

MINNEAPOLIS WAREHOUSE DISTRICT  
(Bounded by 1st, 3rd, 6th & Washington Avenues)  
BERMAN BUCKSKIN COMPANY BUILDING  
Hennepin Avenue at N 1st Street  
Minneapolis  
Hennepin County  
Minnesota

HABS NO. MN-110-V

HABS  
MINN,  
27-MINAP,  
18-V-

PHOTOGRAPHS

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

HABS No. MN-110-V

MINNEAPOLIS WAREHOUSE DISTRICT,  
HOME INSURANCE COMPANY BUILDING  
(BERMAN BUCKSKIN COMPANY) (*Berman Buckskin Building*)  
Hennepin Avenue at North First Street  
Minneapolis  
Hennepin County  
Minnesota

HABS  
MINN  
27-MINAP,  
18V-

ADDENDUM TO:  
MINNEAPOLIS WAREHOUSE DISTRICT,  
BERMAN BUCKSKIN COMPANY  
Hennepin Avenue at North First Street  
Minneapolis  
Hennepin County  
Minnesota

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287

MINNEAPOLIS WAREHOUSE DISTRICT,  
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18V-

ADDENDUM TO:  
MINNEAPOLIS WAREHOUSE DISTRICT,  
BERMAN BUCKSKIN COMPANY  
HABS No. MN-110-V

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

This report is an addendum to photograph MN-110-V-1, Minneapolis Warehouse District, Berman Buckskin Company (HABS No. MN-110-V) taken by Jet Lowe in April 1990 and transmitted to the Library of Congress in 1990. The new record name reflects the historic name of the building.

Location: Hennepin Avenue at North First Street, Minneapolis,  
Hennepin County, Minnesota.

USGS Minneapolis South, Minnesota Quadrangle; Universal Transverse Mercator  
Coordinates: 15.479000.4981080

Present Owner: Morris Berman, et al.

Present Occupant: Vacant.

Present Use: Vacant. Awaiting demolition.

Significance: The Home Insurance Company Building was built in late 1894 and early 1895 as a venture by New York investors, who held the building until 1905. The building's best-known and major tenant in the early years was Northrup, King and Company who purchased the building in 1905. The company moved to new quarters in 1917, maintaining a retail store in the building, and sold the Home Insurance Company Building in 1922 to Northwestern Drug Company. The Home Insurance Company Building was the fourth building that was occupied by Northrup, King and Company on the block facing Hennepin Avenue. Since 1964, the building has been known as the Berman Buckskin Company building. It was listed as a contributing building when the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in November 1989.

The Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District nomination notes that the Home Insurance Company Building features a facade "designed in a commercial version of the Queen Anne Style." The style may be more properly described as Richardsonian. In terms of its mass, the building is one of the larger buildings at the east end of the district. It appears to have been an in-house design by the H. N. Leighton Company, the local construction company that built it. When it appeared that more space was needed during construction, a fifth floor was added.

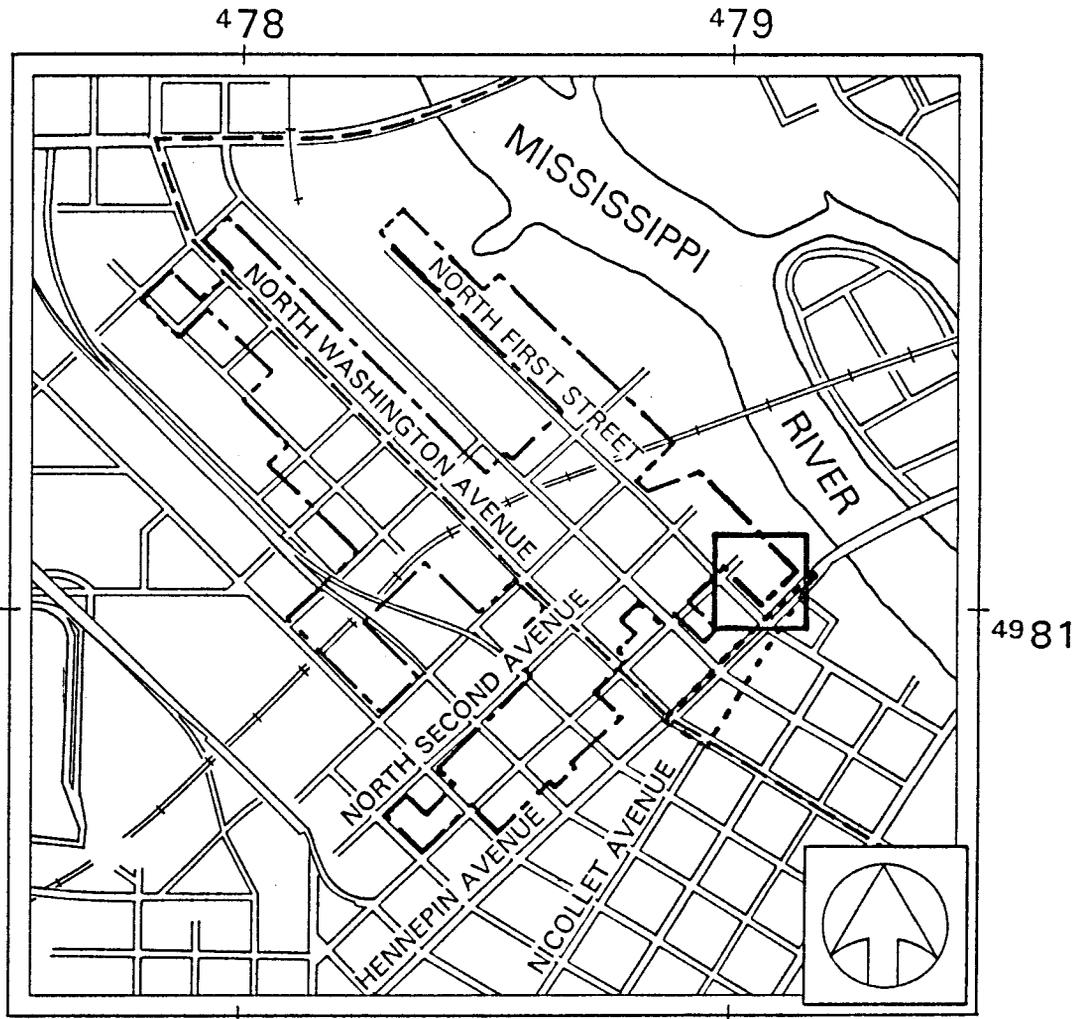
### PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

