Minnesota Newspaper Association’s Half Century Club. In a 1967 article recognizing his 50 years on the job, Aspaas recalled covering a bank heist in the early 1930s when robbers stole \$180,000 in cash and bonds and sprayed a downtown Willmar street with machine gun fire (“A.P.” 1967).

Reuben Bengtson (1900-1995) worked for the newspaper for more than 65 years. He began with the *Tribune* in 1928 in circulation, and in 1932 switched to the advertising division. He became advertising manager and eventually president of the company’s board of directors. From 1939 to

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 13

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

1995 he wrote a *Tribune* column entitled "Man About Town" – writing more than 13,000 columns in all. Bengtson also served as the *Tribune*'s director of corporate planning and development, community relations coordinator, and publisher emeritus. His other contributions to the Willmar area included a long career of public service through numerous civic, fraternal, and church organizations ("Longtime" 1995).

Eben E. Lawson, Victor Lawson's younger brother, worked at the *Tribune* for many decades. Eben Lawson was owner and publisher of the *New London Times* from 1895-1905. He then attended the Art Institute of Chicago. Beginning in 1909 he worked as a sculptor, painter, and newspaper cartoonist. His cartoons began appearing in the *Willmar Tribune* about 1909. His long-running cartoon series, the "Old Timers," ran in the *Tribune* in the 1920s and 1930s. (J. Vernon Lawson, another Lawson brother, also worked first at the *New London Times* and then at the *Willmar Tribune*.)

Donald E. Miller worked for the *Tribune* for many years in the advertising department and as a columnist. He still writes the newspaper's popular column "The Mirror of History." In 1994 Miller was principal author of *Where Buffalo Fish Abound: A Pictorial History of Kandiyohi County*.

Anton Okerman began to work at the *Tribune* in 1920, while the *Tribune* was still in its Benson Avenue building. He was a longtime linotypist – "one of the best" in the newspaper's history, wrote Augustson in 1960. In September 1960 he was honored for 40 years of continuous service by the *Tribune* and by the Willmar chapter of the Typographical Union (No. 853). Okerman was also serving as union president in 1960 ("Veteran Tribune" 1960).

Ernest Strom began at the *Tribune* in 1928. In 1960 he was the plant foreman ("Veteran Trib" 1960).

Victor E. Lawson

In addition to its significance as the home of the *Willmar Daily Tribune*, the Tribune Building meets National Register Criterion B for its associations with an important person – leading journalist, politician, and civic leader Victor E. Lawson. The Tribune Building served as Lawson's base of operation from 1920 to shortly before his death in 1960.

Victor Emmanuel Lawson (1871-1960) was born in March 1871 in Paxton, Illinois. His parents, Carl and Maria Lawson, were Swedish immigrants. Lawson attended school in Paxton until 1880 when the family moved to a farm near New London in Kandiyohi County. Here, "his time was divided by attending the New London school, participating in the struggle to clear the [farm] land of hazel brush, popple woods, and old stumps, and doing the usual farm work. His early ambition was to learn the printer's trade, and all his small savings were invested in printing material. He spent most of his leisure time at this work and in reading all the books and literature within his reach" (Lawson et al 1905: 424).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 14

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

Journalism. In 1889 Lawson obtained a teaching certificate and taught one term of public school. That same year he began his journalism career when he became editor of the *New London Times*. He was 18 years old. In addition to putting out the New London newspaper, he continued to work on his parents' farm. From 1891-1894 Lawson was owner and publisher of the *Times*. He became editor of the newly-established *Willmar Tribune* in 1895.

In addition to his long career with the *Willmar Tribune*, Lawson also edited and published the *Minnesota Forum*, a short-lived Populist newspaper, in 1902.

According to a memorial tribute, "As an editor he was the champion of the common man, was of liberal political philosophy, was a crusader for temperance and good morals and an upholder of the Christian faith." The tribute called him "the last of the pioneer editors of the west central [Minnesota] area" ("In Memoriam" 1960; "In Memoriam" 1961). Lawson was a member of the Minnesota Editorial Association and in 1952 was inducted into its Half Century Club. He served as president of the Minnesota Associated Press.

Politics. Lawson was initially a Republican, but for most of his life sympathized with a succession of liberal reform movements. Historian Peter Twenge writes, "Politically, Lawson promoted third-party efforts and ideas such as referendum and recall, as well as other legislation which would promote social justice." According to Twenge, "A close correlation existed between his journalistic career and his political efforts, for the newspaper provided Lawson a forum to express his ideas and views. His editorials served to familiarize the public not only with his ideas, but with his name, providing him the recognition so essential for public office" (Twenge 1970: np, 123).

Political activity among newspaperman was common in the U.S., particularly before the mid-20th century. Editors were often well-educated, opinionated, familiar with the workings of government, and knowledgeable about agriculture, business and industry, and other topics. As newspapers became more objective, "more commercially oriented," and more politically independent, overt political activity and office-holding generally decreased (Dooley 1997: 65).

A 1905 sketch of Lawson (likely self-penned and written as the Populist Party was declining) explained, "[Lawson] is still convinced that the original demands of the [People's] Party (which are simply the reincarnation of principles which never die) present the only practicable remedy for the ills under which the country suffers, and looks to the future for a vindication of his views" (Lawson et al 1905: 424).

In the 1910s and 1920s Lawson supported the Nonpartisan League, an agrarian reform movement that developed in North Dakota around 1915. In the *Willmar Tribune*, Lawson published League platforms and other coverage, and he helped with some organizing at the state level. In January 1918, during World War I, the front door of the *Willmar Tribune* was painted yellow – implying cowardice or treason – as an attack on Lawson's Nonpartisan views. The Nonpartisan League was the second-strongest political group in the state in 1920 and merged with Farmer-Labor in 1924.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 15

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

As a Prohibitionist, Lawson was "continually involved in controversies concerning alcoholic beverages at both local and state levels" (Twenge 1970: 75). The *Tribune* frequently took stands against issuing liquor licenses in Willmar, and the newspaper accepted no liquor or tobacco advertising. The Prohibitionist Party arose nationwide in the 1880s and was popular in Minnesota through the 1930s.

