

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

392

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.



### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Laird, Norton Company Building  
Other names/site number: Lumber Exchange Building, Lumbermen's Building, United Building Centers (UBC) Building  
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 125 West Fifth Street  
City or town: Winona State: Minnesota County: Winona  
Not For Publication:  n/a Vicinity:  n/a

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A  B  C  D

<p style="font-size: 1.2em; color: blue; text-align: center;"><i>Barbara Mitchell Howard</i></p> <hr/> <p><b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b> Barbara Mitchell Howard, Deputy SHPO, MHS</p>	<p style="font-size: 1.2em; color: blue; text-align: center;"><i>May 21, 2014</i></p> <hr/> <p><b>Date</b></p>
<p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	
<p>In my opinion, the property <input type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p><b>Signature of commenting official:</b></p>	<p><b>Date</b></p>
<p><b>Title :</b></p>	<p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>

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**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain: \_\_\_\_\_)

*Joe Edson H. Beall*  
Signature of the Keeper

7-11-14  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>1</u>	_____	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE/business

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS/Italian Renaissance

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK; STONE: limestone

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Laird, Norton Co., one of the lumber firms which dominated Winona's riverfront, built a headquarters at 125 W. Fifth Street in downtown Winona in 1917 to house its corporate leadership and the two subsidiaries which operated its retail lumber yards. Designed in Second Renaissance Revival style by the Chicago firm of Schmidt, Garden and Martin, the rectangular flat-roofed, brick and stone building has two stories and a full basement. The most prominent exterior feature is the central entrance which has two bronze doors recessed in a two-story barrel vault made of coffered limestone. Except for the last few years, the building has been continually occupied by Laird, Norton Co. or its successor companies and retains its essential integrity. The exterior facades, with the exception of the windows, are unchanged. The dramatic two-story lobby with its central staircase, balconies, marbled walls, and stained glass skylight retains its original finishes and fixtures.

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## Narrative Description

### Exterior

The Laird, Norton Co. building is a rectangular two-story reinforced concrete structure with full basement.<sup>1</sup> The elevations are clad in a dark brown brick laid in a Flemish bond pattern accented with Oneota Dolomite, a local limestone often referred to as “Winona Travertine.”

The front façade, facing generally north, runs parallel to Fifth Street for 121 feet and is set back about 15 feet from the sidewalk. The west façade runs for 91 feet along Johnson Street and is directly opposite the Winona Public Library (NRHP, 1977). The east façade is identical in length to the west façade and faces an alley which separates it from the rear façade of the Winona Masonic Temple (NRHP, 1998). The rear or south façade has 30-foot wide bays on the east and west ends which project out about 15 feet, framing a central alcove about 60 feet wide. The south façade opens unto a surface parking lot which connects with a larger parking lot owned by Central United Methodist Church which occupies the entire southern half of the block and has its main entrance on Broadway (Sixth Street).

As is typical of Renaissance Revival buildings, the primary façades are “organized into distinct horizontal divisions,” each of which is articulated differently.<sup>2</sup> The north (front) façade is symmetrically organized around the central entrance (described below) but the window openings of the first and second floor differ (Photo #1). Above a limestone base there are six evenly spaced windows on the first floor level, three on each side of the main entrance. Each sits on a limestone spandrel and has a limestone hood with a keystone in the form of a scroll. As is true throughout the building, the original steel six-light casement sash have been replaced with similar metal-clad casement sash with fixed transoms. On the second floor, there are five evenly spaced windows on each side of the central entrance. They share a single continuous limestone

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<sup>1</sup> Many Winonans referred to it as the “Lumber Exchange Building,” and this term appears on the *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1917 (updated 1949)*. The term “Lumbermen’s Building” or “Lumbermen’s Exchange” were also used. However, the Laird, Norton Co. never used these terms nor endorsed them. In a January 11, 1956 letter to the Winona County Historical Society, Ward Lucas, president of one of the subsidiaries of Laird, Norton Co. which occupied the building, wrote that the company could not prevent the public from using the name “Lumber Exchange,” but that the company had in fact never named the building. A sign was never erected, save for the “125” over the door, due to “the retiring nature of the Laird, Norton people.” Laird-Norton files, Winona County Historical Society archives. Various documents, including those related to architects and contractors, refer to the property as the Laird, Norton Co. Building during the course of its history. For reasons noted in Section 8, many referred to it as the United Building Centers Building after 1962.

<sup>2</sup> John Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1981), 40-41; Marcus Whiffin, *American Architecture since 1780: A Guide to the Styles*. Rev. Ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 75-79. Although this nomination advances the claim that the building is eligible for the National Register as historically significant under Criterion A, an argument can be made that it is also eligible under Criterion C as embodying “the distinctive characteristics” of the Second Renaissance Revival style. However, the building presents a restrained application of the style. For example, many buildings in this style have a stone balustrade which crowns the primary façade, whereas the Laird, Norton Co. Building has a simple brick parapet with stone coping.

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hood and limestone sills. A stone cornice above these windows separates the main façade from a brick parapet which has stone coping. Above the central entrance, a carved limestone medallion adorns the parapet, and above the medallion, a stone crest and a flagpole rest on the top edge of the parapet.

The prominent central entrance is recessed in a two story barrel vault made of coffered limestone (Photo #5). A scroll-shaped keystone adorns the peak of the arch where the barrel vault meets the front façade. In front of the barrel vault entrance is a limestone platform reached by four steps from the street level. A bronze and glass light fixture hangs from the apex of the vault. The double bronze doors and bronze 21-light transom have a limestone surround and a broken-arched limestone pediment. Within the pediment is a limestone pineapple and below that on the entablature is a limestone shield. Above the pediment and under the arch of the barrel vault is a multi-paned segmental arch window.

East and west façades are identical (Photos #2, 3). The first floor has six evenly spaced windows which are identical in size and ornament to the first floor windows on the front elevation. The second floor features nine windows of the same shape and size as the second floor windows on the front elevation. However, seven are grouped together and share one continuous limestone hood and sill, and the remaining two stand alone and flank this grouping on the north and south ends of the elevation. The limestone base and cornice, as well as the brick parapet, are the same as on the north façade.

The south (rear) façade is functional and unadorned (Photo #4). There are few windows, and they lack ornamental stone hoods or sills. However, in the center of the rear façade there are three large arched windows which illuminate the lobby. There is no stone cornice. At the center of the façade at grade level is the rear entrance, now enclosed by two aluminum and glass replacement doors. These doors and the front doors provide the only access to the building.

The building has a flat roof. Originally there was a large rectangular skylight in the center of the roof which allowed natural light to illuminate the stained glass described below. Because of leaking, this skylight was replaced by a roof in 2004. There are two brick chimneys, one servicing the original boiler, which is still in use, and one for the fireplace in the second-floor room in the southwest corner which was originally the Laird, Norton Co. conference room.

### **Interior**

A visitor entering through the deeply recessed central entrance on the north façade passes through a barrel vaulted vestibule about 13 ½ feet wide which is separated from the lobby by two wood framed doors with full glass panes, 12-light sidelights, and a segmental arch with multi-paned transom. The lobby is a dramatic two story space which is 30 feet wide and runs the full depth of the building (Photo #6). Opposite the main entrance at the center of the south wall is an imposing double-return staircase with a seven-foot-wide central flight reaching a landing from which side flights rise to landings at the southeast and southwest corners of the lobby from which final flights to the north reach the five-foot-wide balcony which wraps around the east, north and

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west sides of the lobby and provides access to the second floor offices. The railings of the stairway and balconies have intricately patterned wrought iron balusters topped with wood handrails.

The walls of the lobby are clad in grey marble panels on all four sides up to about seven feet. These marble panels rest on a black marble base, and above them are lath and plaster walls painted a buttery beige. The floor is terrazzo in a diagonally-placed checkerboard pattern, with alternating tan and black squares. The treads, risers and landings of the stairways are all in the tan terrazzo. The marble walls and terrazzo floor also continue into the vestibule. The lobby is lit by six large hexagonal fixtures which hang from the ceiling and by a series of sconces mounted in the marble walls. The ceiling features a large stained glass window divided into fifteen rectangular sections which originally was illuminated by a skylight (Photo #7). As noted above, the skylight has been replaced by a roof and the glass is now lit by electric lights. There is elaborate plaster molding featuring dentals and rosettes at the top the lobby where the plaster walls meet the ceiling. A Wells-Fargo clock in a walnut frame, now gone, was originally mounted at the center of the fascia below the balcony railing on the north side of the lobby.

The first floor of the lobby has four doors which provide access to the office areas. On the west wall near the stairway and in the northwest corner are doors which provide access to the west wing office areas. On the east wall of the lobby and in the northeast corner there are doors that provide access to the east wing office areas. In addition, there are two doors in the south wall of the first floor to the east and west of the central staircase. The door to the east opens into a utility room. The door to the west leads down a short flight of stairs to the rear entrance and to the basement stairs. Finally, the original construction included a five by six-foot elevator, still in use, which is entered through a door in the east wall of the lobby near the northeast corner.

