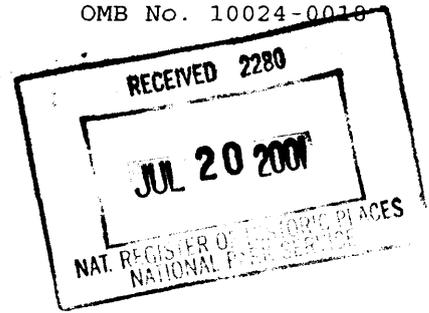


United States Department of Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



964

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, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Lawson Airplane Company/Continental Faience and Tile Company
other names Pan-American Rubber Company; Fisk Rubber Company

2. Location

street & number 909 Menomonee Avenue N/A not for publication
city or town South Milwaukee N/A vicinity
state Wisconsin code WI county Milwaukee code 079 zip code 53172

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 X nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation for additional comments.)

Alicia L. Coeh
Signature of certifying official/Title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer-WI

July 11, 2001
Date

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

Lawson/Continental Building
Name of Property

Milwaukee County, Wisconsin
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is: Signature of the Keeper Date of Action
 entered in the National Register. _____
 ___ See continuation sheet. **Entered in the**
 ___ determined eligible for the **National Register** 9/3/01
 National Register. _____
 ___ See continuation sheet. _____
 ___ determined not eligible for the _____
 National Register. _____
 ___ See continuation sheet. _____
 ___ removed from the National _____
 Register. _____
 ___ other, (explain:) _____

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 listed resources within the count)	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-state	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> 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)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY: Manufacturing facility COMMERCE/TRADE: warehouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)
Commercial Vernacular
Astylistic Utilitarian

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)
foundation CONCRETE
walls BRICK
roof ASPHALT
other N/A

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on continuation sheet(s).)

8. Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from
instructions)
Transportation
Architecture

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.

Period of Significance

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.

1919-1922; 1928

Significant Dates

N/A

D Property has yielded, or is likely to
yield, information important in
prehistory or history.

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is
marked above)

N/A

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

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

Cultural Affiliation

B removed from its original location.

N/A

C a birthplace or grave.

D a cemetery.

Architect/Builder

E a reconstructed resource.

Unknown

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age 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 Bibliographic References

(Cite the sources used in preparing this form on continuation sheet(s).)

Lawson/Continental Building
Name of Property

Milwaukee County, Wisconsin
County and State

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:
 State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State Agency
 Federal Agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
Name of repository:
George Hardie, Jr. (private collection)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.5 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>1/6</u>	<u>4/2/9/7/9/0</u>	<u>4/7/5/0/4/3/0</u>	2	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / /</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

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)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth L. Miller, Historic Preservation Consultant
organization _____ date 2-01-01
street & number 4033 Tokay Boulevard telephone 608-233-5942
city or town Madison state WI zip code 53711

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)

Lawson/Continental Building
Name of Property

Milwaukee County, Wisconsin
County and State

Property Owner

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

name Richard Schumacher
street & number 624 Elm Avenue telephone 414-764-2331
city or town South Milwaukee state Wisconsin zip code 53172

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.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Section 7 Page 3 Lawson Airplane Company/Continental Faience and Tile Company
City of South Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

The east-facing façade of the circa 1928 section is the front façade of the Lawson/Continental Building (see photo 1). Paneled brick pilasters with concrete bases and caps divide the front façade into three parts. Four courses of recessed brick create a watertable. The entrance is centrally-placed and set well within a course of recessed stretchers, which forms a round arch suggesting a portal (see photo 2). Inside the arch, mosaic tiles in shades of blue outline the plain doorway. On either side of the door, is a metal, industrial sash window with a concrete sill. Originally, another industrial sash window was set between each outer pair of pilasters. The northern one remains, but the southern window was removed and the opening enlarged to give access to an enclosed loading dock, erected circa 1953.⁶ Mr. Schumacher removed the loading dock in 1996. The front façade is further enriched with decorative brickwork, a parapet with tile coping (which hides the roof), and, on top of the central pair of pilasters, concrete pineapples.

The north- and south-facing façades of the circa 1928 section are utilitarian in appearance. The east end (toward the front) of the north-facing façade is finished with brick and displays a group of three replacement windows and two smaller industrial sash windows (see photo 3). The rest of this façade exhibits original brick apron walls with replacement windows set in concrete block, a change that probably dates from about 1960. The east end of the south-facing façade of the circa 1928 section is brick with a boarded opening that likely held a group of industrial sash windows. The circa 1949 addition comprises the rest of this façade (see photo 4). This addition exhibits metal siding, punctuated with garage doors and single doors.

⁶ Richard Schumacher, current owner, interview, 9 November 2000; the loading dock appears on Map of Milwaukee (1966), but not on Map of Milwaukee (1937, pasted over through 1951).

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Section 7 Page 5 Lawson Airplane Company/Continental Faience and Tile Company
City of South Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

set off-center on the east-facing façade. There are no openings on any of the other facades of the circa 1965 addition.

Interior: Circa 1928 Section

The original plan of the circa 1928 section can be divided into two parts: the showroom and office area (east, see plan attached) and the factory floor (west). The showroom and office area had three rooms across the front. North to south, these probably were the manager's office, the vestibule and a storeroom. A large showroom is set behind the vestibule and the office, and two bathrooms and a coatroom are tucked behind it. A corridor runs west from the southeast room and opens onto the factory floor. The factory floor plan was open.

The vestibule, showroom and office display the tile produced by the Continental Faience and Tile Company. The tilework is intact, except that it suffered some vandalism in the early 1990s. The design on the floor in the vestibule displays varying shades of reddish-brown quarry tile laid out in a geometric pattern (see photo 9). The quarry tiles are outlined with glazed black tiles and accented with glazed art tiles. Each art tile features either a long-legged bird, tulips, a sunflower, or an abstract design. Most are highlighted in blue or green. A quarry tile baseboard encircles the vestibule. The showroom exhibits glazed tile baseboard and wainscot, accented with a few art tiles and finished with a tile chair rail enriched with a rope molding (see photo 10). The floor pattern is composed of a checkerboard pattern of quarry tiles in different colors (see photo 11, through doorway). The doorways in the showroom display tile surrounds ornamented with a rope molding.

The office displays more exuberant tile work. The design on the floor suggests a carpet. Polygonal tiles in shades of reddish-brown and green are bordered with glazed tiles in blue, red and green. The tile wainscot features bouquets of golden tulips enriched with green, brown and deep blue, surrounded by garlands of

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Lawson Airplane Company/Continental Faience and Tile Company
Section 7 Page 6 City of South Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

creeping myrtle and framed with diamond and chevron moldings (see photo 11). Baseboards and chair rails of glazed green tile accent the wainscot. The door surrounds are also tile and are enriched with a green and gold rope molding. The only alteration in this room is the brick veneer on the fireplace (north wall), which dates from about 1950.

The showroom and office area plan is intact, except that the storeroom in the southeast corner was divided in two and a ramp constructed up to a new loading dock circa 1953. The storeroom has concrete floors and drywall on the walls and ceilings; this room never had tile finishes. The existing drywall replaced plaster in 1994. The plaster had been severely damaged due to roof leaks during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The bathrooms, the coat room and the corridor running back to the factory floor are utilitarian. Concrete floors and drywall finishes predominate, except that there is plain tile in one bathroom and the other bathroom (which appears to have been remodeled with the addition of a shower circa 1950) possesses a dropped acoustical tile ceiling.

Above the showroom and office area, there is a loft. The loft was extended, perhaps around 1940. A straight, wood staircase descends from the loft to the factory floor.

The original plan of the factory floor, when it was completed circa 1928, was open. When the addition along the south wall of the factory floor was constructed circa 1949, the circa 1928 south wall was removed, leaving the plan of the factory floor open. Currently, the plan is open, except that a concrete block fire wall divides the area in two and a drywall partition separates part of the circa 1949 addition from the circa 1928 section. A concrete block fire wall has also been built at the west end of the circa 1928 section, in front of the circa 1916 section. The finishes in the factory floor area include concrete floors, exposed steel trusses, and

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Section 7 Page 7 Lawson Airplane Company/Continental Faience and Tile Company
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exposed brick and concrete block walls. Steel rails embedded in the concrete floor show the former location of the kilns, through which the unfinished tiles were pulled in the firing process.