#### A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Fall and winter 1894-95<sup>1</sup>

2. Architect: Architect unknown. This building is believed to have been designed in-house by H.N. Leighton and Co.<sup>2</sup>

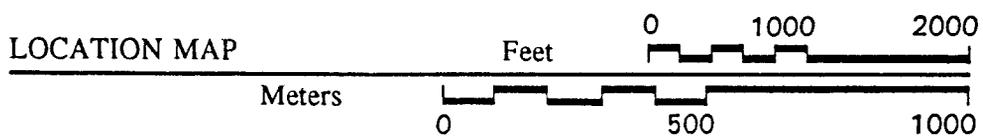
MINNEAPOLIS WAREHOUSE DISTRICT,  
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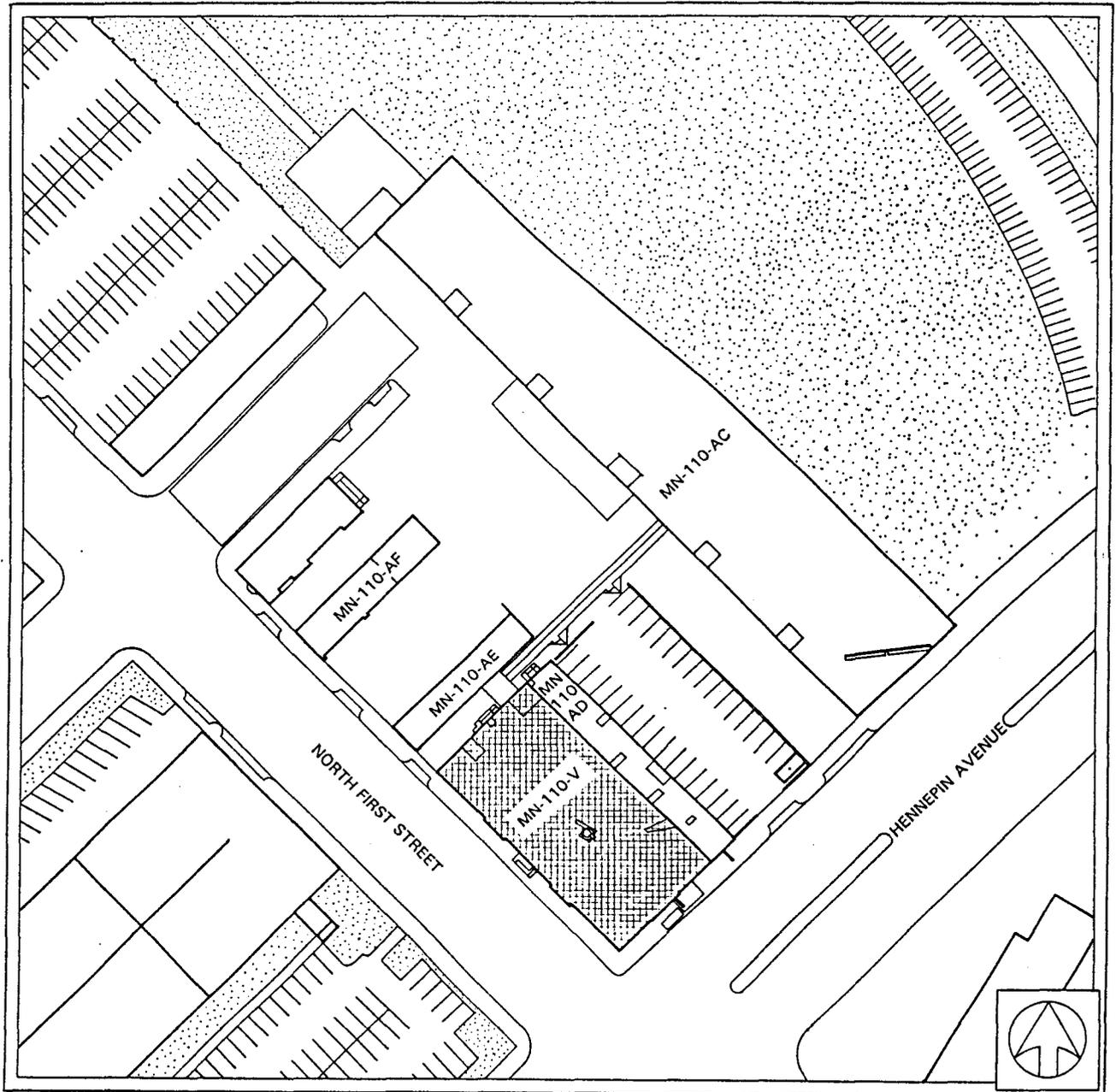
Adapted from USGS 7.5 Minute Series "Minneapolis South Quadrangle"  
 Scale adjusted 1:10 000

LEGEND:

- Western Boundary of the Saint Anthony Falls Historic District,  
National Register of Historic Places Number 71000438
- Minneapolis Warehouse District,  
National Register of Historic Places Number 89001937
- Historic Location of Bridge Square
- Site Location



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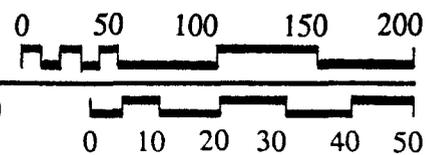


Adapted from Aerial Photograph  
"Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota, Metropolitan Area" Sheets 55C and 56A

SITE PLAN

Feet 1" = 100'-0"

Meters 1:1200



MINNEAPOLIS WAREHOUSE DISTRICT,  
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3. Original and subsequent owners: Original owner: Home Insurance Company, 1894-1905; Northrup, King & Company, tenant from 1895-1905, and owner from 1905-1922; Northwestern Druggist Realty Company, 1922-1964; Berman Realty, 1964-86; various Berman family members, 1986-present.<sup>3</sup>

4. Builders, Suppliers:

a. Builder: H.N. Leighton and Company, St. Paul, general contractor.

b. Suppliers:

Brick contractor: Northern Hydraulic Press Brick Company.

Fireproofing of interior walls: F.R. Pettibone.

Elevators: Gust. Lagerquist

Roofing contractor: Wishard and Hybertson

Steam Heating contractor: Pond and Hassey Company.

Radiators: Minneapolis Radiator and Iron Company

Iron work, sidewalk lights: Crown Iron Works

Glass: Brown and Haywood Company<sup>4</sup>

5. Original plans and construction: Not located. The building was described in 1894 as "mill construction" with gravel roof.<sup>5</sup>

6. Alterations and additions: Initial construction in 1894 included only the first four floors of the building, although the fifth floor was immediately added in early 1895 while the building was under construction. The iron fire escape was added to the rear on the alley sometime before 1914. While the building was still owned by the Home Insurance Company, the fifth floor was rented to H.J. Putman & Company, a boot and shoe manufacturer, who maintained a ground-floor store and housed its manufacturing operations on the fifth floor until 1911-12.<sup>6</sup>

Several changes to the interior occurred during the 1910s while Northrup King owned the building. These changes suggest that the original interior was largely open on the upper floors with the company's retail space on the first floor. A North First Street side saloon and restaurant were electrified in 1914.<sup>7</sup> The interior received new frame partitions and a beaded wood ceiling in 1915.<sup>8</sup> Partitions were installed around five stairways in 1919.<sup>9</sup> A barber shop was added to the building in 1921.<sup>10</sup>

The Northwestern Druggist Realty Company bought the building from Northrup King in 1922 and made alterations to the interior and exterior to suit their needs as a wholesale drug firm. In 1922, Northwestern Drug put up office partitions on the second and third floors for offices and added new hardwood floors.<sup>11</sup> In 1926 a 15' x 50' concrete areaway was added at the west end of the North First Street side of the building by the Northwestern Druggist Company to accommodate loading and unloading of trucks.<sup>12</sup> At this time the first floor was raised to provide greater ceiling height to the west corner of the basement by the addition of extensions to timber posts in the basement and new purlins. This alteration allowed trucks to pull into the basement for deliveries. In 1926, partitions for a hall and stairway were added and a store front was changed.<sup>13</sup> In 1927, Northwestern Drug again altered the basement.<sup>14</sup> Permits indicate that minor plumbing changes were made between 1930-35 for tenants to a

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store, a cafe, and a lunch room in the building.<sup>15</sup> In 1930, Northwestern Drug also made additional changes in the way of frame partitions and other unspecified interior alterations.<sup>16</sup>

Until the late 1930s, most of the storefront alterations were minor. The Hennepin Avenue and North First Street sides originally consisted of storefronts with several entries. The south corner of the building originally had a canted entry with a column which carried the overhang of the second story. There was another central entry on the Hennepin Avenue side and two entries into retail space in the east bay giving access to shops on the ground floor. The North First Street facade had at least four separate entrances into storefronts as well as loading dock doors in the western bays. Minor storefront alterations were done in 1908, 1916, and 1926 which may have included new display windows or alterations or removal of some of the ground floor entrances. Historic photographs suggest that these alterations were minimal changes such as adding or removing canopies and relocating doorways. In 1939, a permit was given for remodeling the front of the building<sup>17</sup> and in 1942 another permit for alterations to a store front was given.<sup>18</sup> Although the 1939 and 1942 store front alterations are not specified on these permits, this was presumably the time when the first floor took on its current appearance. The 1939 contractor was Wunder Klein Donahue, Inc., who had to file a lien against Northwestern Drug in order to be paid for the work.<sup>19</sup>

There have been various other repairs and alterations since the mid-1940s. The upper floors have had brick repair over the years. In 1944, some repairs to brick were done.<sup>20</sup> Major repairs were done to the original panelled brick parapet in 1952 when it was rebuilt.<sup>21</sup> New doors were installed on the storefront in 1950.<sup>22</sup> When Berman Buckskin purchased the building in 1964, they installed partitions for toilets, and in 1969 built two toilets on the first floor and one toilet room on the second floor.<sup>23</sup> Most of the changes to the building since the Berman family took over have been for routine mechanical maintenance and elevator repair. In 1977, the Bermans made miscellaneous alterations to the first, second and third floors.<sup>24</sup> Additional interior alterations were done again in 1980 to the second floor for offices and for non-structural interior remodeling.<sup>25</sup> In the course of various remodelings since 1895, very little original interior material remains with the exception of the framing, floors, and peripheral walls.

