

Minnesota Veterans' Home Complex,
Power House (No. 14)
5101 Minnehaha Avenue South
Minneapolis
Hennepin County
Minnesota

HABS No. MN-74-K

HABS
MINN,
27-MINAP,
19-K-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

ADDENDUM

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MINNESOTA VETERANS' HOME COMPLEX,
POWER HOUSE (NO. 14)

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Location: 5101 Minnehaha Avenue South, Minneapolis,
Hennepin County, Minnesota

USGS St. Paul West Quadrangle, Universal
Transverse Mercator Coordinates: Zone 15;
483960:4973380; 484140:4972680; 483640:4973140

Present Owner: State of Minnesota
Department of Veterans' Affairs
St. Paul, Minnesota

Present Occupant: Minnesota Veterans' Home

Present Use: Housing for Senior Veterans

Significance: The Power House No. 14, originally constructed in 1888, and rebuilt in 1937, utilizing the chimney from the original structure, is one of 17 remaining structures built on a plot of land between the Mississippi River and Minnehaha Creek that the State of Minnesota acquired in 1886. The peninsula, originally called "Godfrey's Point", was donated to the State of Minnesota by the City of Minneapolis to use as its primary care facility for Veterans and their families beginning in 1888. Most of the remaining structures retain their historical significance, including the Power House, rebuilt as a WPA project in 1937. This simple Art Deco structure coexists with other predominantly Richardsonian Romanesque buildings from the late 19th century, and is, as well, significant in its own right in relation to the Minnesota Veterans' Home site and its surroundings.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of Erection: Original Construction - 1888.
Rebuilt - 1935-1937. (Source: Dedication plaque, northwest corner of front exterior wall, Power House No. 14).
2. Architect: H.G. Bowstead, S.E.R.A. Project No. Henn. S100 B3 12
3. Original and Subsequent Owners:
1937 - Present: Veterans' Home of Minnesota

4. Builder, Contractor, Suppliers:

Builder: Joint Enterprise - Federal and State Emergency Relief Administrations

5. Original Plans and Construction: Plans not available
Original Construction Cost - \$183,000.00
\$75,000.00 Materials and Equipment (State Funds)
\$108,000.00 Labor (Federal Funds)

6. Alterations and Additions: Breeching added from Boiler to Stack (no date)

B. Historical Context:

The Soldiers' Home history began in 1851, with the procurement of land on the West side of the Mississippi River, specifically, the wooded point lying between the Mississippi and Brown's Creek (now known as Minnehaha Creek). A soldier from Fort Snelling, working as an agent for Ard Godfrey, made a claim for this particular piece of land, originally considered a part of the Fort Snelling Military Reservation. Mr. Godfrey was a millwright from Maine, who, at the bequest of Franklin Steele, a local Miller and Minneapolis businessman, came to Minneapolis to oversee the erection of a mill and dam at Saint Anthony Falls.

Mr. Godfrey continued to work with the mills for five years, then, in 1853, he became Postmaster in Saint Anthony. It was at this time that Mr. Godfrey procured the property aforementioned on the Mississippi River and Minnehaha Creek. He moved to the land after title was obtained and began construction of a mill in 1853. After the mill was completed, Mr. Godfrey built a levee at the point of junction between the creek and the river, which was used as a steamboat landing. The river men named the area "Godfrey's Point".

In 1862, due to financial difficulties, Mr. Godfrey tendered fifty acres of his homestead to the City of Minneapolis, "Godfrey's Point", for \$1,000.00 per acre. When Ard Godfrey died in 1886, the City of Minneapolis acquired the land, 51 acres altogether, held it for a year, and then, in 1887, donated the land to the State of Minnesota to use as a new facility for a badly needed Veterans' Home.

Construction of the original complex began in 1888 by Minneapolis Architect Warren B. Dunnell, famous for his interpretations of Richardsonian Romanesque Architecture. The overall site plan and landscaping program was developed by Horace Cleveland, noted Landscape Architect for the City of Minneapolis. Construction of the buildings in the original complex took place over an approximately

ten year period, from 1888 - 1899. Eight brick and stone buildings were completed in the Richardsonian Romanesque style, according to the Cleveland/Dunnell plan. Of these, six remain today.