Interior: C. 1916 Section

The interior plan of the c. 1916 section is open. According to historical photographs, the original plan included a small office in the northwest corner of the section and a tiny bathroom along the north wall. The wood partitions for these spaces have been lost, but their former location is evident from changes in the concrete floor. The concrete floors, pilastered brick walls, heavy timber trusses and wood decking are exposed, as they were originally (see photo 12).

Non-contributing Resource

An astylistic utilitarian structure is located just south of the Lawson/Continental Building (see photo 13). Erected for Midwest Potteries, Incorporated in 1950, it is of concrete block construction and rests on a concrete slab foundation. The roof is flat. This building measures 50 feet (east-west) by 40 feet. In 1998, the current owner installed a bay window and a pent roof across the front of the building. The building is altered and architecturally insignificant.

ALTERATIONS

The Lawson/Continental Building has been altered. In the c. 1916 section, some openings have been reduced or filled, the partitions that created the bathroom and office inside have been lost, and there is a c. 1965 frame addition attached to the back of the building. In the c. 1928 section, one window on the front facade has been made into a loading dock door, the north-facing facade of the factory floor has been altered with concrete block and the south-facing façade exhibits a metal-sided addition. On the interior, a storeroom in the office section was divided in two and a brick veneer was installed on the fireplace in the

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Section 7 Page 8 Lawson Airplane Company/Continental Faience and Tile Company
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manager's office in 1950. More recently, two concrete block fire walls were erected in the factory floor area.

Despite these alterations, the significant spaces retain very good integrity. The interior of the circa 1916 section is significant as the space in which the Lawson Airplane Company designed and constructed the prototype "Midnight Liner," which was the second airplane built for commercial passenger use and the first "sleeper." It is also significant as the building most closely associated with the Lawson Airplane Company and the Lawson Air Line Transportation Company. The interior of this section is intact, except for the loss of the partitions that formed the bathroom and the office.

In the circa 1928 section, the significant spaces are the vestibule, showroom and manager's office, which were designed to showcase the products of the Continental Faience and Tile Company. These spaces are also intact, except that a brick fireplace was installed on the north wall of the manager's office circa 1950. Even so, these rooms clearly function as originally intended, as a three-dimensional advertising brochure for the Continental Faience and Tile Company.

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Section 8 Page 1 Lawson Airplane Company/Continental Faience and Tile Company
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: SUMMARY

The Lawson Airplane Company/Continental Faience and Tile Company building is eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C. The building's association with the Lawson Airplane Company and the Lawson Air Line Transportation Company lends it national significance under Criterion A in the area of transportation. In 1919 and 1920, the Lawson Airplane Company designed the first two airplanes built for commercial passengers in the U.S., and probably the world. Both airplanes incorporated features no earlier airplane had included, and most of those features became standard when commercial airliners were finally put into mass production in the late 1920s. Through the Lawson Air Line Transportation Company, Alfred Lawson was the first to propose a nationwide commercial passenger service. When this was finally established in the late 1920s, the network of aviation routes closely resembled what Lawson had proposed. The period of significance in transportation extends from 1919 to 1922.

Under Criterion C, the Lawson/Continental Building is locally significant for the high artistic expression of the tilework in the vestibule, manager's office and showroom. These rooms showcase the Continental Faience and Tile Company's sophisticated, finely-detailed, vibrantly-colored art tile and served as a three-dimensional advertising brochure for the firm's products. The period of significance in architecture coincides with the year in which this section was built, circa 1928.

The significant spaces in the Lawson/Continental Building retain good to excellent integrity.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CITY OF SOUTH MILWAUKEE

The site that would become the city of South Milwaukee was a section in the Town of Oak Creek. Beginning in 1835, European-American pioneers settled in the area to farm. By 1842, a sawmill

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had been constructed on Oak Creek and 40 families lived in the township. A small village developed around the sawmill. The future growth of the village was assured in the mid-1850s with the arrival of the Chicago, Milwaukee and Green Bay Railroad (now a part of the Chicago and NorthWestern Railway), the addition of wagon and basket factories, and the discovery that clay deposits along the lakeshore north of Oak Creek yielded a cream-colored brick. The brick-making industry flourished into the 1880s and had a profound effect on the appearance of various communities in the region, especially the city of Milwaukee. The large number of cream brick buildings earned Milwaukee the nickname, "the Cream City." Despite the success of the brick-making industry, South Milwaukee grew modestly until the 1890s.⁸

In 1892, the Bucyrus-Erie Company relocated one of its plants from Bucyrus, Ohio (the other was located in Erie, Pennsylvania). The Bucyrus-Erie Company manufactured primarily excavating machinery, such as power shovels, bulldozers, tower excavators, water and oil well drilling equipment, and various types of dredges. The company spent more than \$1 million constructing a sprawling factory complex and a harbor in South Milwaukee. The same year, South Milwaukee incorporated as a village. A nationwide recession and a fire at the South Milwaukee plant dealt Bucyrus-Erie a setback in the mid-1890s, but by the late 1890s, the company was prospering. South Milwaukee incorporated as a city in 1897.⁹

The success of the Bucyrus-Erie Company propelled South Milwaukee's growth through most of the twentieth century, employing as much as half of the city's working population at one time. The number of inhabitants of South Milwaukee rose steadily over the period, from 6,092 in 1910 to 23,297 in 1970. By 1990, the population had fallen slightly, to 20,958. Among residents, Polish-Americans

⁸ Milwaukee Writers' Project, History of Milwaukee County (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Library, 1947), pp. 574-75.

⁹ Ibid.

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and within three weeks his major league career was over. He then became a manager in the minor leagues. Beginning in 1900, Lawson directed his attention toward developing new teams and leagues, predominantly in the Mid-Atlantic states. In this endeavor, Lawson met with modest success and bestowed upon himself the title, "Magic Man of Baseball."¹¹

On a visit to London, England in 1907, Lawson was captivated by the sight of a propeller-driven dirigible flying slowly over the city. Two landmark events in American aviation history likely increased his fervor. In July 1908, Glenn Curtiss made the first public demonstration in the U. S. of a one-mile-long flight in a "heavier-than-air flying machine." This term was used to distinguish what later became known as the "airplane" from the dirigible. In September 1908, the Wright brothers, who had been conducting private test flights since 1903, gave the first public demonstration of their airplane, keeping the craft in flight for about one hour. Lawson envisioned a future in which large, fast flying machines filled the skies and he saw himself as the man to make this vision a reality. His first step in this effort was to launch a publication, entitled Fly, the National Aeronautic Magazine. Based in Philadelphia, this magazine likely was the first published in the U.S. that was directed at a general audience and focused on heavier-than-air flight. The first issue came out in November 1908. Lawson edited the magazine until late 1909 and then sold his interest in it and moved to New York City.¹²

In March 1910, Lawson published the first issue of a new magazine, called Aircraft. Although the term, "aircraft," had appeared in print a few times previously, it was this very successful magazine that popularized the term, which Lawson later claimed to have

¹¹ Lyell D. Henry, Jr., Zig-Zag-And-Swirl: Alfred W. Lawson's Quest for Greatness (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991), excerpted from pages 1, 10, and 19-31.

¹² Ibid., pp. 58, and 60-61.