Lawson was a leader in Minnesota's Farmer-Labor coalition (1918-1944), a movement considered to be the most successful third party in U.S. history. He promoted formation of a national progressive third party in the late 1920s and 1930s, feeling that neither the Republican nor Democratic Party appropriately represented "the common folks." He also supported reform measures such as changing Minnesota election laws to require all candidates for state office to run without party designations, believing that this would reduce manipulation of the voters by political "machines" (Twenge 1970: 170-182).

Lawson was active during a contentious and shifting period in Minnesota politics when the nation faced economic depression; coalitions were forming and reforming; farmers, union labor, moderates, Communists, Socialists, and other liberal factions were vocal and divergent in their vision for the future; and the Republican Party was the state's largest political party and for many years held most major offices. A memorial tribute to Lawson, published both in Willmar and by the Minnesota Senate, called him "one of the builders of the liberal movement in Minnesota" ("In Memoriam" 1960; "In Memoriam" 1961).

Local Office. Lawson's career of public service began in New London where, as a young man, he served as postmaster, justice of the peace, village recorder, and chief of the fire department.

In Willmar, Lawson ran unsuccessfully for city alderman as a Prohibitionist in 1906 and 1908. He was first elected mayor in 1920 when he ran as a candidate allied with the new Farmer-Labor Party, receiving important support from the city's labor movement. Twenge explains, "For years he had been active in support of farm organizations, and supported their principles. He, in turn, was endorsed by the Farmers' Alliance, the Populists, Progressives, and in the 1920 election, the Farmers' Nonpartisan League. With the formation of the Farmer-Labor Party [in 1918], Lawson gained enough support to put him into political office in the city of Willmar" (Twenge 1970: 155).

Lawson won reelection as mayor in 1921 and 1922 and then lost reelection bids in 1923 and 1924. As mayor Lawson supported initiatives such as law enforcement (especially as relating to temperance), construction of a new city power and water plant, extending paving and sidewalks (including burying power lines downtown), and improving lake shores, boulevards, and parks (Twenge 1970: 148-151). He was later credited with instituting many "forward looking programs of a civic nature" (Kandiyohi 1970: np).

State-Level Party Organizing. From 1900-1906 Lawson served as chairman of the State Committee of the People's Party, also known as the Populist Party. In this role he managed two

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 16

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

statewide political campaigns at a time when the Populist Party was relatively strong in the state. (Only a few years before, in 1892, the national Populist Party candidate for U.S. President, James B. Weaver, had carried four states in the popular vote and received the electoral votes of two more states. The party's platform that year included the abolition of national banks, a graduated income tax, direct popular election of U.S. Senators, civil service reform, and an eight-hour work day.)

During the 1920s through 1940s, Lawson was one of a cadre of Minnesotans who were central to the formation of the Farmer-Labor Party and then to the party's eventual merger with Democrats to form Minnesota's Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party (DFL). Historians have referred to Lawson as an "elder statesman" of farmer-laborism (Mayer 1951) and a "veteran agrarian spokesman" (Gieske 1979: 213).

As a Farmer-Laborite, Lawson served many years on state-level committees. For example, in 1925 Lawson was one of eight Minnesotans who made up the executive committee of the newly-formed Farmer-Labor Association of Minnesota (Gieske 1979: 98-101). The group had formed to rebuild the party after virtually all of Farmer-Labor's major candidates had lost in the 1924 election. (The association existed until the 1944 merger to form the DFL.) In 1936 Lawson was selected as chair of Farmer-Labor's platform committee. In this role he had the delicate and important responsibility of framing platform language that would satisfy competing factions in the coalition and win support from a public that was at that time particularly sensitive to the perception of "communist" influences in the liberal party (Twenge 1970: 186-187).

In 1928 the state Farmer-Labor convention selected the *Willmar Daily Tribune* as its official newspaper. In 1937 and 1938 Lawson served as chair of the Farmer-Labor Newspaper Board, the statewide body in charge of publishing the party's own official newspaper.

State Office. Lawson also ran for statewide office. In 1906 he campaigned unsuccessfully for the Minnesota Senate as an independent, but with Prohibitionist views. He ran again as a Prohibitionist in 1910, and again lost. According to historian Peter Twenge, Lawson's 1910 campaign "showed an improvement in his campaign strategy and a movement toward Progressivism, which was just getting underway in the early 1900s" (Twenge 1970: 140).

In 1921 Lawson was urged to run for the U.S. House of Representatives. Alexandria's *Park Region Echo* was supportive, writing, "a man who can edit a Nonpartisan League newspaper in a city of something like five thousand people, and still be elected and reelected mayor of the city against the strongest efforts of the other side to beat him, would certainly make a splendid candidate for Congress" (quoted in Twenge 1970: 155-156). Lawson decided not to run, however.

In 1924 Lawson ran for Minnesota Governor on the Farmer-Labor ticket with strong support from his Nonpartisan League allies. He launched his campaign in May. "Lawson for Governor" clubs formed in several cities, and his support rose, especially in rural Minnesota. Lawson campaigned on "a combination of ideas and policies for which he had worked as a Populist"

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 17

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

including control of special interests, municipal ownership of public utilities, public ownership of railroads, reducing the power of telephone monopolies, veterans' benefits, and financing highway construction via automobile taxes (Twenge 1970: 161-163). Lawson lost in the state primary – a race in which six other Farmer-Labor candidates also vied for governor. (Floyd B. Olson won the primary but Republican Theodore Christianson was elected governor.)