The oldest surviving historic structures of the Veterans' Home Complex include: Domiciliary Building No. 1 (1888), Domiciliary Building No. 2 (1888), Domiciliary Building No. 4 (1891), Laundry Building No. 13 (1891), Administration Building No. 10 (1892), Main Dining Room No. 7 (1902), and Domiciliary Building No. 6 (1905).

Construction of later structures also include: The Storage Building (1921), Ten-stall Garage (1925), Infirmary/Domiciliary Building No. 9 (1936), and Power Plant/Power House Building No. 14 (1937).

The Infirmary/Domiciliary Building No. 9 and the Power House No. 14 were constructed as part of a joint enterprise of the Federal and State Emergency Relief Administrations' WPA projects. The projects were overseen by H.L. Richards, District Director of the WPA in Minneapolis, and H.G. Bowstead, Supervising Registered Architect.

The Veterans' Home of Minnesota has served as an important institution for over 100 years, providing care to Veterans from every war, Civil to Vietnam, as well as providing assistance and care to wives and children in many cases.

Aside from its function as a care facility, the Veterans' Home provides us with excellent examples of Richardsonian Romanesque Architecture, and, to a lesser extent, two good examples of WPA projects constructed in the Art Deco, or Zigzag Moderne style. In addition, its situation on its site and subsequent surroundings serve as one of the most scenic, historic, and picturesque gems of the Twin Cities Metropolitan area.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: The Power House No. 14 is a single story structure, brick faced on concrete and exposed steel. The buildings main entrance faces southeast toward the middle of the complex and the Mississippi River. Its rear borders on the bluff that descends down to the Minnehaha Creek gorge. The exterior is faced with decorative brick coursework and concrete detailing reminiscent of its Art Deco/Zigzag Moderne design. The building is small (22' x 35'), but has a strong presence because of its bold lines and detailing.

2. Condition of the Fabric: The Power House No. 14 has been maintained adequately, and although some exterior features (brick and stone cracking and spalling) ornamentation have begun to deteriorate, the building itself appears to be structurally sound.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: The Power House No. 14 is located on the Veterans' Home of Minnesota site, Section 17-28-23, Minneapolis Tract Index, part of N.E. 1/4 of S.W. 1/4. This area, being State property, is unplatted. The combined dimensions are 22' x 35'.

The Power House is constructed in a transverse with wings attached on either end. The basement area comprises both the east-west and north-south dimensions of the structure, with the first floor dimensions running north-south only. The building has two floors, the basement and first floor. The main floor is divided into Engine Room, Main Office, and Shop area, with the basement housing the Boiler Room, Tool Room, Gas Header Room, Plumbing Shop, and Garage. The small, square building is three bays wide on the north, or front facade, and five bays wide on the east and west facades. The chimney is also located on the west side of the building.

2. Foundations: The Power House No. 14 is supported by a limestone foundation.
3. Walls:
 - a. North Elevation: The north facade is the main entrance to the Power House. Mankato Limestone belt courses on the ground rise 18" to brickwork around four sets of windows up to a height of 12 feet where another belt course of limestone circles the entire building. Then, brickwork up to the top of the structure, where a final limestone belt course runs along the border of the Power House roof, rising in the center and opposite ends of the building approximately 6" above the roof line. The brick is a dark sienna color and the Mankato stone is buff tone.
 - b. South Elevation: The south facade opens in the center at the Basement level with a doorway and a loading area. Belt coursework in limestone continues around the rear of the structure.