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Section 8 Page 5 Lawson Airplane Company/Continental Faience and Tile Company
City of South Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

coined. Through editing Aircraft, Lawson became an early and influential advocate of aviation in the U.S., particularly its potential for military and commercial use, which Lawson immediately recognized.¹³

Lawson biographer, Lyell D. Henry, Jr., explains how Lawson's journals captured the imagination of the public:

Lawson's magazines were interesting, informative, well written and well illustrated. Lawson was especially skilled in conveying the romance, excitement and promise of aviation. Even more noteworthy were Lawson's editorials, with remarkable vigor and arresting content.¹⁴

In his editorials, Lawson made forward-thinking recommendations, such as airbags to protect pilots in the event of a crash (Aircraft, February 1912). He also made incredible projections about accomplishments he believed aviation would soon achieve. In the March 1911 issue of Aircraft, for example, he predicted that, within ten years, airplanes would fly at speeds exceeding 200 miles an hour, airplanes capable of carrying more than 50 people would be built, and airplanes would be able to fly across the Atlantic and the Pacific Ocean nonstop. In the October 1916 issue, he predicted that, by 1970, so many airplanes would be in the air that an air traffic control system would be imperative, and that the leading nations would realize that the nation that controlled the air also would control the earth and would arrange their defenses accordingly. These predictions demonstrate the amazing breadth of Lawson's vision for aviation's future.¹⁵

Lawson was not content simply to write about aviation. He wanted to build airplanes. Lawson learned how to fly in 1913 and began

¹³ Ibid., p. 61.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 63 and 68.

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Lawson Airplane Company/Continental Faience and Tile Company
Section 8 Page 6 City of South Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

commuting by airboat from his home in New Jersey to his office in Manhattan, a 70-mile roundtrip. This brought him a great deal of publicity and, combined with the contacts he made through Aircraft, Lawson soon knew almost everyone involved in aviation in the U.S.¹⁶

For nine years, Lawson used his contacts to search for financial backers to get him started in aircraft manufacturing. When the U.S. entered World War I, he finally got his chance. The Lawson Aircraft Corporation was established in Green Bay, Wisconsin, in 1917. The U.S. War Department encouraged Lawson to develop prototype military trainer planes. The firm designed and built two such prototypes, which government inspectors graded excellent. The Lawson Aircraft Corporation held its collective breath, expecting that an order for 100 airplanes was imminent. The order was delayed, however, and did not arrive before World War I ended in November 1918. With the encouragement of Vincent Buranelli, one of the firm's aeronautical engineers, Lawson proposed that the Lawson Aircraft Corporation manufacture airplanes for commercial passenger service. He presented a drawing for an airplane he called, the "C-1." The financial backers in Green Bay were unconvinced and dissolved the corporation.¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 78-79.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 85. During World War I, Lawson made two other interesting proposals to the U.S. War Department. First, he proposed a steel-plated military airplane, which he called the "Lawson Armored Battler." At a time when airplanes were constructed of wood and covered with cloth, this was quite radical. The U.S. War Department rejected this idea and the "Lawson Armored Battler" was never built. Lawson's other proposal came about as a result of his intense lobbying of Congress to fund the manufacture of 40,000 airplanes in 1918. Lawson insisted these planes were necessary to ensure victory in World War I and that the contracts to build them should go to American firms. Lawson's detractors pointed out that moving so many airplanes to France would be a major problem. At the time, airplanes were transported, in pieces, by rail or by ship. In response, Lawson suggested that the planes could be flown to Europe. He proposed that ships be stationed at regular intervals across the Atlantic, and that these ships have modified decks so that airplanes could land on them. Lawson called this the "Transoceanic Float System." Although

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Lawson Airplane Company/Continental Faience and Tile Company
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Buranelli pitched the idea to one of his relatives, John Koerner, a well-known Milwaukee businessman. Koerner was intrigued and brought Lawson to Milwaukee to speak to a group of civic and business leaders. A charismatic speaker, Lawson convinced the crowd that Milwaukee could become the Detroit of the aircraft industry. He also vowed to organize a passenger transportation company, which would buy the first "airliners." The Lawson Airplane Company was incorporated on July 9, 1919 with \$100,000 in capital from large and small investors, most of whom lived either in Milwaukee or in La Crosse.¹⁸ The Lawson Air Line Transportation Company was incorporated on February 26, 1919 with \$25,000 in capital.¹⁹ This was the first use of the new words, "airliner," and "air line." These words had much the same meaning as they do today; the airliner would be designed specifically to carry passengers while the airline would operate the passenger service.

Lawson's team of engineers and technicians, led by Lee Wallace and Vincent Buranelli, who had worked with Lawson in Green Bay, began translating Lawson's vision for a passenger airplane into working drawings in Milwaukee in April 1919. Buranelli found space for the team in the loft of one of the factory buildings of the Cream City Sash and Door Company at 1200-1236 West Pierce Street (probably not extant). While the team revised and finalized the design and built the body of what was designated the "C-2," Lawson tried to raise more funds.²⁰ As Michael J. Goc succinctly put it

not tried during World War I, a variation on Lawson's float system was used in the first flight across the Atlantic Ocean in May 1919. And, aircraft carriers have been an important part of the naval fleet since World War II.

¹⁸ Milwaukee County Incorporation Records, 41:550. On file, Milwaukee County Historical Society.

¹⁹ Milwaukee County Records of Incorporation, 41:151.

²⁰ Henry, p. 86.

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Lawson Airplane Company/Continental Faience and Tile Company
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Not only did Lawson have to organize one company to build an airplane unlike any yet seen, he also had to create a second company to deliver a service unlike any yet in use.²¹

Both were ambitious projects requiring the investment of a large amount of cash. Trying to fund both projects at once was a monumental task. In this endeavor, the C-2 was the company's best advertisement.

On August 22, 1919, the C-2 was ready for its test flight. Lawson had gotten permission from the governor to assemble the airplane in the new Auto Pavilion (extant) at the State Fair Grounds and had prevailed upon the mayor of Milwaukee to have a runway built on city property. The airplane was assembled (except for the wings) in the Auto Pavilion, and drawn by brewery horses to the runway at what is now Currie Park, where the wings, which had been manufactured by Thomas Hamilton at the Matthews Brothers Woodworking Company, were installed. In front of a large crowd, the first Lawson Airliner took off. The trial flight went perfectly, except that the crew could not find the field where they had started and blew out the tires landing the airplane in a pasture.²²

The Lawson C-2 was the first airplane in the U.S., and probably in the world, that was designed and built specifically to carry passengers as a commercial venture. The C-2 had a complement of two pilots and accommodations for 16 passengers. Among the many features that had never been seen before were the weather-proof cockpit enclosed with celluloid windows and a roof, and the passenger cabin with plywood walls, ceiling and floor. The plywood separated the passengers from the cross-wires and bracing typical of the interior of early airplanes and created a roomy interior in which even a tall person could stand and move about comfortably.

²¹ Michael J. Goc, Forward in Flight: The History of Aviation in Wisconsin (Friendship, Wisconsin: New Past Press, 1998), p. 115.

²² Henry, pp. 88-89.

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Eight upholstered wicker chairs were placed on either side of a central aisle. There was a large celluloid window next to each chair. Baggage was to be stored in a compartment behind the passenger cabin. It should also be noted that the cockpit had dual controls, and may have been the first non-training airplane with this feature. The weather-proof cockpit with dual controls; the spacious enclosed cabin with a central aisle, windows and comfortable seats; and the layout with the cockpit up front and the cabin behind would become standard when commercial airliners began to be manufactured ten years later. With the body painted green, the wings red, with "Lawson Air Line" in white along the side, the C-2 looked very much like the airliners that would be built by the Douglas and Boeing companies in the 1930s. The C-2, 50 feet long with a bi-plane wingspan of 95 feet, was also the largest airplane built for a non-military use in the U.S. up to that time. Not until the 1930s would airliners as large appear.²³

By August 27, 1919, the tires had been replaced and the C-2 was ready for its second test flight. Lawson (as co-pilot, but calling himself, "Captain in Command"), pilot Charles L. Cox, engineer Buranelli and mechanics Andrew Surini and Carl Schory took off. While in the air, the "Captain in Command" unexpectedly ordered the pilot to fly to Chicago. Cox complied and when the airplane landed safely in Chicago, the crew was surrounded by the press. Sensing a golden opportunity, Lawson announced that he was headed for New York City and then Washington, D.C. The crew, unprepared for such a trip, had neither money nor a change of clothes and had to send home for them.²⁴

The C-2 flew on to Toledo, Cleveland, Buffalo, Syracuse, New York City, and Washington, D. C., returning through Dayton, Indianapolis

²³ Ibid., p. 87; "Crossing Continent Flying in Style," Milwaukee Sentinel, 18 June 1919; and Carl Solberg, Conquest of the Skies: A History of Commercial Aviation in America (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), pp. 102-03.