Two years later, Lawson was one of six men at the 1926 state Farmer-Labor convention who were officially considered as the party's candidate for governor. Lawson was outvoted in early convention balloting and Magnus Johnson became the Farmer-Labor gubernatorial candidate (Gieske 1979: 100). (Christianson was reelected.)

That same year, 1926, Lawson was elected to the Minnesota Senate after soundly defeating his Republican opponent. He served 12 years in the Senate, being reelected in 1930 and 1934. He lost his reelection bid in 1938. During Lawson's early Senate years he was a leader among Prohibitionists, working to promote temperance and clean up corruption. During this time he served on Senate committees addressing crime prevention, agriculture, drainage, elections, public institutions, and other issues. In subsequent years his clout as a Farmer-Labor senator grew, especially after the 1930 election.

In 1930 Lawson ran his own campaign for Senate reelection as well as campaigning for gubernatorial candidate Floyd B. Olson and other Farmer-Laborites. Olson was elected in a landslide, becoming Minnesota's first Farmer-Labor governor, and Lawson became the Senate minority leader. Olson and Lawson worked closely together from 1930 until 1936 when Olson died in office during his third term as governor (Twenge 1970: 176, 186).

In 1932 Lawson ran for the U.S. House of Representatives but lost in the Farmer-Labor primary in June of that year. In 1934 he won reelection to the Minnesota Senate. A year later, in December 1935, Lawson was considered one of Governor Olson's top choices for appointment to fill the U.S. Senate seat of Thomas Schall after Senator Schall was killed in an automobile accident. (Olson ultimately appointed Elmer Benson to the seat.)

In 1938 Lawson was defeated when he stood for Senate reelection, losing to a moderate Republican who was a longtime state representative and a fellow Willmar resident. Lawson was not the only Farmer-Labor candidate to lose in 1938 – Elmer Benson was defeated by Harold Stassen in the governor's race, and many other Farmer-Labor candidates also lost. The party was in serious decline after several years of ascendancy, from 1930-1936 (Twenge 1970: 197; Gieske 1979).

During the next five years Lawson was actively involved in discussions regarding the fate of Farmer-Labor. He served on the party's state central committee, and was one of the voices opposed to Farmer-Labor's merger with the Democrats. Lawson's views did not prevail, and the two parties merged to form the DFL in time for the 1944 campaign season (Gieske 1979: 321-322; Benson 1980; Twenge 1970: 198).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 18

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

Education. Largely self-educated, Lawson was a strong proponent of education. As a young man he served on the Board of Education for Minnesota College, a Lutheran high school established in Minneapolis in 1904. For 25 years he served on the board of directors of Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, and in 1945 was awarded an honorary doctorate by Gustavus. He was elected to the Willmar Board of Education during the late 1910s, served six years on the board – five as chairman – and in 1955 was honored by the board for his years of service. Lawson also served on the governing board of the Willmar Public Library for more than 25 years, from 1926 to 1953.

Lawson was an avid historian. He was a supporter and honorary member of the Kandiyohi County Old Settlers Association and, after that group reorganized as the Kandiyohi County Historical Society in 1940, he served on the Society's board of directors from 1940 through the late 1950s. Lawson also supported the organization of county historical societies elsewhere in the region. He was a charter member of the Mississippi Valley Historical Society, and a member of several Scandinavian historical societies and foundations.

Lawson was co-author and co-publisher of a comprehensive history of Kandiyohi County published in 1905. He wrote and spoke about the history of Kandiyohi County, the Farmers' Alliance, the Kandiyohi County Fair, the U.S. Government-Dakota War of 1862, Willmar's Bethel Lutheran Church, and New London's Lebanon Lutheran Church, among other topics. Updated county histories published in 1958 and 1970 were both dedicated to Lawson in his role as preeminent county historian.

In 1970 Lawson's papers and much of his library were given to the Kandiyohi County Historical Society. Gifts from Lawson and from the *Tribune* enabled the society to expand its research collections, which are now housed in the society's Lawson Memorial Archives and Research Center.

A lifelong member of the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS), Lawson served on the MHS Executive Council for 33 years, from 1918-1951, and then on its honorary council. He was active in helping the society acquire a permanent home in 1918, served as vice president of the council, and chaired and spoke at many MHS events. In the 1940s Lawson served on the MHS Committee for the Preservation of Buildings of Architectural and Historical Interest, a group that was in charge of the MHS Historic Markers Program, among other duties.

Conservation. Lawson played leading roles in the establishment and support of two state parks: Sibley State Park in Kandiyohi County and Monson Lake State Park in Swift County. Sibley State Park was established in 1919 and first funded by the State in the early 1930s. (Its federal relief-built resources were listed on the National Register in 1992.) Monson Lake State Park was established in 1923. (Its federal relief-built resources were listed on the National Register in 1989.)

In Willmar, Lawson was instrumental in the creation of Robbins Island Park, established in 1942. He also established his own conservation preserve on Lake Andrew near New London

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 19

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

called the Ekeberg Conservation Foundation. Lawson eventually gave 22 acres of this land to the Lutheran church to create Shores of St. Andrew Bible Camp, which was built in 1958.

Other. In 1917 Lawson was elected president of the Kandiyohi County Poultry Association. In 1935 he was the first chairman of a new committee formed to oversee the organization of rural electric associations in the county. He was president of the Kandiyohi County Fair Association and later named a lifetime honorary member. He was a member of the Willmar Chamber of Commerce. In 1949 he was knighted by King Gustaf of Sweden into the Royal Order of Vasa. Lawson was also a noted patron of arts and literature.