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- c. East Elevation: Facing the Laundry No. 13 and storage facilities, the east facade is six bays wide, has a garage entrance in the S.E. corner, and the limestone belt courses continue around this side of the building. Nine windows, approximately 8'x4' each are spaced 2 by 2 along this elevation.
 - d. West Elevation: Mostly party wall, this is the side of the building the chimney is located on. A door, outlined in limestone in the middle of the west wall, exits next to the chimney. Two more small service doors exit to the East of the chimney. A garage sits in the N.E. corner of the west wall. Four windows, 8'x4', are spaced one foot apart beginning at the N.E. corner and continuing to the main service door.
4. Structural System, Framing: Standard, load bearing, brick faced curtain wall construction, 10" thick, tile faced. Quarry tile over concrete floors.
 5. Chimney: Located on the northwest side of the Power House, the chimney is rebuilt on the same spot as the original, using materials from the original Power House chimney. It is brick lines, inside and out, with a smooth, fired, red clay brick. Original mortar is light pink in tone. The base of the chimney is hexagonal, approximately 24 feet in diameter and 16 feet high. The stack itself rises to a height of approximately 75 feet, tapering to 8 feet in diameter at the top. The top of the stack displays simple, decorative brick belt courses, making it resemble a turret on a tower or piazza.
 6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and Doors: The main doorway on the north facade has double doors surrounded by a limestone belt course and Deco-inspired Arch over the doorway. The entire doorway is 9 feet high. The other major doorway is on the west side of the Power House next to the chimney. It is a single door also surrounded by limestone blocks, with little detail. It is approximately 7 feet high.
 - b. Windows: All window frames are wood construction, painted a dark green. Window glass is wire inforced and window sizes vary from one 2/2 window on the south elevation, to four 8/8 windows on the north elevation, to nine 12/12 windows on the east elevation. Middle window panels are hinged and open outward for ventilation.

7. Roof: Entire structure has a flat, built-up, fireproof asphalt roof with firewalls 18: high.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:
 - a. Typical plan: The Power House's Engine Room is open, with the main office of the Foreman located in the center of the room. High, exposed ceilings with pipes running along walls and ceiling area. The Engine Room is approximately 24 feet square. Stairs on either end of the Engine Room, steel in construction, lead down to the basement's Boiler Room, which is approximately 18' square. Also located in the basement are the Plumbing, Gas Geader, and Tool Rooms. These rooms average 12'x12' in dimension. Garage doors enter from both east and west sides of the building.
2. Flooring: 4"x6" red quarry tile over concrete in a straight, row on row pattern.
3. Wall and Ceiling Finish: The interior walls are brick lines and covered with a fired and glazed yellow brick that follows both the structure's planer and curvilinear surfaces. The brick is in excellent condition and quite stunning in appearance.
4. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Doors are all standard, metal fire doors.
 - b. Windows: Large windows let enough natural sunlight inside of the structure so that little outside sources are needed during the day. Flourescent lighting as backup in all rooms.
5. Hardware: Many doorknobs, latched, and instruments remain in place from construction completion in 1937, although none have specific historical significance.
6. Mechanical Equipment:
 - a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: Power House generates it's own heat, ventilation system is standard, and there is no air conditioning system aside from individual window units.
 - b. Lighting: Currently, all lighting in the structure is flourescent.

D. Site:

1. General Setting and Orientation: The Power House was built as a self-contained power source for the entire Veterans' Home Complex, originally in 1888, and then rebuilt in 1937, utilizing parts of the original Power House's chimney. The main facade faces out onto the center of the Veterans' Home site, towards the Mississippi River. The rear of the building is built on a steep bank that descends down to the Minnehaha Creek Gorge. It is accessible from the main entrance on the north facade, three doors on the west side, one in the south side basement, as well as two garage doors accessible from both the east and west sides. An underground tunnel also connects this structure with the Main Dining Hall No. 7 directly to the northwest of the Power House.
2. Other buildings in the complex.
 - a. Domiciliary Building No. 1 (1888).
 - b. Domiciliary Building No. 2 (1888).
 - c. Domiciliary Building No. 4 (1891).
 - d. Domiciliary Building No. 5 (1891; Foundation only).
 - e. Domiciliary Building No. 6 (1905).
 - f. Main Dining Room No. 7 (1902).
 - g. Administration Building No. 10 (1892).
 - h. Storage Building (1921).
 - i. Laundry No. 13 (1891).
 - j. Power House No. 14 (1973).
 - k. Paint Shop and Garage (1899).
 - l. Ten-stall Garage (1925).
 - m. Steel Bridge (1908).
 - n. Carpenter Shop No. 12 (1950).
 - o. Chapel-Auditorium No. 15 (1962).