²⁴ Goc, p. 116.

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and Chicago. The entire trip took nearly three months, due to mishaps and promotional activities. At each stop, local business and civic leaders, as well as members of the press, were treated to rides in the airliner.²⁵ With the audacity of P.T. Barnum, Lawson claimed that, by July 1, 1920, he would have 100 airliners, equipped with sleeping berths and showers, flying between New York City and San Francisco. The intermediate stops would be made in those cities that provided airfields (a tactic that had worked well for the railroads), and whose residents invested in the Lawson Air Line Transportation Company. Lawson would then display his map of proposed air routes, along which he planned to station "lighthouses" (beacons) at 100-mile intervals so that his planes could fly through the night (see map attached). The press declared Lawson the "Columbus of the air."²⁶

Lawson and his crew returned to Milwaukee on November 15, 1919, where they were greeted with a heroes' welcome. On December 2, 1919, the Lawson Airplane Company purchased the factory building at 909 Menomonee Avenue, which is the subject of this nomination. The building had been erected c. 1916 for the Pan-American Rubber Company. Pan-American Rubber had incorporated in 1916 to manufacture rubber and is said to have obtained the first patent for synthetic rubber in the U.S (no evidence to support this contention was found). In 1919, the company went out of business. The Fisk Rubber Company may have occupied the building briefly.²⁷

²⁵ On one occasion, Goc asserts, against their will. He describes an incident in which several U.S. senators, the Speaker of the House and the Secretary of War and his family were inspecting the interior of the airliner. Slamming shut the cabin door, Lawson dashed to the cockpit and took off. Flying over Washington, D.C. with a plane-load of protesting and panicking passengers, Lawson eventually agreed to land. The passengers fled, except for the 300-pound senator from Georgia, who, according to Goc, had fainted and become wedged in his chair.

²⁶ Goc, p. 116.

²⁷ Henry, p. 95; George Hardie, Jr., "The Lawson Airliners," in preparation for publication, p. 221; and Hardie, interview, 30 November 2000.

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Lee Wallace, who had been one of the lead engineers on the C-2 project, took charge of the factory. Not content with the success of the C-2, Lawson wanted the next airplane to be more powerful and to include features necessary for overnight flights, such as sleeping berths and a lavatory. From an office in the First National Bank Building in Milwaukee, Lawson issued his directives, which were made into working drawings by Wallace, Russell B. Shaw and other team members. The result would be the L-4, also called the "Midnight Liner." A wooden hangar (demolished) for assembling the airliner was erected alongside the factory building in the spring of 1920.²⁸

In April 1920, the Midnight Liner was nowhere near completion and it was clear that Lawson would not be inaugurating passenger service by July 1, as he had promised. Lawson's decision to build a bigger and better airplane had made it impossible to meet the production schedule he had publicized. In an effort to allay investors' fears and attract more capital, Lawson announced that the Lawson Airplane Company had received an order for ten airplanes and that they would be delivered in June, July and August. Lawson neglected to mention that the order came from the Lawson Air Line Transportation Company. This ploy brought very little cash and as the months passed with no airplanes completed and no passenger service underway, Lawson began losing credibility.²⁹

In September 1920, the U.S. Post Office Department awarded the Lawson Air Line Transportation Company the contract for carrying airmail daily over three routes. This was the first large airmail contract ever given to a private company. If Lawson could have the three routes in operation by March 1921, the company would receive \$685,000 for carrying airmail on these routes for one year. It was an incredible incentive. In December 1920, the Midnight Liner was

²⁸ Hardie, "The Lawson Airliners," pp. 221-239.

²⁹ Henry, p. 98.

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finally finished and ready for its test flight. By this time, however, the Lawson Airplane Company was barely able to meet weekly payroll. In January 1921, Lawson took out an ad in the Milwaukee Journal, promising to pay a ten percent return to any new investors. Lawson's inability to meet his earlier deadlines, combined with an economic recession, discouraged new investors. Lawson was forced to back out of the Post Office contract and lay off most of his employees. The stockholders of the Lawson Airplane Company became increasingly insistent that Lawson prove that the Midnight Liner would fly. Through the winter the weather provided an excuse to delay the test flight. Lawson continued to delay into the spring; he no longer had the cash to transport the craft to the airfield. He had cleared a dirt runway at the factory, but it was only 300 feet long. At a meeting held April 21, 1921, the stockholders decided to mortgage the factory property for \$6,500 and issued an ultimatum: conduct the test flight by May 9, or resign.³⁰

The weather was uncooperative but Lawson, desperate, scheduled the test flight of the Midnight Liner for May 8, 1921. Fatefully, he decided to take off from the runway on the grounds of the factory. The engineers and technicians opposed this decision, but Lawson and his co-pilot, Charles Wilcox, believed that, with favorable winds, they could get the plane airborne. The Midnight Liner lumbered down the runway but was unable to reach takeoff speed before reaching the end. The plane continued into the neighboring farm field, which had been Lawson's contingency plan. But Lawson had not considered that the field might be plowed; it had been and in rows perpendicular to the runway. As the Midnight Liner bounced over the furrows, the Captain in Command ordered Wilcox to take off. The Midnight Liner began to rise. Unable to clear a nearby house, Wilcox banked left, catching tree branches and a telephone pole before crashing. No one was hurt but the airplane was severely damaged. Lawson maintained that the Midnight Liner could be

³⁰ Ibid., pp., 100-101; and Hardie, "The Lawson Airliners," pp. 275-280.

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repaired at a cost of \$10,000. But on July 16, 1921, the Board of Directors decided to close the factory and give Lawson a six-month, unpaid vacation. The Lawson Airplane Company declared bankruptcy in 1922.³¹

The Midnight Liner (see photo 14) was as innovative as the C-2 had been. The layout refined the plan of the C-2, placing the cockpit at the front end, the passenger cabin in the middle, and tucking the lavatory and the compartment for airmail and baggage into the tail. The weather-proof cockpit was separated from the passenger cabin by a door with a window. The passenger cabin could be used for daytime or nighttime flight. For daytime, it had an off-center aisle with two rows of seats on one side and one row on the other, accommodating 24 passengers. For night travel, the cabin could be converted into a sleeper, with six berths and six seats. The cabin was finished with mahogany and carpeted (both for comfort and for sound-proofing). The lavatory included drinking water, a mirror and a shower. It was finished in white enamel with a tile floor. The airmail and baggage compartment contained a chute, through which mail could be delivered or picked up while in the air.³² The Midnight Liner had an electrical system to provide heat to the cockpit, cabin and lavatory, and to light the dashboard, cabin, wingtips, and tail. All of these features were first used in the Midnight Liner. Lawson also intended to provide wireless communication for business passengers so that they could keep in contact with their offices, and to carry vacuum containers that would keep food warm so that a waiter could serve meals at regular hours.³³

³¹ Henry, pp. 101-103; and Hardie, "The Lawson Airliners," pp. 287-88 and 295.

³² Lawson also proposed to transfer passengers through the chute in midair.

³³ "The Lawson Midnight Airliner, Aerial Age Weekly, 27 December 1920; and "La Crosse to Honor Lawson," Milwaukee Journal, 23 January 1921.