Lawson served as deacon, trustee, and benefactor of Willmar's Bethel Lutheran Church. He was statewide president of Lutheran Brotherhood, a Lutheran fraternal aid association. From 1932-1941 Lawson was on the board of directors of Augustana Book Concern, a Swedish-Lutheran publishing house that was a forerunner of the present-day publisher Augustana Fortress.

Lawson was married to Minnie Nelson in 1894. The couple had no children, and Minnie died in 1901. Lawson was then married to Julia Shellstrom from 1909-1947. They had no children.

Lawson died in Willmar in March 1960, just a few days before his 89th birthday. His obituary was published in many cities and a broad spectrum of political, educational, and church leaders sent letters of condolence. Minnesota Governor Orville Freeman called him "a man of vigorous intellectual attainments, fearless in his judgments and in the expression of them." State Treasurer Val Bjornson said, "His fearless courage, his intelligence, his warmth – his passion for history and his own share in shaping it – were all qualities giving him the impressive stature he had." U.S. Senator Hubert H. Humphrey wrote, "He was a great American and a splendid newspaper publisher. I have always been proud of his friendship" (Lawson Papers).

O. B. Augustson

The Willmar Tribune Building is also associated with the entire career of another potentially important person – leading journalist and civic leader Oscar B. Augustson. His career began in 1916. Because Augustson was active well beyond 1957 – the end of this nomination's period of significance – many of his professional and civic activities are too recent to be properly evaluated within this nomination. It is recommended that the contributions of O. B. Augustson as an important person associated with the Willmar Tribune Building (National Register Criterion B) be reviewed fully once sufficient time has passed to provide historical context in which to assess his entire career. Toward that end, further information on Augustson is included below:

Oscar Bernard Augustson (1898-1987) was often known to friends and colleagues as "O.B.A.," or "O.B." He was born in Ishpeming, Michigan, in 1898 to Anton and Eva Augustson, who were Swedish immigrants. He father was apparently an iron miner. He graduated from Ishpeming High School in 1916 and that year, as an 18-year-old, was recruited by his uncle, Victor E. Lawson, to move to Willmar to work at the *Willmar Tribune*. Augustson attended Gustavus

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 20

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

Adolphus College in St. Peter, graduating in 1920.

Journalism. O. B. Augustson's long career in journalism began as a *Willmar Tribune* "printer's devil," or apprentice, in 1916. He worked as reporter, printer, and associate editor. In 1920 he was named managing editor. He served as editor until 1979, and then as editor emeritus. In 1960, at Lawson's death, Augustson also became owner and publisher of the newspaper. Although Augustson learned the field from his uncle, he became a formidable journalist in his own right and was one of the state's leading editors and publishers. He took his role as a newspaperman seriously, and was often quoted as saying, "Journalism is not just another business on Main Street" ("Former" 1987). Augustson remained at the newspaper for 67 years, retiring in 1983.

When Augustson died in 1987 a colleague wrote, "To O.B., as to his contemporaries, the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights was more important than breath," and "He was one of the last, if not the last, of the 'old time' editors in Minnesota. They were a breed unto themselves, and their like shall not be seen again. . . . The business side of newspapers didn't interest him. He was a newspaperman, first and always. . . . He doted on the quiet excitement of a breaking story: he loved the ring of the telephone, the rattle of a typewriter, the pound of the teletype, the clatter of the linotypes, and the roar of the press . . . this was news!" ("Death" 1987).

Fellow editor Bill Macklin suggests that Augustson's disapproval of alcohol may have made him reluctant to participate in state professional journalism activities. Macklin writes, "There was no lack of offenders in journalism, a field in which drinking is customary after hours. [Augustson] found excuses for not attending conventions of the trade, though he went to enough to have served as president of the Minnesota Associated Press." Macklin relates that, after being telephoned by colleagues attending a 1959 state convention in New Ulm and urged to drive over, "The reluctant Willmar editor - with a couple of his children - came, but he didn't remain after the dinner at the Country Club to partake of the sociabilities. He didn't want to see John Barleycorn take over" (Macklin 1987).

Augustson was elected president of the Minnesota Associated Press in 1950. He was a member of the Minnesota Newspaper Association's Half Century Club. In 1971 he was named Editor of the Year by the National Farmers Organization.

Politics. Augustson was active in politics and civic affairs. He made unsuccessful runs for the Minnesota Senate in 1954, 1958, and 1962, but did not make it through the Democratic-Farmer-Labor nominating process.

According to Bill Macklin, Augustson "often referred to himself as a liberal and a progressive. Known for his individualism and independence, he was one of the first [editors] in the area to speak out publicly against the Vietnam War." Macklin quotes one of Augustson's daughters recalling, "We were a great influence on Dad. We were teenagers during the Vietnam War, which he opposed very early as no place for the U.S. He didn't know why young people should have to go and risk death in the bloom of their lives" (Macklin 1987). Augustson was an ardent

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 21

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

supporter of presidential candidate Eugene J. McCarthy of Minnesota, also a critic of the Vietnam War.

Education. The father of seven children, Augustson served several years on the Willmar Board of Education. He worked to create Willmar Community College (established in 1961, now the Willmar campus of Ridgewater College) and chaired the committee to acquire property for the college's campus. He was honored with the college's Distinguished Service to Education Award. Augustson was also a strong supporter of his alma mater, Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter. In 1979, for example, Augustson gave Gustavus a major gift to help establish the Victor E. Lawson Chair in Swedish Immigrant Studies. In 1980 Augustson received the college's Greater Gustavus Award.

Augustson also had a strong interest in local history. He served on the board of directors of the Kandiyohi County Historical Society from 1961-1971. He wrote frequently on local history topics and contributed to a county history written in 1958. He directed the project to write and publish the *Centennial History of Kandiyohi County*, issued in 1970. Augustson worked to preserve the Guri and Lars Endreson House, a settlement-era log homestead in Kandiyohi County that figured prominently in the U.S. Government-Dakota Conflict of 1862. (The Endreson property is owned by the Kandiyohi County Historical Society and was listed on the National Register in 1986.)