The random ashlar limestone foundation in the basement is from the 1876 City Market building, which was originally located on this site. The foundation was partially infilled and repaired with concrete block in 1991. On the Hennepin Avenue side, this foundation repair was done as part of work by Northern States Power Company under the sidewalk. On the North First Street side, the concrete block repairs were done because the limestone foundation was collapsing.<sup>26</sup>

The skyway between this building and the Minneapolis Warehouse District, Wisconsin Central Freight Station (Chicago Great Western Warehouse) (HABS No. MN-110-AC) dates from post-1938-early 1950s. A ca. 1938 aerial view of the Minneapolis milling district at the Minnesota Historical Society does not show this structure.<sup>27</sup> Based on its materials and condition, it appears to be from the 1950s. The skyway does not appear on a 1951 Sanborn Insurance Company map,<sup>28</sup> indicating that it may have been built after 1951. A 1951 permit for \$9,800 by contractor D. J. Kranz for the Northwestern Druggist Realty Company includes the notation "alter bridge over alley," referring to the skyway.<sup>29</sup> This permit suggests that there might have been an earlier structure that was replaced by the existing structure. Field inspection yields no indication that this skyway contains elements of more than one phase of construction. If there was an earlier structure, it was apparently replaced in its entirety in the early 1950s. Northwestern Drug in Minneapolis has no blueprints of the

skyway and current employees of the company do not recall specific details about the company's tenancy in the Home Insurance Company Building.<sup>30</sup> As a large drug wholesaler, Northwestern Drug undoubtedly found the skyway a convenient way to move goods between their building and the Freight Station. Permits for the Minneapolis Warehouse District, Wisconsin Central Freight Station (Chicago Great Western Warehouse) (HABS NO. MN-110-AC) do not include a record of the construction of this skyway.

## B. Historical Context:

1. Neighborhood Context: Before the Home Insurance Company Building was constructed in late 1894 and early 1895, the corner of Hennepin Avenue and North First Street was well-known throughout the City of Minneapolis as the site of the city market. Harlow A. Gale's City Market was constructed here in 1876 from designs by Minneapolis architect LeRoy Buffington. Although Gale had a business on the corner as early as 1857, he did not own the site until 1873.<sup>31</sup>

The City of Minneapolis played a role in economic development at Bridge Square in the 1870s. Bridge Square was the area of lower Hennepin Avenue between the river and the junction of Hennepin and Nicollet avenues where the bridge crossed the Mississippi River into downtown Minneapolis. This 1854 suspension bridge, the first across the Mississippi River leading into Minneapolis down Hennepin Avenue, was a private venture, with shares sold to private local investors. These investors were compensated by the tolls collected. In 1876, the city built a second stone-towered suspension bridge to replace the original wood-towered suspension bridge. And it awarded a municipal franchise to Harlow A. Gale to construct a city market. The resulting City Market building functioned as the city market until its municipal franchise expired in 1891. The 1876 market building remained standing and vacant from 1892 until the fall of 1894 when it was torn down.<sup>32</sup>

The demise of the city market was caused by traffic congestion on the west approach to the Hennepin Avenue bridge. Local gardeners had centered all the wholesale commission business around the city market, and the result was gridlock. Indignant contemporary accounts mentioned 300 teams blocking all attempts to pass through the area.<sup>33</sup> In 1891, the city market then moved farther away from the river and to the west edge of downtown Minneapolis in the block bounded by Second and Third avenues and Fifth and Sixth streets away from congested downtown streets.

Bromley writes that the city market was "[o]ne of the most picturesque buildings on the square," for Gale "not only made the market famous as the gathering place of the farmers of the country but also inaugurated there, in the hall over the market a series of literary and musical entertainments"<sup>34</sup> Gale's market was a multi-use facility which leased space for market stalls on the first floor and on the street around the building. In 1885 the building's second floor contained a hall with stage and scenery. The central portion of the floor provided a seating area, including a gallery. On the southern portion of the building's second floor, the Y.M.C.A. maintained its Bridge Square branch.<sup>35</sup>

Contemporary accounts of the replacement of the City Market note the decline in the Bridge Square area. In covering construction of the replacement building which still occupies that corner today, the *Minneapolis Journal* announced:

The old market house corner on Bridge Square has been sold to New York parties, the Home Insurance Company, who have already contracted for the

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erection of a fine, five-story, modern commercial building, which is to cover the entire lot, 80 x 160 feet. [H.N.] Leighton & Co., the contractors, are already at work clearing out the debris of the old market, and have engaged to have the new building completed and ready for occupancy by Jan. 1 [1895].... The old market house, since abandoned for market purposes, has been but little less than a nuisance, occupying as it has one of the most central and commanding corners. The improvement of this site is likely to stimulate lower Hennepin and Nicollet avenues to renew business and building activity.<sup>36</sup>

The same article applauded the Home Insurance Company of New York for their acquisition of the property and their decision to replace the old building with a modern one already leased by Northrup, Braslan and Goodwin, Company, a growing Minneapolis seed firm and predecessor to Northrup, King and Company.<sup>37</sup> The original name of the Home Insurance Company Building comes from several 1894 sources, including newspaper accounts, the Abstract of Title, and articles in the 1894 and 1895 *Improvement Bulletin*.<sup>38</sup>

In 1905, the Minneapolis newspaper noted that Northrup, King and Company's purchase of the Home Insurance Company Building and planned new railway depots in the area would presage further economic development:

Real estate activity has reached First street N. and Hennepin Avenue. Northrup, King and Co., the seedsmen, have bought the five-story brick building they have occupied for twelve years from the Home Insurance company of New York for \$60,000. . . . Property has been stagnant in the Bridge Square district for years and the recent sale is the most important event since the erection of the big Smith & Zimmer building adjoining on Wisconsin Central tracks.<sup>39</sup>

However, by the turn of the century the heart of downtown Minneapolis had moved away from Bridge Square. Saloons had replaced earlier businesses on the block and city planners would spend the next hundred years drafting plans to address the problem of cheap bars and lodging houses that had become the area's defining characteristic after 1891.