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The Midnight Liner was never repaired and Lawson left Milwaukee, his career in the aviation industry essentially over. In 1926, he made one last attempt at manufacturing aircraft with a design for a "super airliner" with a double-decker passenger compartment that would carry 104 passengers. The design called for a dining room, a library, sleeping berths, restrooms and showers. In January 1926, Lawson obtained a patent on the two-tier passenger compartment, covering its use on trains, boats and buses, as well as airplanes.³⁴ Working at a factory near Plainfield, New Jersey, the Lawson Aircraft Company was chronically short of funds. Although the cabin and fuselage were finished in 1927, the "super airliner" was never completed.³⁵

Lawson moved on to projects that were still more visionary and broad-reaching than those of his aviation days. In 1931, Lawson founded the "Direct Credits Society," an organization whose aim was the complete restructuring of the American economy to create a capitalist utopia. The same year, Lawson published a pamphlet called Direct Credits for Everybody, which contained his plan for economic reform. Lawson's plan was quite progressive for the time. It called for the abolition of the gold standard; prohibiting private banking and the charging of interest; and eliminating insurance companies. These provisions were intended to eliminate the business of lending money and the "financiers" (whom Lawson viewed as immoral) who had become wealthy dealing in money. Lawson proposed that the government take control of all financial institutions and be the only agency permitted to make loans. All loans would be interest-free and extended directly to borrowers (giving the movement its name, "direct credits"). Lawson's economic plan also called for the government to fund the living expenses and education of all children (up to 21 years old), and

³⁴ This patent, also secured in many European countries and in Britain, likely provided much of the money for Lawson's later endeavors as it was licensed to several railroads and bus companies.

³⁵ Henry, p. 104.

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the living expenses for everyone over 65. Finally, Lawson proposed a national health care system supported entirely by the government, with no private practice allowed. Lawson firmly believed his plan would result in falling prices, full employment, and high wages and profits. The Direct Credits Society, with its motto "Justice for Everybody Harms Nobody," soon had a membership in excess of one and one-half million, concentrated in the Midwest (it was based in Detroit). Organized like the military, complete with uniforms, the Direct Credits Society crusaded for institutional economic reform throughout the 1930s. Lawson, of course, was "Commander in Chief," but also referred to himself as "the New Emancipator," "the Wizard of Reason," and "the People's Coach."³⁶

At heart, Lawson was a moral reformer and a review of the newspaper of the Direct Credits Society, The Benefactor, shows that he incorporated some of his personal philosophical beliefs into the Direct Credits movement. Beginning in 1931, Lawson published a series of treatises explaining his philosophy, which he called, "Lawsonomy," and which he defined as "the knowledge of life and everything pertaining thereto."³⁷ As early as 1904, Lawson showed glimmerings of this philosophy in a novel he published called Born Again. This novel imagined a future in which human beings, through moral rectitude and unselfishness, would create a utopia and, over many generations, evolve into god-like beings who could reshape the earth and the heavens. Following the failure of the Lawson Airplane Company in 1922, Lawson had written what would become the first treatises in Lawsonomy, Manlife (published in 1922) and Creation (written in 1923 and published in 1931). In these books, Lawson presents an unorthodox science that explains physics with theories that are astonishing in their creativity. Lawson declared that the universe was ruled by the "Law of Penetrability," that is, that the movement of all matter is caused by suction and pressure,

³⁶ Henry, pp. 112 and 132-141.

³⁷ Lawson: Aircraft Industry Builder (Detroit: Humanity Publishing Company, 1937), p. 299.

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and that penetrability of varying densities caused matter to move through space in countless directions. Lawson calls this movement of matter, "zig-zag-and-swirl."³⁸ During the 1930s, Lawson returned to these ideas, writing volumes on the Lawsonomic views of the life sciences, philosophy and theology, and promoting some of the ideas that first appeared in Born Again (notably vegetarianism and reincarnation).³⁹

By 1939, Lawson clearly believed he had been divinely appointed to improve humanity. To accomplish this, he set out to establish a university and utopian community, where people would study Lawsonomy and live by its precepts, thereby developing into a new species of advanced human beings. In 1943, he purchased the abandoned campus of Des Moines University, in Des Moines, Iowa, renaming it, "The Des Moines University of Lawsonomy," (hereafter, DMUL). Lawson's proclamation that Iowa was a favorable spot from which to inaugurate the birth of a new species in the June 1944 issue of Benefactor apparently sparked mass resignations from the Direct Credit Society and by mid-1945 the organization was defunct. The number of residents at the DMUL appears to have peaked at around 200 in 1947. Lawson moved to Ohio about that time and the numbers dwindled thereafter. In 1948, Lawson founded the "Lawsonian Religion," with as many as eight churches by the mid-1950s, three or four of which may still exist. Shortly before his death, Lawson sold the DMUL, which had run into financial difficulties. The campus was razed in 1955. In 1956, the university was relocated to Sturtevant, Wisconsin, where it continues with three or four "students."⁴⁰

³⁸ V.L.A. Farrell, compiler, Lawson: From Bootblack to Emancipator (Detroit: Humanity Publishing Company, 1934), p. 57.

³⁹ Henry, p. 179.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 186, 201, 209, 214, 238, 247 and 283.

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Summary of Transportation Significance

The Lawson/Continental Building is significant in transportation for its association with the Lawson Airplane Company and the Lawson Air Line Transportation Company. The Lawson Airplane Company built the first and second airplanes in the U.S., and probably in the world, that were intended for commercial passenger service. Both the C-2 and the L-4 were innovative, incorporating elements never before seen and that became standard features on later commercial passenger airliners. The unique features of the C-2 included a weather-proof cockpit with dual controls; a spacious enclosed cabin with a central aisle, windows and comfortable seats; and a layout placing the cockpit up front and the cabin behind. The striking colors of the C-2, with its green body, red wings, and "Lawson Air Line" emblazoned in white along the side, would be emulated by later airlines beginning in the 1930s. The L-4, also known as the Midnight Liner, built upon the C-2 design, and became the first airplane with sleeping berths, a lavatory, a heated cabin and electric lighting. The first mass-produced airplane with sleeping berths was called the Condor; a poorly-designed and underpowered plane, it was manufactured only in 1934. Not until the DC-3 was launched in 1936 did an airplane include lavatories. The DC-3, widely regarded as one of the best airplanes ever designed (and with many still flying), was also the first plane to match the Lawson airliners in size and carrying capacity. The "goony bird," as it was affectionately called, could accommodate 21 passengers by day while its night version carried 12 sleeping berths.⁴¹

In his history of aviation in America, Legacy of Flight, author Richard Hallion assesses Lawson's role in the development of passenger airplanes, as follows:

Lawson's efforts certainly foreshadowed the development of large multiengine specialized air transports with sleeping accommodations; his C-2 and L-4 were simply born at the wrong

⁴¹ Solberg, pp. 102-03 and 166-169.

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time, for air transportation in America had not advanced far enough to take full advantage of the capabilities of these two extremely promising aircraft.⁴²

Alfred Lawson, through the Lawson Air Line Transportation Company, was also the first to propose nationwide passenger service. In June 1919, Lawson published his proposal for a network of routes, with a system of beacons stationed at 100-mile intervals to assist nighttime flying. As the network of aviation routes evolved in the late 1920s, it closely resembled what Lawson had envisioned (see map attached).⁴³

Lawson imagined large, commercial airliners plying the skies, carrying passengers in a nationwide network of air routes. His vision was all the more remarkable given how primitive aviation technology was at the time. When the C-2 and the L-4 were produced, very few Americans had ever flown in an airplane. Flying in an airplane was viewed as the ultimate thrill ride, something you might do once in your life, when daredevil barnstormers came to town. No one could imagine flying as an everyday form of transportation. That Lawson could imagine a future that no one else could strengthens his vision, but it also meant that there was virtually no demand either for commercial airplanes or for a large-scale passenger service. By 1919, a few short routes were operating on a fairly regular schedule, using military craft retrofitted to carry one or two passengers. Aviation technology was primitive, making air travel undependable and often hazardous. There were very few airports, limited radio communication and no beacons. Pilots navigated by sight, following rail lines and rivers, and the compass was the sole navigational instrument. Weather-forecasting was unreliable. All of this infrastructure was essential for Lawson's endeavors to succeed, but it was not until

⁴² Richard Hallion, Legacy of Flight (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), p. 10.

⁴³ Henry, p. 109.