Other. In 1968 Augustson was appointed by Minnesota Governor Harold LeVander to the Governor's Council on Aging (established in 1956 as the first body of its kind in the nation; now the Minnesota Board on Aging). He also served on the state industrial development commission, among other regional and state committees.

Augustson was a member, co-chair, and director of the American Red Cross of Kandiyohi County. He was a member of the American Legion, the Willmar Chamber of Commerce, and the local Kiwanis Club. He was a member and vice president of the Willmar Civic Chorus. He was a recipient of the Willmar Jaycees Outstanding Citizen Award in 1980 and the Kandiyohi County Outstanding Senior Citizen Award.

By 1941 Augustson had already served 20 years with the Willmar Boy Scouts including six years as a scoutmaster. He was instrumental in founding the Boy Scout troop associated with Willmar's Bethel Lutheran Church. He was recognized by the Willmar Boy Scouts for his many years of service in 1980.

Augustson was a longtime member, deacon board chair, Sunday school superintendent, choir director, and benefactor of Bethel Lutheran Church in Willmar.

Augustson was a lifelong teetotaler – coffee was much more to his liking. In 1928 Augustson co-founded the Willmar Saucer Drinking Society. According to local historians, "This group of mostly Scandinavian-descended Willmar businessmen met almost every business day for more

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 22

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

than 30 years” to discuss community development and concerns (Miller et al 1994: 39). In 1946 the society’s tongue-in-check celebration of Willmar’s coffee-drinking heritage helped launch the Willmar Kaffe Fest, a citywide festival still held annually. O. B. Augustson was grand marshal of the Kaffe Fest parade in 1979.

Augustson was married to Mildred Sletten in 1929. They had no children and Mildred passed away in 1936. In 1940, at the age of 42, Augustson was married to Phyllis Lundquist. The couple had seven children.

In 1987, four years after he retired from the *West Central Tribune*, O. B. Augustson died in Willmar.

Architect William L. Alban

The Willmar Tribune Building was designed by William L. Alban. William Linley Alban (1873-1961) was born in Plover, Wisconsin, attended public schools in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, graduated from the Chicago School of Architecture in 1897, and first practiced architecture in Stevens Point in 1897-1899. In 1899 he moved to St. Paul, where he apparently spent the rest of his career. Linley was chief draftsman for the firm O’Meyer and Thori from 1899-1905, and then became principal in a succession of partnerships including Thori, Alban, and Fisher; Alban and Fisher; Alban and Hausler; and Alban and Lockhart. He established his own practice around World War I. At one point in his career Alban also worked as an architect with Ellerbe and Company of St. Paul.

A recent architectural history of the city of St. Paul refers to Alban as a “gifted” designer. The authors, Jeff Hess and Paul Larson, write, “Alban was a graduate of an architectural school in Chicago and, like [his one-time partner Charles] Hausler, fell under the spell of Louis Sullivan. His tastes and skills ran to formally ordered but materially expressive designs. Even bungalows were not exempt from Alban’s demand for formal clarity” (Hess and Larson 2006: 96-97).

Alban specialized in church and school architecture. His churches in St. Paul include First Methodist Church (1908, Alban and Fischer), Olivet Methodist Episcopal Church (1909, Alban and Fisher), St. Anthony Park Methodist Episcopal Church (1912, Alban and Hausler), Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Reformation (1913, Alban and Hausler), Knox Presbyterian Church (1913, Alban and Hausler), Fairmount Avenue United Methodist Church (1917), St. Matthew’s Evangelical Lutheran Church (1918), and Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church (ca. 1925). His church designs elsewhere include two in Wisconsin: First Methodist Episcopal Church in Eau Claire (1909-1911) and Methodist Episcopal Church in Marshfield (1922).

Schools designed by Alban include Morris High School in Morris (1914, Alban and Lockhart; listed on the National Register in 2004), Lincoln School in St. Peter (1913, Alban and Hausler), Whittier School in Austin (1913, Alban and Hausler), Lincoln School in St. Paul (ca. 1916, Alban and Hausler), and a third-floor addition (1923) to Bockman Hall at United Church Seminary (now Luther Seminary) in St. Paul (listed on the National Register in 1985).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 23

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

Among Alban's many other works are Nerstrand City Hall in Nerstrand (1908, Thori, Alban, and Fisher; listed on the National Register in 1982), Shelter House at Sylvan Playground in St. Paul (1913, Alban and Hausler), City Water Department Building in St. Paul (1913, Alban and Hausler), First National Bank in St. Peter (1914, Alban and Lockhart; listed on the National Register as part of St. Peter Commercial Historic District in 2001), Payne Avenue State Bank in St. Paul (1923), Skinner and Chamberlain Department Store in Albert Lea (1924, listed on the National Register as part of Albert Lea Commercial Historic District in 1987), and many homes in St. Paul.

Summary

The Willmar Tribune Building, designed by William L. Alban and built 1920, housed Willmar's principal newspaper for 60 years from 1920 to 1980. During that time the *Tribune* grew from a small community weekly to a regional daily that was Minnesota's largest daily newspaper published outside of the Twin Cities. In many ways the *Tribune's* development reflected national industry trends, but the paper also bore the unique mark of its longtime editors and publishers – Victor E. Lawson and his nephew O. B. Augustson – men who were politically liberal, socially conservative, expert journalists, and dedicated community servants. In addition to producing the *Willmar Daily Tribune*, Lawson was an important state political leader in the first half of the 20th century. He served 12 years in the Minnesota Senate and helped lead several major third-party political movements including the Farmers' Alliance, the Populist Party, the Farmer-Labor Party, and the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party. Augustson, who was less active than Lawson at a statewide political level, was one of Minnesota's leading editors and publishers in the mid-to-late 20th century and a longtime Willmar community leader.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Alban, W. L." Architect Information Files, Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

Alban, W. L. "Tribune Building, Willmar, Minn." Architectural drawings, approx. 13 sheets. Aug. 1919. Kandiyohi County Historical Society, Willmar.