## 2. Northrup, King and Company history at Bridge Square:

From 1884 until 1922, the Northrup, King company maintained a presence on the first block from the river on the northwest side of Hennepin Avenue at Bridge Square. Their last location in the area was the Home Insurance Company building on the corner of Hennepin and First Street North. In 1884, Jesse E. Northrup and Charles E. Braslan founded Northrup, Braslan and Company, a retail seed store, at 22 Hennepin Avenue on Bridge Square. The business, with Northrup as president and Braslan as general manager, occupied the first floor and basement of the building for retail sales and storage. Both men had been raised in the seed business in the east and hoped to take advantage of the business opportunities afforded by the Midwest. Minneapolis seemed a perfect location for their enterprise because both men were interested in the development of seeds produced in northern climates and because the Minneapolis location provided an excellent distribution center for the emerging agricultural areas of the Midwest.<sup>40</sup>

The small store at 22 Hennepin Avenue was the first of four Bridge Square locations used by Northrup, King and Company and its predecessor company during its early years of operation. In addition to retail sales, Northrup, Braslan, and Company also developed a seed catalogue for distribution through the circulation department of the *Farmer's Weekly*

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*Tribune*.<sup>41</sup> Catalogue sales would prove a crucial step in establishing the firm's market position and growth. By 1886 Augustus H. Goodwin had joined the firm as secretary and treasurer, which was renamed Northrup, Braslan and Goodwin Company. The company moved a few doors east to a three story building at 18 Hennepin Avenue. Still growing, in 1887, they moved to still larger facilities in 10-12 Hennepin Avenue, where the Minneapolis Warehouse District, Wisconsin Central Freight Building (HABS No. MN-110-AC) now stands.<sup>42</sup>

The increased capital of the new organization allowed Northrup, Braslan and Goodwin Company to move into the areas of seed production well as distribution. By 1889 the company had 1,800 acres under contract, and by 1893, they opened a branch office and warehouse in Chicago to handle the wholesale operations. This was the year of the panic. The firm had so overextended itself that it was unable to meet its financial obligations.<sup>43</sup> Fortunately, Col. William S. King, a wealthy Minneapolis pioneer, came to the company's financial rescue. The colonel's son, Preston King, joined the company as secretary. With King's financial backing, Northrup, Braslan and Goodwin Company again sought a new, larger facility, at Bridge Square. This is how they came to lease part of the Home Insurance Company Building at 26 Hennepin Avenue when it was completed in early 1895.

When Northrup, King and Company purchased this building ten years later, newspaper reports expressed hope that the building's appearance and location would help to spur economic development in the Bridge Square area.<sup>44</sup> Northrup, Braslan, and Goodwin Company moved their retail store into the first floor of this building and used several of the other floors for catalogue sales and packaging purposes. The top floor and part of the first floor retail space on Hennepin Avenue was leased by H[enry] J. Putman, a shoe and boot manufacturer. However, even William S. King's financial help was not enough to stave off Northrup, Braslan and Goodwin Company's creditors. In May, 1896, the company was declared bankrupt.<sup>45</sup> Realizing that more attention should have been paid to the lucrative retail and catalogue business in Minneapolis, which had continued to make money for the firm, Jesse Northrup and Preston King scraped together enough money to buy out the remaining assets of the company. With Northrup as president, King as treasurer, and Charles Massie, a former employee, as secretary, the reorganized Northrup, King and Company took over the Bridge Square space in November, 1896.<sup>46</sup>

While the company's own written history reports that growth was slow during the next few years, by the turn of the century it was shipping seeds to countries throughout Europe and as far away as South Africa and Australia.<sup>47</sup> The company opened another retail store in the new Dayton's (Department Store) Block at 714 Nicollet Avenue in 1902. Thus, Northrup, King and Company joined the flow of retailers up Nicollet Avenue from the Bridge Square area.<sup>48</sup>

Northrup, King and Company eventually took over most of the Home Insurance Company Building at Bridge Square and in 1905, tired of paying rent, they purchased it for \$60,000 from the original owners. H.C. Putman & Company remained in the building until 1911-12 as the other major tenant.<sup>49</sup>

The company's initial use of the Bridge Square building was as "a retail store on the first floor, and several additional floors for storage purposes."<sup>50</sup> The retail store at the corner of Hennepin Avenue and North First Street "played an important part in the company's growth."<sup>51</sup> It was located adjacent to the trolley cars and routes between downtown and the

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East Side and accessible for drop-in traffic. In the early years, the company was in the retail Christmas tree and wreath business from the Hennepin Avenue location.

In less than ten years after moving to the Home Insurance Company Building, the small warehouse space in its Bridge Square building forced it to look elsewhere. By 1902 it had leased warehouse space in the old Mehlin piano factory on Main Street S.E., across the river on the East Side.<sup>52</sup> In 1905 it made arrangements to use the six-story Warehouse "B" at 724 North First Street for supplementary storage. By 1910, the company was also renting a two-story seed corn warehouse in St. Louis Park<sup>53</sup> and "other scattered warehouses about the city."<sup>54</sup>

In 1914, Preston King died, and Jesse Northrup resigned as president because of ill health. The new president, Charles Massie, took the firm away from downtown Minneapolis, building a huge complex of buildings in northeast Minneapolis at Fifteenth Avenue and Jackson Street N.E. The company occupied its new quarters in 1917, consolidating all operations into one unified plant. The retail store stayed at Hennepin Avenue for "several more years" after the move to northeast Minneapolis. During the last years in the Home Insurance Company Building, from 1912-1917, Northrup King was still a small seed company with an annual sales volume in 1912 of around one million dollars.<sup>55</sup> Northrup, King and Company's historic association with Bridge Square is clear, as is its association with the Home Insurance Company Building, the fourth and last of four buildings that Northrup, King and Company and its predecessor company occupied on this block facing Hennepin Avenue.