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the late 1920s that the federal government and large corporations began investing heavily in improving aviation technology.⁴⁴ In the words of Lawson biographer, Lyell Henry, Lawson "was a prophet of and a pathfinder for air passenger service."⁴⁵

The Lawson/Continental Building has the closest association with the Lawson Airplane Company and the Lawson Air Line Transportation Company, although there may be other buildings in some way associated with Lawson. The first commercial airliner, the Lawson C-2, is arguably the more important of Lawson's two airliners, as the L-4 built upon the innovations of the C-2. The C-2 was built in the loft of the Cream City Sash and Door Factory at 1200-36 West Pierce Street in Milwaukee. A historical photograph shows the C-2 under construction in a brick building of "textile mill industrial loft" configuration, that is, exposed walls and ceilings, and heavy timber frame. The Cream City Sash and Door Factory was a very large complex with three factory buildings, all of them three-story brick structures dating from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, and so probably textile mill industrial loft buildings.⁴⁶ George Hardie, Jr., who has conducted in-depth research on Lawson and his Wisconsin-built airliners, is uncertain which of the buildings was used by the Lawson company.⁴⁷ Only one of the three buildings survives. Whether this building was where the C-2 was built is unknown. In contrast, the Lawson/Continental Building was verifiably where the L-4 was manufactured. It is the only building that was owned by the Lawson Airplane Company and it was acquired for the production of commercial airliners and the operation of a passenger airline service. The Lawson/Continental Building, therefore, best represents the innovations of the Lawson Airplane Company and the Lawson Air Line Transportation Company.

⁴⁴ Henry, pp. 108-09.

⁴⁵ Henry, p. 109.

⁴⁶ Map of Milwaukee (1910, pasted over 1923 and 1925), p. 400.

⁴⁷ Hardie, Interview, 30 November 2000.

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SIGNIFICANCE: ARCHITECTURE

The Lawson/Continental Building is locally significant under Criterion C, for the high artistic expression displayed in the tilework that appears in the manger's office, the vestibule and the showroom of the circa 1928 section. Manufactured in the building by the Continental Faience and Tile Company, the tilework served as a three-dimensional brochure for the firm's products. This was a method of advertising that had been employed by purveyors of other building materials in the state, most notably by the lumber barons of northern Wisconsin in the ornate millwork of their palatial residences.

The Continental Faience and Tile Company incorporated on October 27, 1924 and bought the property at 909 Menomonee Avenue shortly thereafter. In 1925, Continental sold off most of the south end of the property to the Ajax Pattern Company, giving the Continental property its current dimensions. The Lawson Hangar was on the parcel sold to the Ajax Pattern Company and was demolished prior to 1937.⁴⁸ Under the direction of Carl Bergmans, president and general manager, Continental manufactured art tile and quarry tile.⁴⁹ "Faience," was a type of French ceramic that was inspired by the pottery of Faenza, Italy, which traditionally was finished with a colorful glaze, most often a greenish blue. For Continental, "faience" likely referred to the firm's glazed art tile.

In the late 1920s, the Continental Company prospered, increasing its capital stock by nearly 50 percent in 1927 and constructing

⁴⁸ Milwaukee County Incorporation Records, 54:574; Milwaukee County Deeds, 1092:191; Map of Milwaukee (1910, pasted over through 1925); and Map of Milwaukee (1937).

⁴⁹ Bergmans was apparently not the owner. The current owner has ledgers from the Continental Faience and Tile Company that indicate a Mrs. Way was the owner of the company.

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the front section of building circa 1928.⁵⁰ The vestibule, manager's office and showroom were lavishly finished in the company's tile. The glazed art tiles show a variety of finely-detailed patterns in vibrant colors. The abstract geometric designs reminiscent of the lacy ornamentation of Moorish Spain and the long-legged birds evoking tropical South Florida appear specifically designed for the Mediterranean Revival style. The floral, chevron, diamond and rope-molding patterns would have suited other Period Revival styles. The artists who designed the tile patterns are unknown, but their work was distinctive, and the flower and bird variations are especially well-executed.

The tilework in the vestibule, manager's office and showroom also represents a form of advertising, in which the building markets the company's products. This seems to have begun in the late nineteenth century, when, for example, the lumber baron's Queen Anne house might feature his firm's best millwork, or the office of a sash-door-and-blind company might be fitted with its finest windows and doors, each in a different wood or style. Despite these early examples, print advertising was considered more effective up until around 1900, when display windows began to supplant print ads. The first display window trade magazine was established in 1898; others soon followed. During the first 20 years of the twentieth century, these magazines publicized the experimentation then taking place as merchants attempted to develop "scientific principles" that would help them persuade consumers to buy their wares.⁵¹ Industrial designers built upon these principles to create products whose very design implied the qualities the manufacturer most wanted consumers to recognize: dependability, strength, speed. The greatest (or perhaps most extreme) use of visual marketing has been in architecture,

⁵⁰ Milwaukee County Incorporation Records, 64:137.

⁵¹ Leonard S. Marcus, The American Store Window (London: Architectural Press, Ltd, 1978), pp. 16-18. Interestingly, the founder of the first display trade magazine was L. Frank Baum, author of The Wizard of Oz, published in 1900.

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especially in fast food franchises and service stations. The earliest example in which the entire building was a billboard for the product was the first White Castle hamburger restaurant, built in Wichita, Kansas in 1921. The owners chose the name and sought to design the restaurant in such a way that its name and its appearance would imply clean ("white") and distinctive ("castle").⁵² The Lawson/Continental Building displays fine examples of the Continental company's tile, serving as a three-dimensional advertising brochure for the company. The rooms in which the tile was installed retain excellent integrity.

The building boom and the popularity of the Mediterranean Revival style during the period likely fueled the company's initial success. During the late 1920s, there appears to have been only one other art tile manufacturer in Wisconsin: Art Mosaic Tile in Green Bay.⁵³ The Mediterranean Revival was never very popular in Wisconsin and it is doubtful the state could have supported many more art tile manufacturers. In South Milwaukee, Continental tile appears in the vestibules of the South Milwaukee Junior High School (built in 1928 and designed by the La Crosse firm of Parkinson and Dockendorff).⁵⁴ St. Stephens Catholic Church on Howell Avenue also displays Continental tile in the aisles and vestibule. Continental tile products were used in one of the Baptist churches in Milwaukee and a school in Wauwatosa. The Butler Tile Company, which still exists, was a Wisconsin dealer that handled Continental's tile. Invoices in the possession of the current owner of the building show that Continental's products were shipped to buildings sites and tile dealers all over the eastern U.S., including Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York,

⁵² Will Anderson, New England Roadside Delights (Portland, Maine: Will Anderson, 1989), pp. 23-25.

⁵³ Polk's Wisconsin State Gazetteer and Business Directory (Detroit: R.L. Polk & Company, 1924; and 1927).

⁵⁴ "Start Work on Junior High," The South Milwaukee Journal, 23 March 1928, p. 1.

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Illinois, and Florida. The company also had an office on Park Avenue in New York City in 1930.

During the 1930s, the Continental Faience and Tile Company struggled through the Depression and the declining popularity of the Mediterranean Revival style. In 1943, the stockholders dissolved the company and the property was sold to Midwest Potteries, Incorporated.⁵⁵ Midwest Potteries manufactured ceramic lamp bases and figurines, such as kewpie dolls. In 1952, the property was again sold and the building was used as a warehouse.⁵⁶ Since that time, it has changed hands several times, but has remained in warehouse use. In the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the building was vacant for eight years, during which time it suffered considerable damage from the weather and vandals. The current owner, Richard Schumacher, purchased the building in 1994 and has stabilized it. Recently, the city of South Milwaukee established a Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) district in the area, including the property that is the subject of this nomination. A developer has acquired surrounding parcels, on which he hopes to build an apartment complex. The subject parcel is under considerable pressure for redevelopment.

In conclusion, the Lawson/Continental Building is locally significant under Criterion C for the fine collection of tilework found in its principal rooms. Because these rooms advertised a product, they may also represent the best work the firm had to offer. In the future it may be possible to attribute other buildings' tilework interiors to this manufacturer through the visual catalog present in the Lawson/Continental Building.

⁵⁵ Milwaukee County Incorporation Records, 118:344.

⁵⁶ "If Walls Had Tongues, the Unusual Story of An L-M Warehouse," Inside Line: Published for the Employees of Line Material, September 1952, p. 6.

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Furthermore, these rooms represent a period of design when tile finishes were a popular decorating feature. Despite some damage due to vandalism, the tilework retains a high degree of artistic integrity.