The four first-floor doors to the office areas open into passageways which have a series of five small closets each enclosed by a quarter-sawn oak door and trim. The passageways on the south provide access to bathrooms (a women's room on the east, and a men's room on the west). Along the north exterior wall, there are three executive offices east of the main entrance, and three to the west. Both the east and west wings have large vaults along the load-bearing walls which separate the lobby from the office spaces. The rest of the space on the east and west wings are divided into offices of varying sizes, generally small offices around the perimeter and a large general space in the center.

The second floor generally follows the plan of the first with the same pattern of four doors on the balcony level giving access to the second floor offices. On the west side, where the Laird, Norton Co. corporate office was originally located, there is a men's toilet room, while on the east side the similar space is divided into a men's and women's room. There are large vaults on both the east and west wings. Like the first floor, the west wing has three large executive offices along the northern exterior wall and other private offices around the perimeter with a general office space in the center. Above the main entrance and vestibule is a small room which was originally used by the stenographer of the Laird, Norton Co. president, but which recently has served as the corporate library. Its east wall is completely filled with a built-in book case with glass doors.

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The office in the southwest corner, originally the conference room and later the chief executive office, features wood paneling, a large limestone fireplace, and bas-relief ornamental plasterwork in the ceiling (Photo #8). The east wing of the second floor was left unfinished in the original construction and although various interior partitions were added over the years, all exterior walls in the east wing remain exposed common brick.

When the building was constructed, the basement was intended for mechanicals and storage and was generally left unfinished. There are three more vaults on this level, two directly below the first and second floor vaults, and one below the entrance vestibule. In recent years, some of the basement has been remodeled for offices and an employee break room. There is also an attic space above the second floor which provides access to mechanicals and originally to the skylight. There is no evidence of the artesian well which reportedly was dug just south of the building but there appears to be an electrical pump from the period in a closet in the southeast corner of the basement in the boiler room.

The building has a very high level of integrity because it exhibits the essential physical features that convey its historic identity, including design, materials, and workmanship. The stone and brick work which define the exterior design are completely unchanged. There are replacement windows, but they have been selected to resemble the originals. Various office spaces have been remodeled to meet changing needs over the years, but the two uniquely designed spaces, the lobby and the second floor conference room, are essentially the same as they were in 1918. The lobby retains its terrazzo floors, stairways, and balconies; the wrought iron railings; and the marble walls. Although the original skylight has been replaced by a roof, the dramatic fifteen-panel stained glass installation in the lobby ceiling continues to command a visitor's attention. The conference room retains its large limestone fireplace and the white pine paneling selected by the owners.



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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1918-1958  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1918  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**  
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Schmidt, Garden and Martin (Chicago, Illinois)  
Seidlitz & Werner (Winona, Minnesota)

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

The Laird, Norton Co. Building is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of commerce for its association with the lumber industry in Minnesota. The property is related to the statewide historic contexts of "St. Croix Triangle Lumbering, 1830s-1900s," "Railroads and Agricultural Development, 1870-1940" and "Urban Centers, 1870-1940." The Laird, Norton Co. was the largest and most successful of the lumbering firms which developed sawmills on the Winona riverfront in the 1850s to turn the white pine of the St. Croix and Chippewa River valleys into the lumber needed to build homes and barns. Using Winona's strategic location as a river port and railroad hub, Laird, Norton Co. pioneered the use of "line yards," retail lumber outlets in towns which developed along the Winona & St. Peter Railroad as it extended its tracks into South Dakota. When the Wisconsin pineries were depleted, Laird, Norton Co. shifted its capital to the forests of Idaho and the Pacific Northwest but retained its system of line yards in the Midwest. In 1917, the company built the Laird, Norton Co. Building to house its corporate headquarters and the offices of the two subsidiaries which operated the line yards. From this building the company expanded its retail network and transformed the line yards into the all-purpose building supply stores of today. The period of significance begins with the completion of the building in 1918 and continues until 1958 when the Laird, Norton Co. moved its corporate office to Seattle. In 1962, it merged its retail subsidiaries into the United Building Centers (UBC) which became part of Pro-Build Holdings, Inc. in 2010.

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

### **The Laird Norton Company and the Winona Lumber Industry**

European-Americans first settled the land that became the city of Winona in 1851 shortly before the U.S. government and the Mdewakanton Dakota signed the Treaty of Mendota, which opened up the west bank of the Mississippi River for settlement. Winona was incorporated as a city in 1857, and thanks to lumber, grain, steamboats and railroads, this small settlement on a Mississippi sandbar grew quickly into a commercial center for the upper Midwest.

Shipping and milling wheat was the city's original economic motor, and by 1870, Winona ranked fourth behind Chicago, Milwaukee and Toledo as a primary grain market. In 1875, thirteen grain mills operated in Winona County. By the late 1880s, the wheat industry surrounding Winona had declined. Timber processing, however, was on the rise, and in the final analysis, was the most important factor in Winona's commercial development.<sup>3</sup> The first

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<sup>3</sup> William Crozier, "A Social History of Winona, Minnesota 1865-1895" (Ph.D dissertation, University of Nebraska, 1975), 38.

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sawmill on Winona's riverfront went into operation in 1855 and was soon joined by several others, all of which were regularly expanded and upgraded. Winona's mills processed the timber cut in the great white pine forests of the "St. Croix Triangle" formed by the St. Croix and Chippewa rivers. Local lumbermen benefited greatly from Winona's strategic location just thirty miles downstream from where the Chippewa joins the Mississippi. By 1870, Winona was one of the nation's top lumber processing and marketing centers.

Transportation was the key to Winona's growth. During its first decade, Winona's commercial prominence was based on steamboat traffic. However, Winona's entrepreneurs recognized very early that their future depended on railroad development. In 1855, a group of Winona businessmen organized the Transit Railroad and obtained a land grant of 1.7 million acres to finance a line to the west. A first attempt to begin laying track fizzled in 1858. In 1862 the investors reorganized the railroad as the Winona and St. Peter and managed to extend track west to St. Charles in 1863, Rochester in 1864, St. Peter in 1870, and Dakota Territory in 1872. As a result, Winona became a hub where logs floated down the river could be processed into lumber and then loaded onto trains for shipment westward.<sup>4</sup>

In 1851, John C. Laird emigrated from Pennsylvania and staked a claim in Winona.<sup>5</sup> When his brothers Matthew J. Laird and William H. Laird arrived in 1855 with a small amount of capital, they organized a partnership to retail lumber bought from the mills already established on the St. Croix and Chippewa rivers. This was Winona's first lumber yard. The following year their cousins James L. Norton and Matthew G. Norton moved from Pennsylvania and joined them in a partnership.<sup>6</sup> The new firm, christened Laird, Norton & Co., built a sawmill and began to mill logs coming from the St. Croix River valley. Unfortunately, their new sawmill debuted just as the economic depression known as the Panic of 1857 deflated demand for lumber. Probably because of the decline in the lumber business, John C. Laird and Matthew J. Laird left to pursue other interests, primarily farming, leaving William H. Laird, James L. Norton, and Mathew G. Norton to build their lumber business.<sup>7</sup> After a lean period, trade picked up, and the company became very profitable. When their business became more complex, the partners transformed the partnership known as Laird, Norton & Co. into the privately-held corporation called the Laird, Norton Co.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Franklin Curtis-Wedge, *History of Winona County*, 2 volumes (Chicago: H. C. Cooper, Jr. and Co., 1913), 177ff.

<sup>5</sup> Fred W. Kohlmeyer, *Timber Roots: The Laird, Norton Story, 1855-1905* (Winona, Minn.: Winona County Historical Society, 1972), 27; Patricia Latourette Lucas, *Branching Out: The History of the Laird Norton Family* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1989), 41ff.

<sup>6</sup> Kohlmeyer, 39. The Lairds and Nortons were Scots whose grandfathers had migrated to Pennsylvania from northern Ireland. Kohlmeyer, 3-20. Lucas, 7-11.

<sup>7</sup> Kohlmeyer, 50. As a result, William H. Laird, James L. Norton and Mathew G. Norton are commonly referred to as the "founders" of the Laird, Norton Co. However, as noted below, relatives of John C. and Mathew J. Laird played significant roles in the development of the Laird, Norton Co.

<sup>8</sup> Kohlmeyer, 202.