Northrup King sold the Home Insurance Company Building to the Northwestern Druggist Realty Company in 1922. The building became the home of Northwestern Drug Company until 1964 when the building was sold to Berman Buckskin Company.<sup>56</sup> Northwestern Drug was a drug wholesale business who sold to retail outlets and druggists in the upper Midwest. When Northwestern Drug was in the building, it was a cooperative. Under the leadership of its president, Robert Buchanan, after 1951, it became "one of the most innovative and progressive independent wholesalers in the industry."<sup>57</sup>

Berman Buckskin Company bought the building in 1964 and the Berman family continued to occupy it as a leather manufacturing and business headquarters, retail store, and rental property until February 1994. From 1964-1983, the first floor and part of the second floor contained retail space for Berman Buckskin Company. The Company's offices occupied the remainder of the second floor. The Bermans sold Berman Buckskin Company to Wilson Leather in 1983 and closed their retail operation and business. Pioneer Shoe Company, a tenant, occupied the fifth floor from 1964-1980. In 1980, the Berman brothers, Morris and Sander, took over the fourth and fifth floors for a new business, Rodeo Leather, a wholesale and manufacturing company. Rodeo remained in the building until the end of February 1994 when the building was vacated.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: Richardsonian Romanesque (described in the Minneapolis Warehouse District nomination as "a commercial version of the Queen Anne style."<sup>58</sup>

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This is a five story red brick building with carved ornamental stone lintels and stone banding. Stylistically, it is a lighter interpretation of the Richardsonian Romanesque, which has also been characterized as Commercial Queen Anne. The building has a substantial amount of relief on the two principal facades and ornamental brickwork such as dentils topping the first floor display window openings.

The Hennepin Avenue facade is organized into five bays with a projecting central entry bay that is flanked with large brick pilasters. A brick base defines the street level. The next three stories are organized vertically with stacked window openings in arched recesses at the fourth floor. The North First Street elevation is a continuation of this theme with a symmetrical pattern of eleven bays. The original Hennepin Avenue storefronts have been destroyed and are infilled with newer materials. The North First Street side of the building has also been infilled at the storefronts on the southern bays. The six western bays along North First Street have original wood frames for storefront display windows and the westernmost bay has original window transoms on the first floor. The other bays have wood infill and an overhead loading dock door.

The building permits and notices of construction indicate that the building was originally designed as a four story building, but a fifth floor was added during construction. The original building permit issued on October 9, 1894, placed the estimated cost of this brick store and office building at \$35,000, to which was added \$13,000-15,000 for an additional floor and an area under sidewalk, according to a December 26, 1894 permit.<sup>59</sup> However, all five stories were constructed together in late 1894 and 1895.

The building design shows a shift in window rhythm and size between the lower four floors and the top, or fifth floor. When the fifth floor was added, the character and size of the windows changed from double sets on the lower floor to triple sets on the top floor. Since construction, above the fifth floor, projecting non-continuous cornices have been removed, as well as the brick panelled parapet and projecting brick piers capped with stone coping. In their place is a flat unornamented brick parapet painted black with white "Berman Buckskin" lettering. The brick piers projecting above the parapet have also been removed.

The northwest wall on the alley is faced in yellow common brick laid in American Bond. The wall to the northeast is similar, except where it forms a party wall with Minneapolis Warehouse District, Gluek Brewing Company Hotel and Saloon (HABS No. MN-110-AD). This party wall is random ashlar and is visible between the two buildings on the northwest wall.

Contemporary newspapers, permits, and publications such as *The Inland Architect*, *Western Architect*, *Northwestern Architect*, and *The Improvement Bulletin* do not mention an architect for this building. Because the original contractors and subcontractors are mentioned in the written record, but not an architect, we believe that the building was designed in-house by the H. N. Leighton Company. Because the Leighton Company had designers and draughtsmen on staff, it is likely that they designed the building themselves.

The H. N. Leighton Company was a large-volume general contractor, builder, and decorator in Minnesota. The company was started by Horace N. Leighton (1852-1927) who moved from Maine to Minneapolis in 1876. The H. N. Leighton Company was incorporated in 1892 and grew to be one of the large general contractors in the state. A decorating department was added in 1881 to give the company the ability to complete buildings ready for occupancy. Horace Leighton was a member of the Minneapolis City Council from 1898-

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1902; the Minneapolis School Board, 1909-ca. 1921; the first president of the Minneapolis Builders Exchange, 1902; and president of the northwest branch of the Associated General Contractors of America, 1922. Associated with Horace Leighton was Fred A. Leighton, vice-president and manager J. LeRoy Leighton, who both joined the company around 1905. Eben E. Leighton joined his brother, Horace, in 1893.