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Wright's Milwaukee City Directory. Milwaukee: Wright Directory
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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Lawson Airplane Company/Continental Faience and Tile Company
Section 10 Page 1 City of South Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The general area of this parcel is a polygon, whose boundaries coincide with the legal boundaries of the parcel. The parcel is described as that part of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 11, T5N, R22E, in the City of South Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, to wit: commencing at the SW corner of Lot 3, Block 15, in South Milwaukee Boulevard Heights; thence S along the Wly boundary of South Milwaukee Boulevard Heights 140 feet; thence due W along the Nly boundary line of land heretofore sold to Ajax Co., under a Land Contract recorded in Volume 1092 of Deeds at page 191, as Document No. 1339332, 359.48 feet, more or less, to the Ely boundary of land conveyed to Standard Mineral Wool Co. by Deed recorded in Volume 376 on Page 447, as Document No. 32493; thence N 11 degrees W along the Ely boundary line of said last mentioned tract of land to the Nely corner thereof; thence S 79 degrees W 125 feet to the land belonging to the Chicago & North Western Railway Company; thence N 11 degrees W along the Ely boundary of said Railway Company's land 101.31 feet; thence E 515.51 feet, more or less, to the place of beginning. This parcel encompasses about 1.5 acres.

VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

These boundaries coincide with the legal boundaries on which the Lawson/Continental Building sits and enclose the all the remaining resources historically associated with the property.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Lawson Airplane Company/Continental Faience and Tile Company
Section photos Page 1 City of South Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

Photo 1 of 14

Lawson Airplane Company/Continental Faience and Tile Company
City of South Milwaukee, Milwaukee County

All photos were taken by Elizabeth L. Miller on November 9 and
December 2, 2000.

Negatives on file at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.
View of the east-facing (front) façade, looking west.

The information for the following photos is the same as the above,
except as noted:

Photo 2 of 14

Close-up of the front entrance, looking west.

Photo 3 of 14

View of the north-facing façade of the c. 1928 section, looking
west.

Photo 4 of 14

View of the south-facing façade of the c. 1949 addition, looking
northeast.

Photo 5 of 14

View of the south-facing façades of the c. 1949 addition (right)
and the c. 1916 section (left), looking northwest.

Photo 6 of 14

View of the south-facing façade of the c. 1916 section, looking
northwest.

Photo 7 of 14

View of the west- and north-facing facades of the c. 1916 section,
looking southeast.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Lawson Airplane Company/Continental Faience and Tile Company
Section photos Page 2 City of South Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

Photo 8 of 14

View of the west-facing façade of the c. 1916 section, looking southeast.

Photo 9 of 14

View of tile floor in the vestibule.

Photo 10 of 14

View of tile wainscot in the showroom.

Photo 11 of 14

View of tile wainscot and door surrounds in the office.

Photo 12 of 14

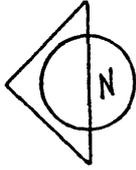
View of the interior of the c. 1916 section, looking east.

Photo 13 of 14

View of 1950 non-contributing building, looking southwest.

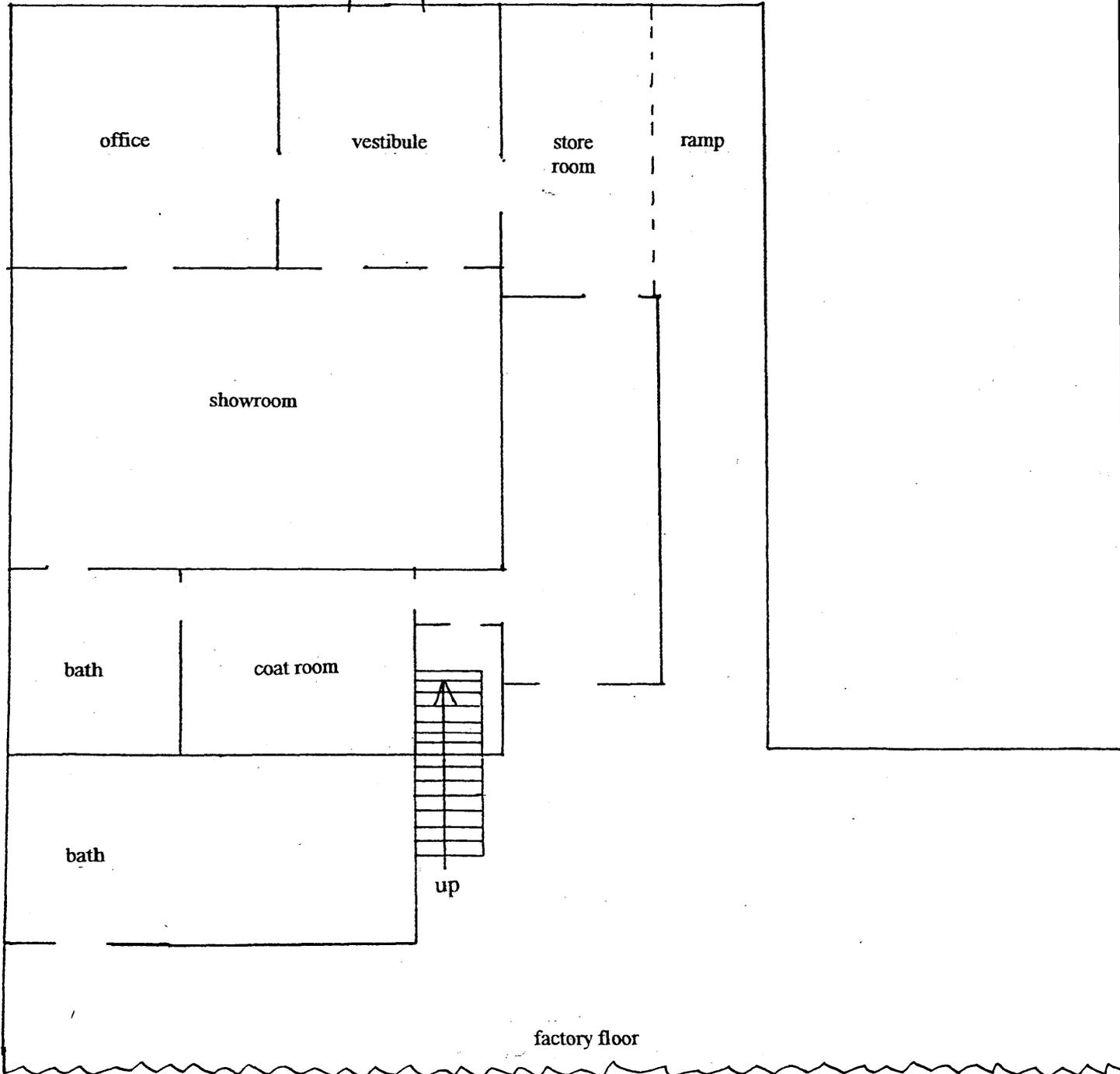
Photo 14 of 14

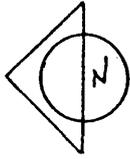
View of the L-4, "Midnight Liner," 1921. Source: Alfred Lawson, Aircraft History (Detroit: Humanity Benefactor Association, 1947) p. 109.