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Laird, Norton Co. shared the Winona riverfront with several other lumber firms. Their main competitors were the Youmans Bros. and Hodgins Lumber Company and the Empire Lumber Company. Earl and Addison Youmans put their first sawmill into operation in 1857 on the riverfront west of downtown. In 1870 they tore down their original mill and replaced it with a larger and more advanced operation. The following year, they formed a partnership with Abner Hodgins to form Youmans Brothers and Hodgins Lumber Company. A third lumbering business was formed in the 1860s by Charles Horton and Andrew Hamilton. In 1880, Andrew Hamilton sold his interests to Horton who then merged his company with an Eau Claire firm to become Empire Lumber Company. The following year, Laird Norton created the Winona Lumber Company with Andrew Hamilton. This firm was actually a subsidiary rather than a competitor, and in any case, Andrew Hamilton sold his interests to Laird, Norton Co. in 1894. All four companies had sawmills, millwork shops, and offices along the riverfront.<sup>9</sup>

All the lumbering companies faced similar challenges. They needed a stable supply of timber, efficient mills to manufacture lumber, and access to wholesale and retail markets for their product. The three partners of Laird, Norton Co. worked together in one large office and shared all major decisions. However, each specialized in one aspect of the business: Mathew Norton was in charge of procuring logs and overall finances, James Norton was in charge of sawmilling operations, and William Laird was responsible for marketing.<sup>10</sup>

### **Logs, sawmills, and lineyards**

In the early days the Winona lumbermen relied on timber grown in the Chippewa River watershed.<sup>11</sup> The logs were gathered, sorted and formed into rafts at Beef Slough, a branch of the Chippewa near its confluence with the Mississippi. The rafts could then be moved down the big river to Winona. To resolve the technical problems of dealing with thousands of floating logs and to reduce the squabbling among the various companies who owned them, Frederick Weyerhaeuser, a lumberman based in Rock Island, Illinois, organized the various Mississippi lumbermen into a cooperative venture called the Mississippi River Logging Company in 1871. Laird, Norton Co was a major part of this endeavor, which marked the beginning of a long and profitable association between the Weyerhaeuser, Laird and Norton families.<sup>12</sup>

At first, Laird, Norton Co. bought logs cut by companies which owned timberland. Gradually they began buying land in the Chippewa Valley, first on their own, and later in partnership with Weyerhaeuser and others. When Chippewa timber began to decline, they purchased land in the St. Croix Valley and then increasingly land farther north in Wisconsin and northern Minnesota. When the Northern Pacific Railroad put enormous acreage in the Pacific Northwest on the market in 1900, Weyerhaeuser persuaded Laird, Norton Co. to join him in this investment. The

<sup>9</sup> Curtiss-Wedge, 177-184

<sup>10</sup> Kohlmeyer, 182-185.

<sup>11</sup> Ralph W. Hidy, Frank E. Hill, and Allan Nevins. *Timber and Men; the Weyerhaeuser Story: 1888-1969* (New York, Macmillan, 1963), 43.

<sup>12</sup> William Laird was the first secretary of the company. Kohlmeyer, 82ff; Hidy, 50-53; Anges M. Larson, *History of the White Pine Industry in Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1949), 138ff.

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900,000 acres they bought formed the basis of the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company of Tacoma. Frederick Weyerhaeuser was the first president and William Laird the first vice-president of this enterprise, which exists today as Weyerhaeuser Co.<sup>13</sup> They were also involved with Weyerhaeuser in the formation of what became the Potlatch Lumber Company and Boise-Payette Company in Idaho.<sup>14</sup> Allison White Laird, the son of one of William Laird's brothers who had been involved with the company at its origins, eventually became general manager of the Potlatch operation, which at that time was the largest sawmill in the world.<sup>15</sup>

Once logs were cut down and floated down the river to Winona, they had to be turned into marketable lumber. Whereas various lumber companies often bought timberland in partnership with each other, each company built and managed its own sawmills. Under the direction of James Norton, the Laird, Norton Co. replaced its original sawmill in 1878 with a much larger steam driven sawmill with an elevated railway to move timber through the yard and to the company's warehouses. By this time the company employed 250 men and manufactured every kind of lumber needed for homebuilding, including fancy trim. Although Norton began losing his vision in 1868, and was completely blind by the mid-1890s, he continued to direct this aspect of the company's business. When a fire destroyed this mill in 1887, he oversaw the construction of a larger, more modern mill which eventually employed 400 men (Figure #1). Norton also oversaw the construction of a large mill for the Winona Lumber Company when that company was created by Laird, Norton Co. in 1880.<sup>16</sup>

The third challenge was to get the lumber to market. This was the era of massive settlement of the mostly treeless prairies of Minnesota, Iowa and the Dakotas, and everything on the prairies would at first be built of wood. Farmers needed wood for houses, barns, sheds, wagons, tubs, water tanks, hayracks, and the like, and towns needed wood for houses, shops, hotels, carriages, boardwalks, and most everything else. As noted, Winona lumber companies were well placed to meet this need. Their sawmills along the Mississippi would supply the product and the railroads would haul it west to the settlers.

Although Winona was eventually served by five railroads, the Laird, Norton Co. shipped its lumber primarily on the Winona and St. Peter (later owned by the Chicago and Northwestern), the pioneering railroad that eventually stretched 500 miles west across the prairie.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps because Laird and the Norton brothers had retailed lumber even before they built their first sawmill, they acted quickly when the Winona and St. Peter began laying tracks west. In 1864,

<sup>13</sup> Kohlmeyer, 286-7. The Weyerhaeuser group invested \$1.8 million and the Laird, Norton Co. contributed \$1.2 million to the original capital. See Hidy, 213.

<sup>14</sup> Kohlmeyer, 294ff.

<sup>15</sup> Kohlmeyer, 296ff.

<sup>16</sup> Kohlmeyer, 182ff.

<sup>17</sup> Although they were not involved in the development of the Winona and St. Peter, the Laird, Norton Co. partners did invest in the ill-fated Winona and South Western Railway Co which never made money and was eventually bought by the Chicago and Great Western. See Kohlmeyer, 63-65.

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they opened their first retail lumber yard at St. Charles in western Winona County. This was the first "line yard" established by a Winona firm, and in that same year they added line yards at Rochester and Kasson. After the war they added more yards, and by 1878 they were operating 27 line yards in Minnesota and South Dakota, and a few even in North Dakota.<sup>18</sup> When the Winona and St. Peter built branch lines to Chatfield and Plainview, more line yards were established, and by 1882 they had 36 in operation.<sup>19</sup>

In 1900, Laird, Norton Co. reorganized its line yards as a separate corporation called the Laird Norton Yards under the management of Otis Botsford, who had worked his way up in the company from line yard manager to traveling auditor of the Laird, Norton Co. line yards. In 1912, these line yards, now numbering 38, were reorganized again as the Botsford Lumber Company, a subsidiary of Laird, Norton Co. partially owned by Botsford, who served as its president.<sup>20</sup>

The line yards of the Winona Lumber Company went through a similar transformation. In 1900, that company's 35 line yards were reorganized as the Hayes-Lucas Lumber Company, a Laird Norton subsidiary, with William Hayes as president and John Lucas as vice-president.<sup>21</sup> Hayes, a brother-in-law to Mathew Norton, started with Laird, Norton Co. as the bookkeeper for the Beef Slough operation. He became the traveling auditor for the Laird, Norton line yards and later an officer in the Winona Lumber Company. John Lucas joined Laird, Norton Co. as a line yard manager and eventually became an executive at Winona Lumber Company. His son Ward Lucas married a granddaughter of William Laird and eventually became president of Hayes-Lucas Lumber.<sup>22</sup>

### **A new phase, a new generation, a new headquarters**

The last log came through the Laird, Norton Co. sawmill in 1905 and of that of the Winona Lumber Company in 1907. Empire Lumber milling operations lasted till 1909 while Youman Bros and Hodgins Lumber had shut down their operations on the riverfront in 1898. The Laird, Norton Co. timber investments were now primarily in the extensive Idaho and Pacific Northwest operations they had developed with Frederick Weyerhaeuser.

Although the upstream timberlands were depleted, Laird, Norton Co. continued to operate the Botsford Lumber Company and the Hayes-Lucas Lumber Company with their growing networks of lumber yards. The retailing of lumber and building supplies became the lasting legacy of the Laird, Norton Co. in the upper Midwest. As noted below, these "line yards" eventually evolved into the modern building supply centers of today. From the beginning, however, the Laird, Norton Co. sold a full range of building materials at their line yards, providing everything

<sup>18</sup> For the spread of Laird, Norton yards into the Dakotas, see John N. Vogel, *Great Lakes Lumber on the Great Plains: The Laird, Norton Lumber Company in South Dakota* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992).

<sup>19</sup> Kohlmeyer, 206ff; Larson, 374ff.

<sup>20</sup> Curtiss-Wedge, 182.

<sup>21</sup> Curtiss-Wedge, 184.

<sup>22</sup> Kohlmeyer, 197, 315; Lucas, 119.

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necessary to build a farmstead, a school, a house, or a church. The firm's millwork plant provided shingles, flooring, sash, doors, and all kinds of trim work, not only in pine but also in oak, ash, cherry, and maple (Figure #2). The line yards also stocked glass, plaster, cement, tarpaper, putty, glue, and nails. In the 1890s, the company even prepared blueprints which provided customers with plans for such things as stairways, porches and bay windows.<sup>23</sup>

The end of timber processing in Winona coincided with the passing of the Laird, Norton Co. founders. James Norton died in 1904, William Laird in 1910, and Mathew Norton in 1917.<sup>24</sup> Although none of the founders had sons who could assume leadership roles, a second generation of leaders emerged from family circles to lead the Laird, Norton Co. in this second phase of its development.<sup>25</sup> Several were men who had married the daughters of the three founders, including Fred S. Bell, husband of William Laird's daughter Frances, and Frank Thatcher, husband of James Norton's daughter Edith. Bell was president of Laird, Norton Co. from 1917 to his death in 1938 and Thatcher was vice-president of the firm from 1910 till his early death in 1921. Eventually a third generation assumed leadership roles, including George Little, husband of one of James Norton's granddaughters, who followed Bell as president; Norton Clapp, Mathew Norton's only grandson, who succeeded Little in the presidency of the company; and Laird Bell, the only grandson of William Laird, who was chairman of the board from 1953-1962.<sup>26</sup>

Although the company's main investments were now in the West, the second generation leadership decided to keep the Laird, Norton Co. corporate headquarters in Winona. In its early years, the company had maintained offices at Front and Kansas streets inside the firm's riverfront lumber yards on the east side (Figure #3). The first office was a simple wood structure which was replaced in 1880 with a more elaborate wooden structure with refined finishes and furniture. Then in 1887, the firm built a two-story brick and stone building in Queen Anne style adjacent to the lumber yard on the corner of Second St. and Liberty (Figure #4).<sup>27</sup> In this building, William Laird, James Norton and Mathew Norton completed their work of building a lumber company whose interests stretched to the Pacific Ocean. In the years before World War

<sup>23</sup> Kohlmeyer, 230.