The Leighton Company was the general contractor, but not the architect, for many large buildings in Minneapolis including the Farmers and Mechanics Building (1891), the Northwestern Bank Building, the Wyman-Partridge Building, the first two Minneapolis downtown post office buildings, the Dayton Building, the Metropolitan Life Building, the Loose-Wiles Biscuit Company building, the Advance Thresher Company building, the Emerson-Brantingham warehouse, the Great Northern warehouse building, and Minneapolis churches among which were the Pro-Cathedral, the Westminster Presbyterian Church, the Wesley Methodist Church, and the fifth and sixth Christian Science churches.<sup>60</sup>

2. Condition of Fabric: Good to fair. The roof is leaking badly and the posts and beams at the center of the top floor are sagging. The southwest foundation wall was collapsing in 1990 and was repaired with concrete-block infill in 1991. The building is to be demolished in 1994. Timber members are in good condition with some exceptions. Some are experiencing dry rot from moisture problems, especially at roof drain locations. The roof is in very bad condition with leakage problems virtually everywhere. This is especially apparent on the top floor. Less than five percent of the timber members are experiencing "checking," the separation of wood fibers in a member, largely due to drying. Corrective work could be accomplished by tying the member together with steel banding. Wood columns resting on footings below the basement floor slab have suffered from moisture and some have deteriorated by crushing from one to two inches.<sup>61</sup>

## B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: Field measurements indicate that the building, originally described in the 1894 building permit as 80' x 160', is actually 77'-11 1/4" x 157'-11 1/4". It is five bays wide along Hennepin Avenue by eleven bays deep along North First Street.

2. Foundations: The present building partially re-uses the 1876 random ashlar limestone foundation of the previous building on the site, the City Market building. H.N. Leighton & Company began tearing down the old city market building in October 1894 and planned to reuse parts of the walls.<sup>62</sup> In 1990 and 1991, extensive repairs to the foundation were made with concrete-block infill where underground utility work was done and where the southwest foundation wall along North First Street was collapsing.<sup>63</sup>

3. Walls: The walls are red brick laid in American Bond on the principal southeast and southwest sides facing North First Street and Hennepin Avenue. The later brick infill at the storefronts is Common Bond. Surface planes vary by bay and around windows. Arches, corbeling, and dentil work provide additional interest. Limestone trim is used in the window lintels above the center bays on the southeast and southwest facades. The northeast and northwest walls are yellow brick laid in American Bond.

On the rear northwest facade of the building, there is a non-historic skyway which connects the third floor of the building with the third floor of the Minneapolis Warehouse District, Wisconsin Central Freight House (HABS No. MN-110-AC). The structure is 8' x 8' x 134' long. This skyway consists of corrugated metal wall panels and several awning-type

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windows resting on lightweight structural steel posts and floor deck. The northwest side of this skyway leaves the third floor of the Home Insurance Building northwest, turns ninety degrees to the northeast and covers the alley behind the building. It tends northeast until it enters the wall of the Wisconsin Central Freight Station at the third floor. The roof of the skyway is shed roof of corrugated sheets at the Home Insurance Company building and slightly gabled with corrugated metal panels on its way over the alley to the Freight Station. The structure had asbestos-impregnated wall panels which were removed in January, 1994.

4 Structural systems, framing: The building is heavy timber post and beam construction with brick masonry walls. It has wood columns, beams, purlins, and flooring. The wood posts on the fifth floor are 9 1/2" square. The exterior walls are load bearing with beams supported on brick pilasters.

5. Chimneys: A large, yellow brick chimney is located at the west corner of the building on the roof.

6. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Front entry doorway and doors are not original. They are metal clad and glass. At the west corner, wood framed loading doorways may be original but wood and metal doors are newer replacements.

b. Windows and shutters: On the first floor, three bays at the west corner on the southwest side along North First Street appear to have their original wood storefront window frames. One bay is fully glazed and the other two are partially boarded up. The bays that have been infilled with brick have aluminum clad sliding windows with the exception of a bay at the east corner which has glass-block infill. Sills are brick and lintels are provided by a steel beam. The wood double-hung one-over-one windows and frames on the northwest side of the building (the alley) are original. Sills are limestone. Most of the upper-story windows on the principal facades on Hennepin Avenue and North First Street have brick jack-arched window lintels. The window openings on the fourth floor are round-arched brick. The rear walls have segmented-brick arched window openings and the outline of original iron shutters which were installed on the northwest side of the building at upper story windows.

On all sides of the second, third, and fifth floors, the windows are the original double-hung one-over-one wood frames and sashes. On the fourth floor, the windows are either as described above or double-hung sets of three which are arched, with the center set reaching full height. On all floors, sills are limestone and lintels are either arched brick, flat gauged arched brick, or decorative limestone.

7. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The roof is flat with a built up membrane and gravel covering. It is in poor condition and leaking extensively.

b. Cornice, eaves: The original galvanized iron cornice has been removed, leaving a plain edge capped with stone.

c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: A small, yellow brick stairway penthouse, located near the west corner, provides roof access.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans and flooring: The upper floors are open warehouse spaces with a few interior partitions added for offices and toilet rooms on the west and northwest walls. The first and second floors have been divided into offices with non-historic interior gypsum partitions. There is a storefront on the southwest side of the building with a separate entrance. Floors are pine and maple on the five floors with concrete slab in the basement.

2. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls are brick throughout. The ceilings are not finished and show the subflooring and beams of the floor above.

3. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: There are very few doorways. Where they occur, they are not historic and are located in non-historic gypsum drywall demising walls.

b. Windows: Windows on floors two through five are one-over-one double-hung units with wood frames and sashes. There are no original display or other windows on the first floor.

4. Mechanical Equipment: The building is currently vacant and unheated. Original heating was steam with radiators and boilers. The current heating equipment and plumbing are not historic. Its light fixtures are predominantly fluorescent.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: The building is located at the south corner of the block at Hennepin Avenue and North First Street. The principal sides of the building face southeast on Hennepin Avenue and southwest on North First Street.