Lawson/Continental Building
Plan of Office and Showroom Area, c. 1928 Section
South Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, WI

Not to scale

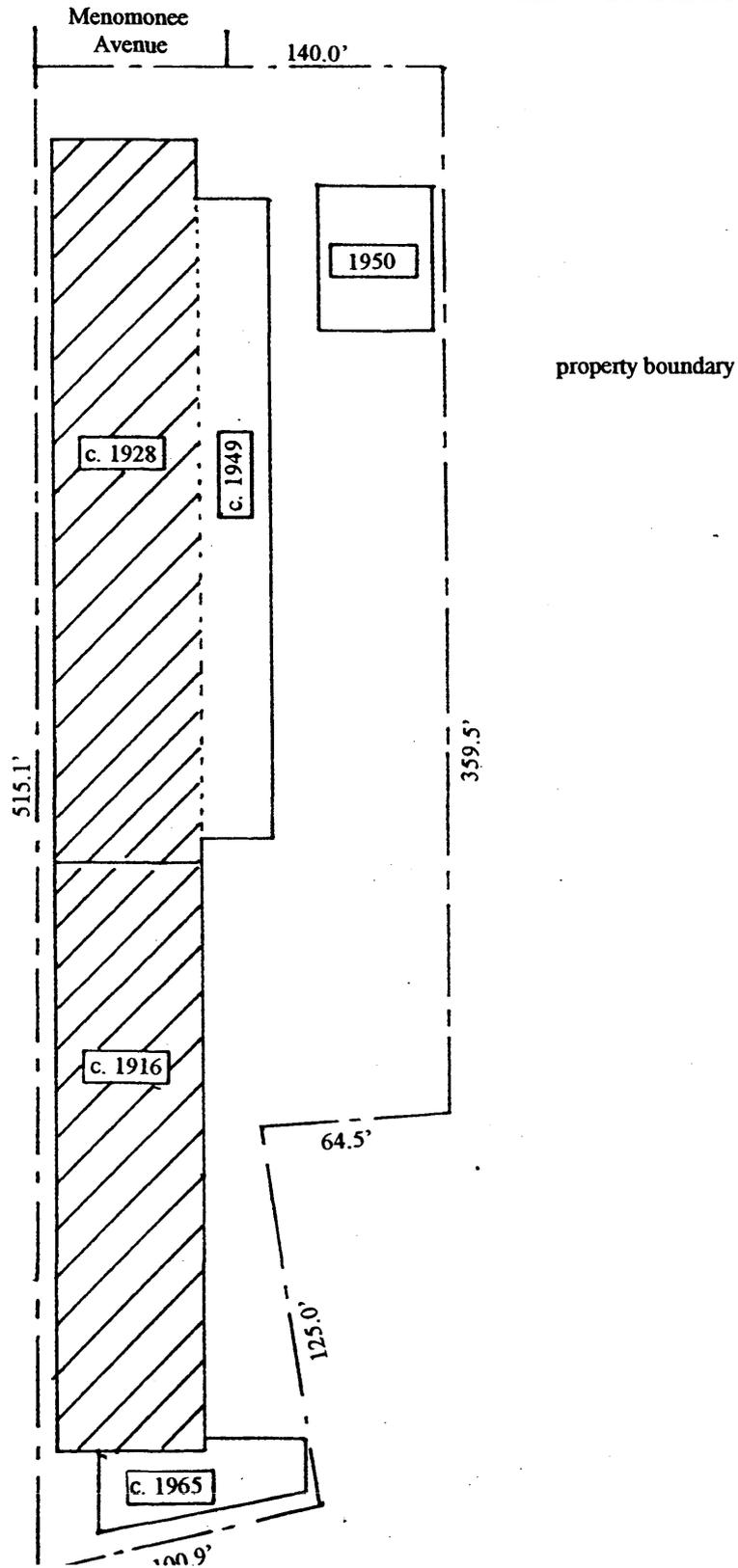




Lawson/Continental Building
909 Menomonee Avenue
South Milwaukee
Milwaukee County, WI

Scale 1" = 60'

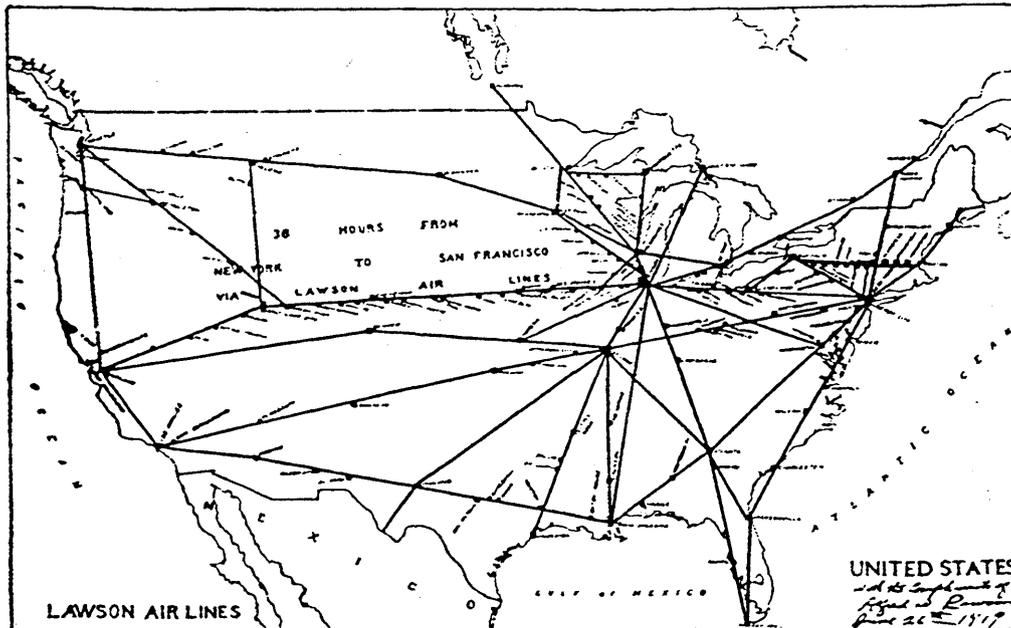
- Contributing
- Non-contributing



PROPOSED LAWSON AIRLINES — 1919

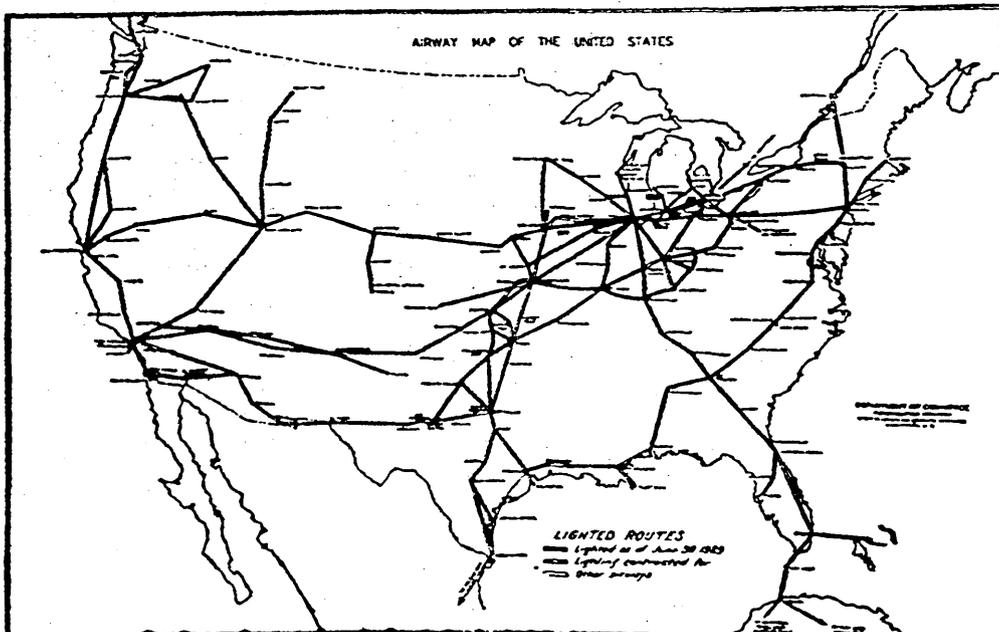
From St. Paul, Minnesota, Press, May 21, 1920

HOW LAWSON PLANS TO CRISS-CROSS U. S. WITH AIR ROUTES



This is an idealized conception of how the Lawson Line will criss-cross the country as soon as Alfred Lawson gets enough planes built. While it is an idealized map, those who are in direct contact with the aviation future predict that within two years this will be accomplished. Alfred Lawson, designer of the twenty-six-passenger plane which made the flight from Milwaukee to the Atlantic seaboard, will make a visit to St. Paul within the next two weeks.

AIRLINES OF THE U. S. A. IN 1929



TEN YEARS AFTER LAWSON

Source: Alfred Lawson Aircraft History (Detroit: Humanity Benefactor Association, 1947).