<sup>24</sup> Laird and James Norton lived their entire lives in Winona. Mathew Norton died at age 86 in Pasadena, California where he had been living for several years. His body was returned to Winona for a funeral at Central Methodist Church and he was buried in Woodlawn Cemetery where James Norton and William Laird were also buried. "Mathew Norton Dies at home in California," *Winona Republican Herald*, July 16, 1917, 3; "Hold Funeral for M. Norton on Saturday," *WRH*, July 18, 1917, 3.

<sup>25</sup> William Laird had three daughters; his one son died in infancy. James Norton had three daughters; his one son "proved temperamentally unsuited for a business career." Kohlmeyer, 248. Mathew Norton had two daughters and two sons, but both of his sons died in their 20s. One of them, Herbert Norton, had graduated from Harvard and was working as a vice president of Winona Lumber Company when he died of meningitis at age 24. On Herbert Norton, see Kohlmeyer, 198-99; Lucas, 97-99, 103-110.

<sup>26</sup> The company continues today as a family held corporation operating under its modern name, Laird Norton Company LLC. It focuses on property management and financial services. See footnote 49 below. For more information go to its website at <http://www.lairdnorton.com/>

<sup>27</sup> Kohlmeyer, 203.



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I, the new generation of Laird, Norton Co. executives like Fred S. Bell shared this building with the officials of the Botsford Lumber Company.<sup>28</sup>

However, in the early morning hours of January 5, 1916 a fire broke out in the basement which did significant damages to the first floor offices of Fred S. Bell and Otis Botsford. That same day, they moved their offices temporarily into the Exchange Building at Fourth Street and Center.<sup>29</sup> Because the Laird, Norton Co. no longer ran milling operations on the riverfront, they had little reason to restore their fire-damaged building.<sup>30</sup> Almost immediately they began planning a new Laird, Norton Co. building on property the company owned at the southeast corner of Fifth and Johnson streets.

This site had the advantage of being surrounded by buildings closely tied to the Laird and Norton families. Directly across Fifth Street was the Y.M.C.A. building. The Laird and Norton families were major supporters of the Y.M.C.A. and William Laird had served a term as president of the board. In 1916, the Y.M.C.A. was using the vacant site at Fifth St. and Johnson for its tennis courts with Laird, Norton Co. approval. The Winona Free Public Library (NRHP, 1977), a gift to the city from William Laird in 1899, was directly west across Johnson Street.<sup>31</sup> Immediately to the east on the block of the proposed site was the Winona Masonic Temple (NRHP, 1998). William Hayes Laird, a nephew of William Laird, was the leader of the Winona Masons and Botsford and Lucas served on the governing board.<sup>32</sup> Warren Powers Laird, another nephew of William Laird, was one of the architects for both the library and the Masonic Temple.<sup>33</sup> The southern half of the block was occupied by Central Methodist Church, a congregation which included the Norton families among its members. Directly across Broadway from the Methodist church was First Congregational Church, which included William Laird and his family among its

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<sup>28</sup> The offices of the Hayes-Lucas Company, the other Laird Norton retail subsidiary, were in the "old post office" building at 50 E. Third Street. According to the *Winona City Directory*, the company had moved its office to this address by 1906.

<sup>29</sup> "Lumber Companies Lose offices in Fire Early Today," *WRH*, January 5, 1916, 8

<sup>30</sup> They sold the damaged building to the Wisconsin Railway, Light and Power Company. Later it housed a printing company. Today it is the home of the Polish Cultural Institute and Museum (<http://polishmuseumwinona.org/>). The museum highlights the history and culture of the Polish immigrants to Winona, most of whom came from Kashubia, a region on the Baltic Sea. A large part of the workforce in the Laird, Norton Co. milling operations on the Winona riverfront came from this community. Kohlmeier, 238-244.

<sup>31</sup> William D. Gernes, "Winona Free Public Library," *National Register of Historic Places Nomination*, December 3, 1976.

<sup>32</sup> Christine Curran and Charlene Roise, with Charles Nelson, "Winona Masonic Temple," *National Register of Historic Places Nomination*, August 1997. William Hayes Laird was the son of John C. Laird, one of the Laird brothers who had started the company but moved to other work in 1857. "Will" Hayes Laird worked for Laird, Norton Co. in a number of positions.

<sup>33</sup> Warren Powers Laird, dean of the school of architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, was the son of Mathew James Laird, one of the Laird brothers who had started the company but moved to other work in 1857.

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congregants. Both churches benefited greatly from the generosity of the Laird and Norton families.<sup>34</sup>

The new office was within easy walking distance to the residences of the city's most successful business leaders. Winona's wealthy citizens built grand Italianate, Second Empire, Queen Anne and Colonial Revival homes just west of downtown on Fourth, Fifth, Broadway (Sixth) and Wabasha (Seventh) streets and especially facing First Ward Park which was bounded by Broadway, Wabasha, Huff and Harriet.<sup>35</sup> Although the Laird, Norton Co. founders originally lived in modest homes near their east side lumber yard, each eventually built a grand home in this area, William Laird on Fourth Street, Mathew Norton on Fifth Street, and James Norton on Wabasha.<sup>36</sup> Their competitor Abner Hodgins built a grand Queen Anne home on Harriet Street facing the park (NRHP, 1983) and eventually Fred S. Bell bought the mansion next door on Harriet at Fifth Street. In 1906, John Lucas of Hayes-Lucas Lumber purchased the Italianate House at 276 W. Fifth, just two blocks from the new office building.<sup>37</sup> In 1918, Otis Botsford built a large Georgian Revival home at 176 W. Wabasha, also just two blocks from the Laird, Norton Co. Building, whose construction he had just overseen.<sup>38</sup>

The Laird, Norton Co. hired the well-known Chicago firm of Schmidt, Garden and Martin of Chicago to design their new headquarters. Richard E. Schmidt was a German born architect well known for designing buildings in both classical and "Chicago school" styles. In 1895 he hired Hugh Garden as chief designer of the firm, and in 1906, Schmidt and Garden formed a partnership which included the structural engineer Edgar Martin. Although Garden was the creative force behind many of their projects, Schmidt was the dominant figure, as evidenced by the fact that the formal name of the firm was "Richard E. Schmidt, Garden & Martin." The firm produced many commercial and industrial buildings in Chicago, most famously the enormous

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<sup>34</sup> Kohlmeier, 251. The family generosity toward their churches continued after the deaths of the founders. For example, in 1953, the four children of William Laird's daughters Frances and Maud built a small chapel for the church, today called the Laird Chapel. Frances married Fred S. Bell, and Maud married Samuel Prentiss, a banker. In 1913, the two families together built Briarcombe, an estate just outside of Winona with two matching and connected Georgian mansions. Lucas, 126-133.

<sup>35</sup> The city later changed the park's name to Windom Park after William Windom, the most famous of the local leaders who built homes facing the park.

<sup>36</sup> William Laird lived at 361 W. Fourth Street, James Norton at 275 W. Wabasha, and Mathew Norton at 254 W. Fifth Street. None of these homes is extant. In 1948, Mathew Norton's grandson Norton Clapp, then president of Laird, Norton, Co., donated his grandfather's home to the YMCA as the site of its new building. The old YMCA at Fifth and Johnson across from the Laird, Norton Co. Building had burned down in 1946. Photographs of all three homes can be found in *Winona Illustrated: Historical, Picturesque, Descriptive* (n.p.: Art Publishing Co., 1888). Landscape Research, LLC, "Phase I and II Architectural History Evaluation for the Winona Bride Study, Winona, Winona County, Minnesota—Final Report," (May 2011), 109.

<sup>37</sup> This house still exists and is the only residence left on the block occupied by the YMCA. Upon his death in 1938, the family of John Lucas donated the home to Winona State Teachers College as a dormitory ("Lucas Lodge") and in 1960 it became the Red Cross headquarters. Today it is apartments. Landscape Research, LLC, 181-86.

<sup>38</sup> The house still exists and is reasonably good repair. Landscape Research, LLC, 342-344.