- p. Infirmary-Clinic No. 16 (1973).
- q. Residential Care No. 17 (1977).

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Panorama/Early Views: The earliest views of the Soldiers' Home Complex can be found at the Map Library of the Minnesota Historical Society. These maps begin in 1867 and continue on through the mid-1900's.
- B. Photographs: Photographs showing general and specific views of the Soldiers' Home site were found in the Audio-Visual library of the Minnesota Historical Society (Saint Paul), Hennepin County Historical Society Photo Archives (Minneapolis), the History Collection at the Minneapolis Public Library, and at the University of Minnesota's Northwest Architectural Archives.
- C. Maps: The most useful maps were found in the Sandborn Insurance maps, dating from 1875 to 1940, located in the Map Library at the Minnesota Historical Society.
- D. Building Permits/Historical Articles: The Building Permits recorded at the Inspector of Buildings Department in Minneapolis do not begin until 1950 for the Veterans' Home site. Because the Home was a state-run institution, Building Permits were not required. Historical articles can be found at the Soldiers' Home museum on the grounds of the Minnesota Veterans' Home, or in numerous souvenir programs located at the Hennepin County Historical Society Archives dating from 1896 to 1945.
- E. Bibliography:
 - 1. Books:
 - History of Hennepin County. Weill and Williams. Minneapolis, Hennepin County Historical Society.
 - History of Minneapolis, Volume 1. Atwater, Judge Issac and Col. John H. Stevens. Munsell Publishing, N.Y., N.Y. 1895.
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 - Minnesota Territorial Pioneers No. 1. Minneapolis, Hennepin County Historical Society.
 - Bullock, Orin. The Restoration Manual. Norwalk, Connecticut: Silvermine Publishers, 1966.

Bezant, Barb and Alan K. Lathrop. Drafting a House History. Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1979.

Gebhard, David and Tom Martinson. A guide to the Architecture of Minnesota. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1976.

McKee, Harley J. Recording Historic Buildings. Washington: National Park Service, 1976.

Upham, Warren. Minnesota Biographies. Minneapolis, 1912. Minnesota Historical Society.

2. Publications:

Ellsworth, Linda. The History of a House, How to Trace it. Nashville, Tennessee: American Association for State and Local History, 1976, Technical Leaflet No. 89.

History Procedures Manual. Historic American Buildings Survey. Washington: National Parks Service, 1983.

Grand Army Reunion Journals. 1896, 1898, 1900, 1911, 1921, 1923, 1930, 1936, 1941, 1945. Minneapolis, Hennepin County Historical Society.

Minnesota Soldiers' Home Annual Reports. 1940, 1942, 1943, 1946. Minneapolis, Minnesota Historical Society.

3. Miscellaneous:

Minnesota Historical Society Audio-Visual Library-Photograph Collection.

Building Inspector's Office. Minneapolis, Minnesota-Building Permits.

Hennepin County Historical Society-Photograph and Map Archives.

Minneapolis Public Library, Minneapolis History Collection - Photograph and Newspaper Collections.

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- F. Original Architectural Drawings: Architectural drawings for the building were not found at the present time. However, there are extensive mechanical and working architectural drawings of the Veterans' Home Site housed at the Power House No. 14 and at the Minnesota State Department of Building Construction, Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Prepared by:
Mark W. Haldeman
University of Minnesota
June, 1988

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was prepared as a class project for Architecture 5143, Historical Building Research and Documentation, a class offered in the School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota. The class project was prepared under the direction of Professor Foster W. Dunwiddie in cooperation with the State Historic Preservation Office of the Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul, Minnesota. Historical data was compiled by Mark W. Haldeman, University of Minnesota, June, 1988.

ADDENDUM TO:
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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
MIDWEST REGIONAL OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1709 Jackson Street
Omaha, NE 68102