"Alban, William Linley [and Alban and Fisher, etc.]." Architect and Contractor File, Historic Sites Survey of St. Paul and Ramsey County, 1982. Ramsey County Historical Society, St. Paul.

"Alban, William Linley." In *Little Sketches of Big Folks*. St. Paul: R. L. Polk, 1907.

"And Now – Today – 24 Page Paper on the New Press." *West Central Daily Tribune*, Sept. 30, 1965.

"A.P. Recognizes Aspaas on 50 Yrs. as Newspaperman." *West Central Daily Tribune*, April 28, 1967.

Augustson, O. B. "Along the Way by O.B.A.." *Willmar Daily Tribune*, April 1, 1939.

Augustson, O. B. "Along the Way by O.B.A.." *Willmar Daily Tribune*, June 4, 1931.

Augustson, O. B. "Along the Way by O.B.A.." *Willmar Daily Tribune*, May 2, 1939.

Augustson, O. B. "Along the Way by O.B.A.." *Willmar Daily Tribune*, Oct. 30, 1940.

Augustson, O. B. "Editorial. More Changes at the Trib." *West Central Daily Tribune*, Sept. 29, 1965.

Augustson, O. B. "Editorial." *West Central Daily Tribune*, Aug. 5, 1977.

Benson, Elmer A. "Politics in My Lifetime." *Minnesota History*, vol. 47 (Winter 1980): 154-160.

"Built on Reform, Tribune Survives Critical First Year." *West Central Tribune*, Feb. 23, 1995.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 2

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

“Clips From the Tribune’s First Issues.” *West Central Tribune*, Feb. 23, 1995.

“A Commercial Dinner in Newspaper Week.” *West Central Daily Tribune*, Oct. 21, 1961.

“A County-wide Cooperative Enterprise, Tribune Building Association Now Offers its Stock to the Public.” *Willmar Tribune*, Nov. 17, 1920.

Dahldorf, Tell G. “Augustson’s *Tribune* Dedicated to the Human Touch.” Jan. 1977. Article reprinted and translation printed in *West Central Daily Tribune*, Aug. 5, 1977.

“Death of O. B. Augustson Marks Passing of an Era.” *West Central Tribune*, May 30, 1987.

Dooley, Patricia L. “Minnesota Publishers and Editors as Elected Officials, 1923-1938: A Comparison of Journalistic Rhetoric and Conduct.” *Journalism Quarterly*, vol. 71 (1997): 64-75.

Emery, Michael, and Edwin Emery. *The Press and America: An Interpretative History of the Mass Media*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1988.

“Former Trib Owner and Editor Dead.” *West Central Tribune*, May 29, 1987.

Gieske, Millard L. *Minnesota Farmer-Laborism: The Third-Party Alternative*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979.

Granger, Susan. *Kandiyohi County Historic Sites Survey, 1984-1985: Final Report*. Prepared for the Minnesota Historical Society’s State Historic Preservation Office in cooperation with the Kandiyohi County Historical Society. Sept. 1985.

Hage, George S., ed. *Minnesota Newspaper Association: 125 Years of Service to the State, its People, and to Journalism*. Minneapolis: Minnesota Newspaper Assoc., 1992.

Hess, Jeffrey A., and Paul Clifford Larson. *St. Paul’s Architecture: A History*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

Historical photographs of Willmar Tribune Building and staff. Kandiyohi County Historical Society, Willmar.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 3

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

“Jacobson of New London Recalls First Tribune Issue Back in '95.” *West Central Daily Tribune*, Jan. 22, 1965.

Kandiyohi County Centennial History Committee. *The Centennial History: Kandiyohi County, Minnesota, 1870-1970*. Willmar, MN: Kandiyohi County Historical Society, 1970.

“Lawson Library” [display advertisement]. *West Central Daily Tribune*, March 4, 1961.

Lawson, Victor E., and Eben E. Lawson, eds. *Anniversary Album, 1859-1944, Lebanon Lutheran Church [New London]*. 1944.

Lawson, Victor E. “The Farmers’ Alliance in Kandiyohi County.” *Minnesota History Bulletin*, vol. 4 (1922): 337-339.

Lawson, Victor E. *Golden Jubilee History of the Kandiyohi County Fair, 1901-1950*. Willmar, MN: 1950.

Lawson, Victor E., J. Emil Nelson, and Martin E. Tew. *Illustrated History and Descriptive and Biographical Review of Kandiyohi County, Minnesota*. Willmar, MN: Victor E. Lawson and J. Emil Nelson, 1905.

Lawson, Victor E., Memorial Papers. Kandiyohi County Historical Society, Willmar.

Letterpress Printing. 16 mm film. Filmed at the West Central Tribune, Willmar, by Bob Schwartz and Associates. Produced by the Kandiyohi County Historical Society with partial funding from the Minnesota Historical Society. 1980.

“Longtime Tribune Columnist Reuben Bengtson Dead at 81.” *West Central Tribune*, May 3, 1995.

Macklin, Bill. “Former New Ulm Editor Pens Tribute to Colleague O.B.A.” *West Central Tribune*, June 12, 1987.

Mayer, George H. *Floyd B. Olson*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1951.