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Montgomery Ward Warehouse, the largest reinforced concrete building produced by an architect associated with the Chicago School.<sup>39</sup>

Hugh Garden visited Winona in February to study the location and meet with executives of the Laird, Norton Co., Botsford Lumber Co., and Hayes-Lucas Lumber Co.<sup>40</sup> In March, the architect delivered preliminary plans and drawings (Figure #5) which the company leaders carefully studied. At that time Fred S. Bell was in California meeting with Mathew Norton and other family members. He exchanged a number of lengthy letters with vice-president Frank Thatcher during February, March and April. Both men took an intense interest in the details of the exterior and interior of the planned building. They wrote how they wanted a building that embodied simplicity, beauty, and most of all, "dignity," the word that appeared most often in their letters.<sup>41</sup> In an April letter, for example, Bell criticized aspects of the exterior design which he said showed "a lack of dignity and distinctiveness."<sup>42</sup>

Until May, the company's planning for the building had been completely behind the scenes. At that point the local newspaper reported "rumors" that the three lumber companies would build a new headquarters on Fifth St. and that in fact, Otis Botsford and John Lucas had just left for Chicago on business related to the new building.<sup>43</sup> Very likely they traveled to meet with the architects to satisfy company concerns about the evolving plans. The negotiations were apparently successful because Fred S. Bell signed a formal agreement with the architects on June 22.<sup>44</sup> On July 26, Hugh Garden delivered detailed plans for the building (Figure #6, 7) and provided a thick sheaf of specifications entitled "Instruction to Bidders" outlining in great detail the requirements of each aspect of the construction, including masonry, concrete, stone, and marble work; plumbing, electrical, and steam heating; lathing and plastering; steel casement windows; and other details.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Carl Condit, *The Chicago School of Architecture: A History of Commercial and Public Building in the Chicago Area 1875-1925* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1964), 187-195.

<sup>40</sup> Letter from Frank Thatcher to Fred W. Bell, February 24, 1916. Laird Norton Company LLC Archives (Seattle), Record Group 1, Box 20, folder 3.

<sup>41</sup> Besides the letters noted in footnotes 39 and 41, see also Letter from Frank Thatcher to Fred S. Bell, March 28, 1916, *ibid.* Thatcher, for example, praised the plans for the lobby as "very beautiful and dignified." Laird Norton Company LLC Archives (Seattle), Record Group 1, Box 20, folder 3.

<sup>42</sup> Letter from Fred S. Bell to Frank Thatcher, April 8, 1916, *ibid.* In particular he didn't like the "circular stone heads" over the first floor window which he said were "meaningless and obtrusive." He also disliked the fact that there were five windows on the second floor above only three on the first. Laird Norton Company LLC Archives, *ibid.* See Figure #5.

<sup>43</sup> "Lumber Interests to Build Modern Office Building on Lot near Library Rumors Say," *WRH*, May 27, 1916, 4.

<sup>44</sup> Contract, dated June 22, 1916, signed by Richard Schmidt and accepted by Fred S. Bell. The contract provided for a fee of 6% of construction costs plus a \$45/week supervision fee for work in excess of six months. Laird Norton Company LLC Archives, *ibid.* In the final plans, Garden removed the "circular stone heads" over the first floor windows which are shown in the early sketch, but the configuration of the windows on the first and second floors remained the same (See Figure #5).

<sup>45</sup> "Office Building for Laird, Norton Co., Winona, Minnesota Job #16557, July 26, 1916, Instructions to Bidders" (typescript). Laird Norton Company LLC Archives, Record Group 1, Box 19. The July 26, 1916 blue prints were

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The layout of the building created four distinct office areas, two on each floor, separated by the imposing two story lobby. The first floor was dedicated to the retail lumber companies, with Botsford Lumber occupying the east wing and Hayes-Lucas Lumber occupying the west wing. Each wing had private offices for several executives as well as large, open general office space and a large vault (Figure #6). The Laird, Norton Co. offices occupied the west wing of the second floor, with individual offices laid out for Fred S. Bell, Frank Thatcher, and two other executives (Figure #7). In addition to general office areas, this wing included an ornate conference room in the southwest corner (Photo #8). The Laird, Norton Co. executives retained responsibility for personally supplying the wood trim for the conference room, which would be, not surprisingly, white pine.<sup>46</sup> The entire east wing of the second floor was left unfinished, presumably for future expansion space.

The architects hired Seidlitz & Werner, local general contractors, to oversee construction, and also had an architect from their own staff on site. Very likely extensive work on the building did not commence until the spring of 1917. A newspaper report in late September of that year indicated that the contractors hoped to complete their work by January 1, 1918. The article notes that the building was of reinforced concrete and “absolutely fire-proof. The reporter who visited the construction site also thought it worth noting that the lobby would be finished in marble, that a Western Union clock system would be installed, that a 375 ft. artesian well was being drilled in the rear to supply water to the building, and that the building would feature “some of the best finished conference rooms in the city.”<sup>47</sup>

Whatever their earlier misgivings, Laird, Norton Co. executives seemed satisfied with the finished building, as evidenced by the letter to Schmidt, Garden and Martin which accompanied their final payment. They wrote that “we have a very beautiful and comfortable building, and wish to express our appreciation to you for your high services and many kindnesses to us throughout its construction.”<sup>48</sup>

### **The retail business grows and diversifies**

The corporate leadership of Laird, Norton Co., Botsford Lumber Co., and Hayes-Lucas Lumber Co. shared the new building for the next four decades. Over the years, the Laird, Norton Co. evolved into a management and investment company. Remarkably, the descendants of the three

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found in a closet of the Laird, Norton Co. Building. Digital scans will be available at the Winona County Historical Society. The original blueprints will be deposited in the archives of the Laird Norton Company LLC in Seattle.

<sup>46</sup> “Instructions to Bidders. Section 107 Cabinet Work.” This section generally called for walnut trim except for quarter sawn oak in the passageways to the offices on the first and second floors, and for the conference room on the second floor which would have “clear kiln-dried white pine furnished by the owner.”

<sup>47</sup> “New Building Being Rushed,” *WRH*, September 22, 1917, 4.

<sup>48</sup> Letter from Laird, Norton Co. to Richard E. Schmidt, Garden & Martin, May 12, 1919. The final cost of construction was \$135,349, in addition to the architects’ fee of \$9,641. Laird Norton Company LLC Archives, Record Group 1, Box 23, folder 21.

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founders, eventually numbering over three hundred, continued to collectively own the company as a privately-held corporation, and this is the status of the company today.<sup>49</sup>

Botsford Lumber Co. and Hayes-Lucas Lumber Co. each continued to grow their networks of retail lumber yards and transform line yards into full service building supply stores. For example, Botsford Lumber operated 38 line yards in 1912 when it was created to take over the original Laird, Norton Co. retail outlets. From 1918 until the start of the Depression, it expanded by purchasing 14 existing line yards from other companies in western Minnesota (e.g. Olivia, Renville, Ortonville, Correll), southern Minnesota (Wabasha, Lake City, Rushford, Austin, Albert Lea, Luverne, Slayton), and Iowa (Algona, Ocheyedon, Hartley). It eliminated small unprofitable yards and replaced them with more profitable yards in larger towns. By 1951, it operated 54 yards and was a very profitable business.<sup>50</sup> The Hayes-Lucas Lumber Company, which had taken over the 35 line yards of the Winona Lumber Company, also expanded its network.

In recognition of the Laird, Norton Co.'s centennial in 1955, the Laird and Norton families made a major donation to the Winona County Historical Society (WCHS) to finish part of the building's unused second floor east wing, along with a cost-free lease to the space.<sup>51</sup> For the next eighteen years, the WCHS housed its museum and offices in the second floor of the building. In 1963, the Prudential Insurance Co. rented another part of the unused east wing.

In 1958, Laird, Norton Co. built the Norton Building, a modernist glass and steel office building in downtown Seattle, to house its corporate offices and also as an investment in commercial real estate. The executive offices of Botsford Lumber and Hayes-Lucas Lumber, however, remained in the Winona building. In 1962, the Laird, Norton Co. merged the two retail subsidiaries into the United Building Centers (UBC). The Winona buildings then became the corporate headquarters of the new company, which eventually operated more than 140 building supply stores.

By the early 1970s, both UBC and the WCHS had grown and were in need of expanded space. At about the same time, the former National Guard Armory, built at 160 Johnson Street in 1915, became available. The Laird Norton Company made a major donation to the WCHS which enabled it to purchase the armory and remodel it as a museum and office space.<sup>52</sup> The WCHS moved into the armory and formally dedicated the new museum on April 16, 1973.<sup>53</sup> UBC then

<sup>49</sup> For more information, see the website of Laird Norton Company LLC: <http://www.lairdnorton.com/>.

<sup>50</sup> These details are taken from a historical sketch of the Botsford Lumber Co. written by Guy F. Streater, an executive of the firm, in a typed manuscript entitled "Botsford Lumber Company" on Laird, Norton Co. Stationery on January 25, 1951. Winona County Historical Society Archives: Laird, Norton Co files.

<sup>51</sup> "Laird, Norton Families Make Gift to Historical Society," *WDN*, June 28, 1955. The WCHS had been storing some of its collection in the unused space since the previous year. See the lease, dated April 7, 1954. WCHS archives.

<sup>52</sup> The company name was changed in 1970 to Laird Norton Company (without the comma). In 2000, it was reorganized as a "limited liability company" so that today it is known as Laird Norton Company LLC.

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expanded into the second floor space which had been used by the WCHS. When the Prudential Insurance Co. left the second floor in 1983, UBC expanded to the entire second floor and eventually also finished some of the basement for office space.

In 1978, the Laird Norton Company created Lanoga Corporation as a holding company for UBC and several similar companies it had acquired.<sup>54</sup> Although now part of Lanoga, the UBC corporate offices remained in the Winona building. Lanoga eventually grew to 240 stores in 14 states. In 2006 Fidelity Capital bought Lanoga's building supply stores and merged them with several other chains to form Pro-Build Holding Company. All UBC outlets then became Pro-Build stores.<sup>55</sup> Laird Norton Company retained ownership of the property associated with UBC, including the Laird, Norton Co. Building in Winona. Pro-Build leased the building for its regional headquarters until 2011. The building is currently vacant, but the Laird Norton Company LLC in Seattle continues to provide maintenance and heating.

With the sale of UBC, the Laird Norton Company's commercial presence in Winona came to an end. However, the company continues to play an active philanthropic role in the area. For example, the Laird and Norton family members provided the \$1.5 million challenge grant which led to the construction of the \$4.2 million Laird Norton addition to the Winona County Historical Society's armory museum in 2009. Laird and Norton family members also maintain the Winona Foundation, which awards about \$50,000 per year in grants to Winona organizations that contribute to the cultural, historical and educational heritage of Winona.<sup>56</sup>

The lumber industry in Minnesota is usually remembered for its northern logging camps, river-borne log rafts, and great sawmills. These were all part of the Laird, Norton Co. story. Ultimately, everything depended on selling the milled lumber to the rapidly multiplying farmsteads and towns on the western prairies, and Laird, Norton Co. led the way by building a network of line yards all across southern Minnesota and into South Dakota. After upper Midwest forests were depleted, the company invested heavily in Pacific Northwest timber. Nevertheless, Winona remained its command center, and from the Laird, Norton Co. Building the corporate leaders expanded their system of line yards and transformed them into the prototypes for the building supply stores which service the construction industry and homeowners today. For this reason it is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of commerce from the time of its completion in 1918 until the Laird, Norton Co relocated its corporate offices to Seattle in 1958.

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<sup>53</sup> "Humphrey phones in speech: Museum dedication here," *WDN*, April 16, 1973, 3. Hubert Humphrey was scheduled to be the featured speaker but weather made his flight impossible. He nevertheless spoke to the crowd of 400 from a telephone booth at the airport in Minneapolis.

<sup>54</sup> "Lanoga Corporation," *International Directory of Company Histories*, Vol 62 (Farmington Hills, MI: Thompson-Clark, 2004), 222ff.

<sup>55</sup> "Pro-Build Holdings Co." *International Directory of Company Histories*, Vol 95 (Farmington Hills, MI: Cengage, 2008), 344-348. Pro-Build now operates about 420 stores nation-wide.

<sup>56</sup> See the Winona Foundation's website at <http://winonafoundation.org/> (accessed December 11, 2013).

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### **Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_



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**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other repositories: Winona County Historical Society, Minnesota Historical Society, Laird Norton Company LLC Archives (Seattle, WA)

**Historic Resources Survey Number:** WN-WAC-0260

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** Less than one acre

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

1. Zone: 15 Easting: 608975 Northing: 4878210

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Lots 2 and 3, Block 32, of the original plat of the City of Winona.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes the city lots historically associated with the property.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Greg Gaut  
organization: Historic Preservation Consultant  
street & number: 673 E. Wabasha  
city or town: Winona state: MN zip code: 55987  
e-mail: GregGaut@gmail.com  
telephone: 507-452-0536  
date: February 10, 2014

Laird, Norton Co. Building  
Name of Property

Winona County, MN  
County and State

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Laird, Norton Company Building  
City or Vicinity: Winona  
County: Winona State: Minnesota  
Photographer: Greg Gaut  
Date Photographed: November and December, 2013

### Description of Photographs and Number

**Photo #1:** (MN\_Winona County\_Laird, Norton Co. Bldg.\_0001)  
Laird, Norton Co. Bldg., north (front) façade, camera facing southwest.

**Photo #2:** (MN\_Winona County\_Laird, Norton Co. Bldg.\_0002)  
Laird, Norton Co. Bldg., west facade, camera facing south.

**Photo #3:** (MN\_Winona County\_Laird, Norton Co. Bldg.\_0003)  
Laird, Norton Co. Bldg., east façade, camera facing north.

**Photo #4:** (MN\_Winona County\_Laird, Norton Co. Bldg.\_0004)  
Laird, Norton Co. Bldg., south (rear) façade, camera facing north.

**Photo #5:** (MN\_Winona County\_Laird, Norton Co. Bldg.\_0005)  
Laird, Norton Co. Bldg., north (front) façade, main entrance detail, camera facing southwest.

**Photo #6:** (MN\_Winona County\_Laird, Norton Co. Bldg.\_0006)  
Laird, Norton Co. Bldg., lobby, camera facing south.

**Photo #7:** (MN\_Winona County\_Laird, Norton Co. Bldg.\_0007)  
Laird, Norton Co. Bldg., stained glass skylight in lobby ceiling.

**Photo #8:** (MN\_Winona County\_Laird, Norton Co. Bldg.\_0008)  
Laird, Norton Co. Bldg., conference room, southwest corner of second floor, camera facing southeast.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

*Laird, Norton Co. Building*

Name of Property

*Winona County, Minnesota*

County and State

Section number Additional Information Page 1

**Historic photos**

- Figure #1: Laird, Norton Co. lumber yards on Winona's riverfront (Winona County Historical Society Archives).
- Figure #2: The millwork factory at the Laird, Norton Co. lumber yards on the riverfront (WCHS Archives).
- Figure #3: Early office of the Laird, Norton Co within the lumber yards near Front and Kansas streets riverfront (WCHS Archives).
- Figure #4: Brick and stone office building which Laird, Norton Co built at Second and Liberty in 1887. A January 1916 fire in this building led to the construction of the new office building at Fifth and Johnson streets. The building houses the Polish Cultural Institute today (WCHS Archives).
- Figure #5: An early sketch of the new building by architect Hugh Garden. Laird, Norton Co. executive Fred S. Bell objected to the configuration of the windows and especially to the arches over the first floor windows. The architects removed the arches and added more ornate limestone hoods to all the windows. In the final version, the cornice became more pronounced and coping on the parapet smaller. A stone crest was also added atop the parapet over the central entrance (Laird Norton Company LLC archives, Seattle, WA).
- Figure #6: First floor plan from the July 26, 1916 blueprints showing Botsford Lumber Co. offices in the east wing and Hayes-Lucas Lumber Co. offices in the west wing. Note the vaults for each wing using the bearing wall separating the offices from the lobby (Scan of original plans found in the Laird, Norton Co. Building. Original plans property of Laird Norton Company LLC. Scans available from WCHS archives or City of Winona).
- Figure #7: Second floor plan from the July 26, 1916 blueprints showing the program for the Laird, Norton Co. offices in west wing. Note the office of Fred S. Bell, president, on the north side near the center and the conference room in the southwest corner. The plans indicate that the east wing was left unfinished for future expansion (Same as #6).