“In Memoriam, Dr. Victor E. Lawson, 1871-1960.” Memorial Services brochure. March 1960.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 4

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

“In Memoriam: Senators Peter Ahles, Sumner T. McKnight, H.N. Benson, Peter J. Memmer, William Michael Boylan, Phillip Palm, O.J. Finstad, Samuel A. Rask, Ralph B. Goodhue, Charles F. Serline, Arthur A. Hahn, H.H. Sullivan, Victor Lawson, F.M. Wrabek.” St. Paul: Minnesota Senate, 1961.

Meyer, Roy W. *Everyone's Country Estate: A History of Minnesota's State Parks*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1991.

Miller, Donald E., and Mona Nelson-Balcer with suppl. research by Thomas J. H. Bonde [Kandiyohi County Historical Society]. *Where Buffalo Fish Abound: A Pictorial History of Kandiyohi County*. Virginia Beach, VA.: Donning Co., 1994.

Mitau, G. Theodore. *Politics in Minnesota*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1970.

Mott, Frank Luther. *American Journalism: A History, 1690-1960*. New York: Macmillan, 1962.

Neiva, Elizabeth MacIver. “Chain Building: The Consolidation of the American Newspaper Industry, 1953-1980.” *Business History Review*, vol. 70 (Spring, 1996): 1-42.

“New Life for an Old Building.” *West Central Tribune*, May 11, 2004.

“New Tribune Press was in Operation This Week.” *West Central Daily Tribune*, Sept. 24, 1965.

“Newspaper History Also Reflects Community's History.” *West Central Tribune*, Feb. 23, 1995.

Nord, David Paul. *Communities of Journalism: A History of American Newspapers and Their Readers*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001.

Oman, A. P. “The Monson Lake Massacre: An Account of the Massacre of 1862 by the Only Surviving Eye-Witness as Told by A. P. Oman to Victor E. Lawson.” *My Church*, vol. 21 (1935): 37-46.

“Only Living Member of Old Tribune Force at Paper's Birth in '95.” *West Central Daily Tribune*, March 4, 1961.

“Oscar Augustson.” *West Central Tribune*, May 30, 1987.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 5

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

Polta, Anne. "Tribune Made Debut 100 Years Ago." *West Central Tribune*, Feb. 18, 1995.

"Sale, New Plant, Major Transitions for Tribune." *West Central Tribune*, Aug. 10, 1995.

"Tabloid – Another Tribune 'First'." *West Central Daily Tribune*, Oct. 6, 1965.

Thurn, Karl, and Helen Thurn. *Round Robin of Kandiyohi County, Minnesota: Centennial Year 1858-1958*. Willmar, MN: Published by the authors, 1958.

"The Tribune Acquired a New Home in 1920." *West Central Daily Tribune*, Jan. 16, 1965.

"Tribune Advances to Age of Color." *West Central Daily Tribune*, Sept. 28, 1965.

"Tribune Changes Name, Invests in Technology." *West Central Tribune*, June 22, 1995.

"Tribune Chronicles Years of Major Change." *West Central Tribune*, Aug. 10, 1995.

"Tribune Has Added 2nd Engraving Machine." *West Central Daily Tribune*, May 29, 1967.

"Tribune History Highlights." *West Central Tribune*, Oct. 5, 1995.

"Tribune Moves into New Home, Becomes Daily." *West Central Tribune*, April 20, 1995.

"Tribune Soon to Move to New Home." *Willmar Tribune*, Dec. 1, 1920.

Twenge, Stephen Peter. *Victor E. Lawson, The Journalist and Politician*. Master's Thesis. St. Cloud State College, 1970.

"Two Men Who Shaped the Newspaper." *West Central Tribune*, Oct. 5, 1995.

"Veteran Trib Employees Honored." *West Central Daily Tribune*, Oct. 25, 1960.

"Veteran Tribune Linotypist was Honored at a Dinner." *West Central Daily Tribune*, Sept. 21, 1960.

"Victor E. Lawson, Country Editor, 1871-1960." In United States Congress. *Congressional*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 6

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

Record: Proceedings and Debates of the 91st Congress. Washington, DC: U.S. Govt. Printing Office, 1960.

“View of Long Pit to Lie Under New Tribune Press.” *West Central Daily Tribune*, June 19, 1965.

“West Central Daily Tribune is Honored by the Press of Sweden.” *West Central Daily Tribune*, Aug. 5, 1977.

Who's Who in Minnesota. Minneapolis: Minnesota Editorial Association, 1941.

“Willmar Daily Tribune is Announced by Publishers.” *Willmar Tribune*, Oct. 26, 1927.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA, CONTINUED

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is shown by the dashed line on the accompanying sketch map entitled "Willmar Tribune Building, Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota."

The nominated property is legally described as the north 1/2 of Lot 11 and the south 1/2 of Lot 12, Block 44, in the Town (now City) of Willmar, subject to and to include the benefits of easements of record.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property is comprised of the parcel of land historically associated with the Willmar Tribune Building.

**Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi Co., MN**



Willmar Tribune Building newly completed, west and north elevations, 1920 or 1921 (Kandiyohi County Historical Society photo).

Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi Co., MN



Willmar Tribune Building under construction, west and south elevations, 1920 (Kandiyohi County Historical Society photo).



Victor E. Lawson, circa 1920 (Kandiyohi County Historical Society photo).