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

*Laird, Norton Co. Building*

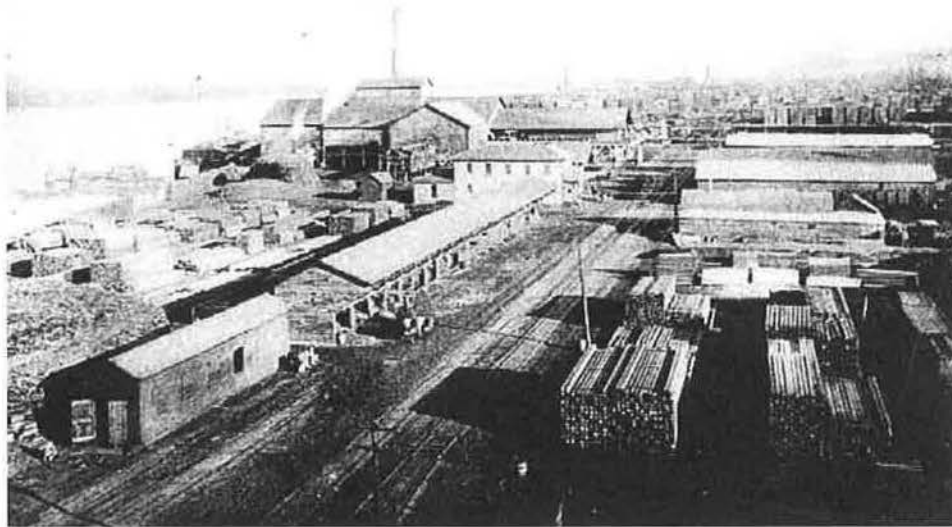
Name of Property

*Winona County, Minnesota*

County and State

Section number Additional Information

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**Figure #1**



**Figure #2**

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

*Laird, Norton Co. Building*

Name of Property

*Winona County, Minnesota*

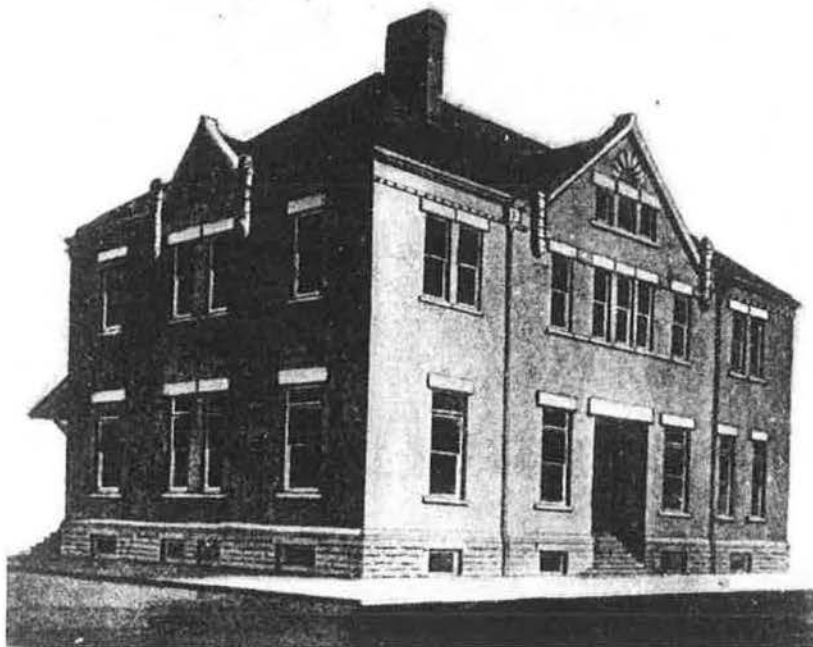
County and State

Section number Additional Information

Page 3



**Figure #3**



**Figure #4**

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

*Laird, Norton Co. Building*

Name of Property

*Winona County, Minnesota*

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Section number Additional Information