O. B. Augustson, circa 1960s (Kandiyohi County Historical Society photo).

**Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi Co., MN**



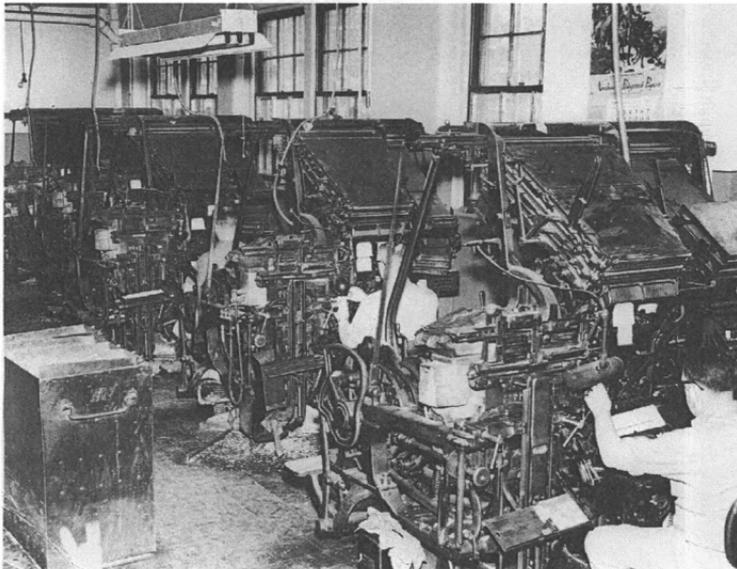
Tribune staff in front of the building, circa late 1940s. In second row are Victor E. Lawson (fourth from left), O. B. Augustson (fifth from left), Eben E. Lawson (sixth from left), and Reuben Bengston (seventh from left) (Kandiyohi County Historical Society photo).

**Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi Co., MN**



Tribune staff near the building, circa 1960. Victor E. Lawson is seated in front and O. B. Augustson is at far left (Kandiyohi County Historical Society photo).

**Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi Co., MN**



Willmar Tribune Building, five linotype machines, 1961 (Kandiyohi County Historical Society photo).

**Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi Co., MN**



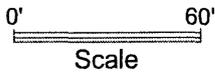
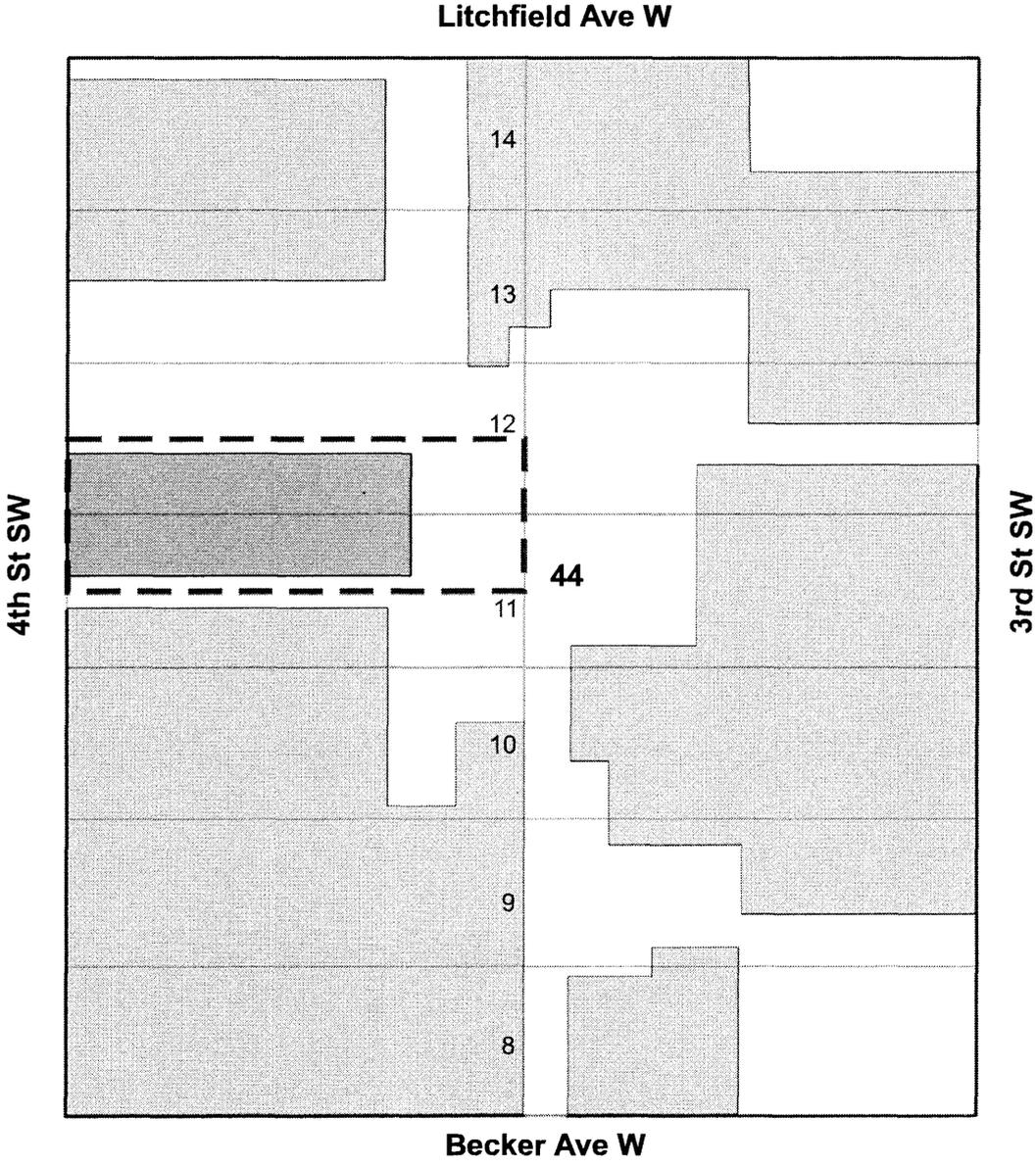
Willmar Tribune Building, 1965 (Kandiyohi County Historical Society photo).

**Willmar Tribune Building
Willmar, Kandiyohi Co., MN**



Tribune Building's 1951 rear addition, 1965. Note the rack for carriers' bicycles (Kandiyohi County Historical Society photo).

**Willmar Tribune Building, Willmar
Kandiyohi County, Minnesota**



--- Boundary of nominated property