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**Figure #5**

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

*Laird, Norton Co. Building*

Name of Property

*Winona County, Minnesota*

County and State

Section number Additional Information

Page 5

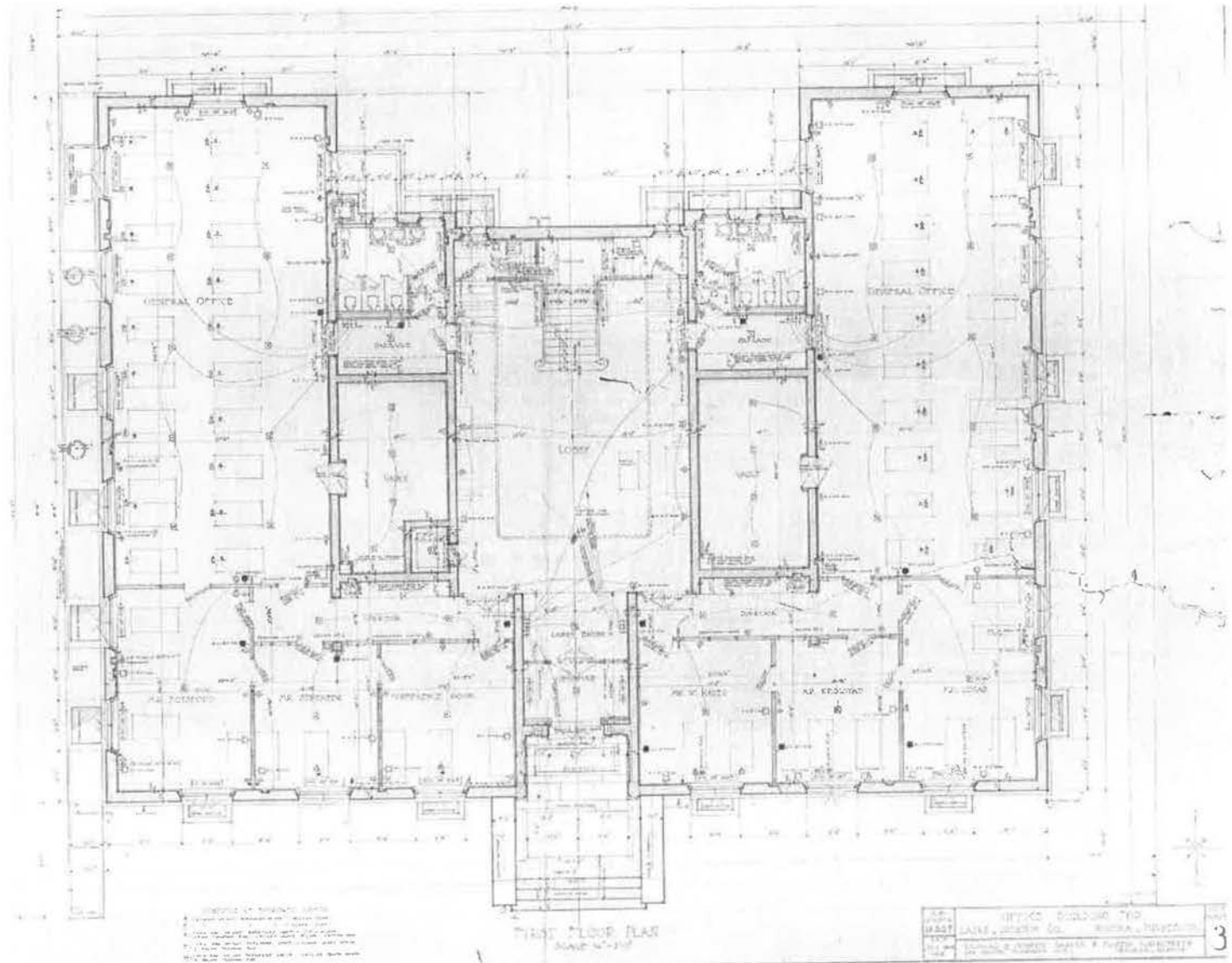


Figure #6





United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

*Laird, Norton Co. Building*

Name of Property

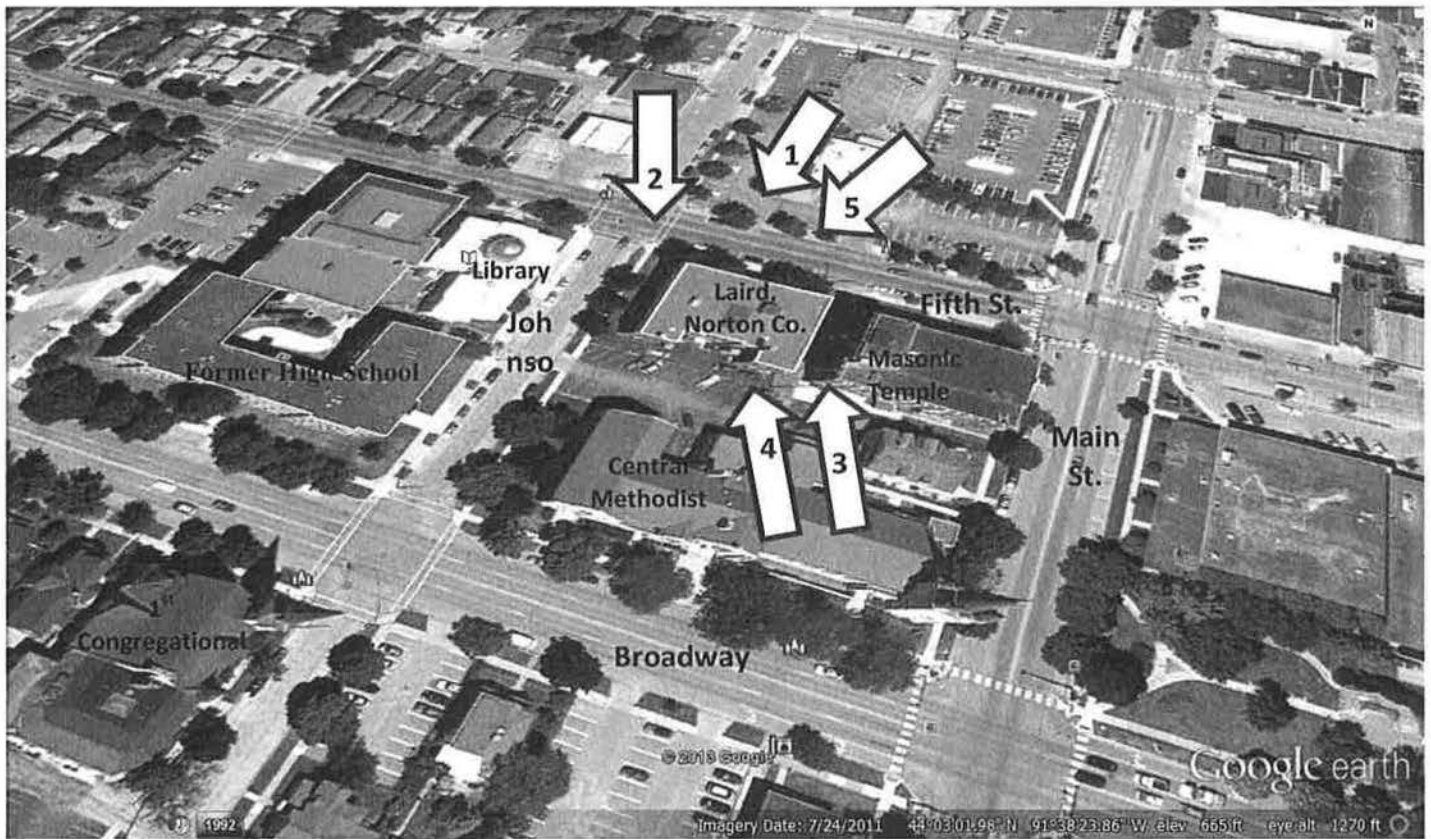
*Winona County, Minnesota*

County and State

Section number Additional Information

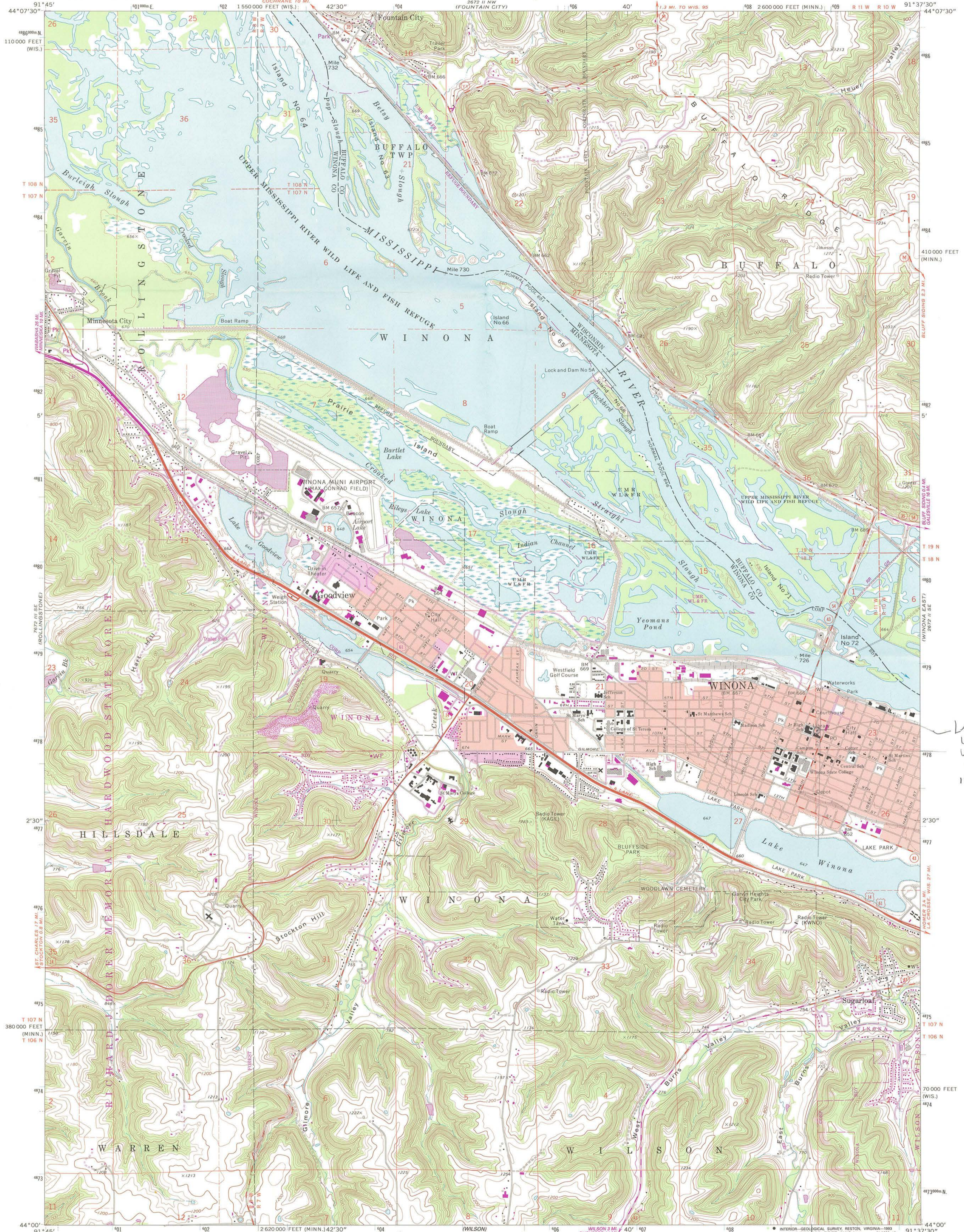
Page 7

Google Earth Photo of Laird, Norton Co. Building and surrounding neighborhood  
indicating camera direction for exterior photographs #1-5



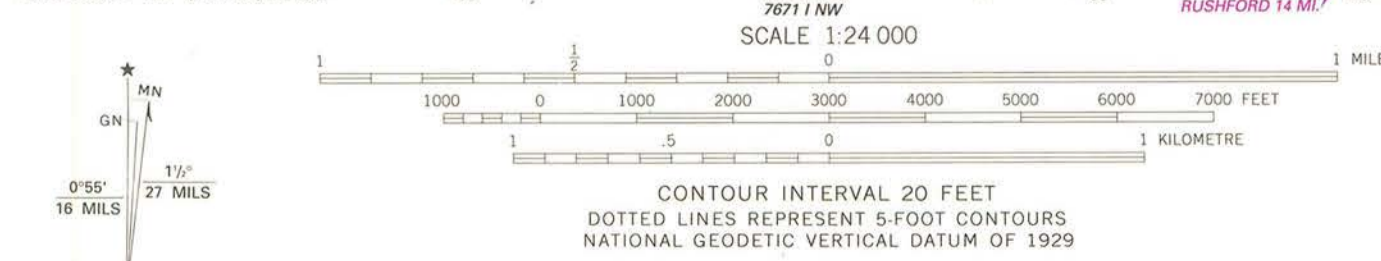
North



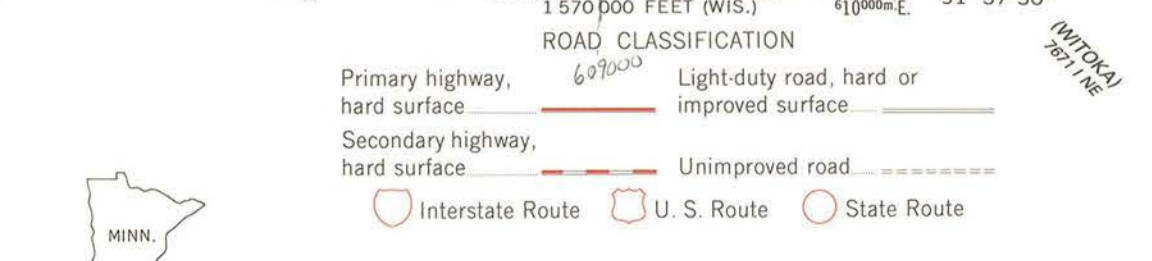


*Land North Co. Bldg  
Winona  
Winona Co., MN  
UTM  
15 608975 4878210*

Produced by the United States Geological Survey  
Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA  
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1972. Field checked 1972.  
Projection: Minnesota coordinate system, south zone (Lambert conformal conic)  
10,000-foot grid ticks: Minnesota coordinate system, south zone and Wisconsin coordinate system, central zone  
100-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 15, shown in blue 1927 North American Datum (NAD 27)  
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed corner ticks  
The values of the shift between NAD 27 and NAD 83 for 7.5-minute intersections are given in USGS Bulletin 1875  
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map  
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown  
Red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092 AND BY THE WISCONSIN GEOLOGICAL AND NATURAL HISTORY SURVEY, MADISON, WISCONSIN 53706 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



WINONA WEST, MINN.-WIS.  
44091-A6-TF-024  
1972  
REVISED 1993  
DMA 7672 11 SW-SERIES V872











125











UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Laird, Norton Company Building

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MINNESOTA, Winona

DATE RECEIVED: 5/28/14      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 6/20/14  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 7/07/14      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 7/14/14  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14000392

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

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

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    7-16/14 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Minnesota Historical Society  
State Historic Preservation Office  
345 Kellogg Blvd West, St. Paul, Minnesota 55102  
651/259-3451



**TO:** Carol Shull, Keeper  
National Register of Historic Places

**FROM:** Denis P. Gardner

**DATE:** May 21, 2014

**NAME OF PROPERTY:** Laird, Norton Company Building

**COUNTY AND STATE:** Winona County, Minnesota

**SUBJECT:** National Register:

- Nomination
- Multiple Property Documentation Form
- Request for determination of eligibility
- Request for removal (Reference No.        )
- Nomination resubmission
- Boundary increase/decrease (Reference No.        )
- Additional documentation (Reference No.        )

**DOCUMENTATION:**

- Original National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
  - Multiple Property Documentation Form
  - Continuation Sheets
  - Removal Documentation
  - Photographs
  - CD w/ image files
  - Original USGS Map
  - Sketch map(s)
  - Correspondence
    - Owner Objection
- The enclosed owner objections  
Do  Do not  constitute a majority of property owners

**STAFF COMMENTS:**