2. Historic landscape design: The site is flat. No landscaping exists. The building is flush to the sidewalk with principal sides facing Hennepin Avenue and North First Street. The northwest wall abuts a narrow alley. This building shares a party wall with the building to the east facing Hennepin Avenue, the Minneapolis Warehouse District, Gluek Brewing Company Hotel and Saloon (HABS No. MN-110-AD).

3. Outbuildings: None

ENDNOTES TO PART I. AND II.

<sup>1</sup> City of Minneapolis, Permit A4259, October 9, 1894.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.; Permit A4342, December 26, 1894.

<sup>3</sup> Abstract of Title.

<sup>4</sup> *The Improvement Bulletin*, 4:3 (December 21, 1894), 17.

<sup>5</sup> *The Improvement Bulletin*, 3:20 (October 12, 1894), 12.

<sup>6</sup> *Davison's Minneapolis City Directory*, 1911, 1956; 1912, 2074; City of Minneapolis, Permit F14102, September 7, 1905.

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- <sup>7</sup> City of Minneapolis, Permits F62455, April 3, 1914; and F65052, July 20, 1914.
- <sup>8</sup> City of Minneapolis, Permit A12965, August 6, 1915.
- <sup>9</sup> City of Minneapolis, Permit A14402, March 28, 1919.
- <sup>10</sup> City of Minneapolis, Permits D136206 and F136206, August 5 and August 10, 1921.
- <sup>11</sup> City of Minneapolis, Permit A16025, July 7, 1922.
- <sup>12</sup> City of Minneapolis, Permit A17944, May 18, 1926.
- <sup>13</sup> City of Minneapolis, Permit A17845, March 26, 1927.
- <sup>14</sup> City of Minneapolis, Permit A18425, May 24, 1927.
- <sup>15</sup> City of Minneapolis, Permits D223220, D223243, D228018, D253777, 1930-1935.
- <sup>16</sup> City of Minneapolis, Permit A19936, April 2, 1930.
- <sup>17</sup> City of Minneapolis, Permit A23717, May 15, 1939.
- <sup>18</sup> City of Minneapolis, Permit A24909, April 24, 1942.
- <sup>19</sup> Abstract of Title.
- <sup>20</sup> City of Minneapolis, Permit A25767, September 21, 1944.
- <sup>21</sup> City of Minneapolis, Permit A30515, October 1, 1952.
- <sup>22</sup> City of Minneapolis, Permit A29409, October 4, 1950.
- <sup>23</sup> City of Minneapolis, Permits A35697, November 20, 1964; Permit A338108, September 23, 1969.
- <sup>24</sup> City of Minneapolis, Permit A042534, March 25, 1977.
- <sup>25</sup> City of Minneapolis, Permits A044333, January 17, 1980; A045024, December 22, 1980.
- <sup>26</sup> Sander Berman, current co-owner. Personal Communication with Norene Roberts, January 12, 1994.
- <sup>27</sup> "Aerial View of Minneapolis Showing Milling District," ca. 1938. Photo number MH5.9/MP4.34/p35, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota. Another photograph in the Great Northern Papers at the Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota, from ca. 1953 also does not show the skyway. This photograph is "Mpls: Business District," Negative #46149.
- <sup>28</sup> Sanborn Insurance Map, 1912 updated to 1951.
- <sup>29</sup> City of Minneapolis, Permit A29957, October 4, 1951.
- <sup>30</sup> Allen Lueck, Financial Officer, Northwestern Drug Company. Personal Communication with Norene Roberts, January 12, 1994.
- <sup>31</sup> Abstract of Title.
- <sup>32</sup> *Minneapolis Journal*, October 9, 1894.
- <sup>33</sup> Marion D. Shutter, *History of Minneapolis Gateway to the Northwest*, 1923, 153.
- <sup>34</sup> *Minneapolis Journal*, May 2, 1903, 12.
- <sup>35</sup> Sanborn Insurance Map, 1885.

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- <sup>36</sup>*Minneapolis Journal*, October 9, 1894, 2. Although this article describes the building as five stories, a permit for the fifth floor was not taken out until December 26, 1894.
- <sup>37</sup>*Minneapolis Journal*, October 9, 1894, 2.
- <sup>38</sup>Abstract of Title; *Minneapolis Journal*, October 9, 1894, 2; *The Improvement Bulletin*, October 12, 1894, 12; December 21, 1894, 17; January 4, 1895, 10.
- <sup>39</sup>*Minneapolis Journal*, July 7, 1905, 6.
- <sup>40</sup>Northrup, King and Company, 1919, 7; Northrup, King and Company, 1984, 4; see, also, Roberts and Roberts, 1993, 33-37.
- <sup>41</sup>Northrup, King and Company, 1984, 8.
- <sup>42</sup>Northrup, King and Company, 1919, 10.
- <sup>43</sup>Northrup, King and Company, 1919, 11.
- <sup>44</sup>*Minneapolis Journal*, October 9, 1894, 2; July 7, 1905, 6.
- <sup>45</sup>Northrup, King and Company, 1919, 11, 12.
- <sup>46</sup>Northrup, King and Company, 1919, 12.
- <sup>47</sup>Northrup, King and Company, 1919, 15; *Minneapolis Journal*, January 1, 1899; July 19, 1901.
- <sup>48</sup>*Minneapolis Journal*, May 16, 1902; April 4, 1903.
- <sup>49</sup>*Davison's Minneapolis City Directory*, 1911, 1956; 1912, 2074.
- <sup>50</sup>Northrup, King and Company, 1919, 12.
- <sup>51</sup>Northrup, King and Company, 1984, 9.
- <sup>52</sup>*Minneapolis Journal*, November 12, 1902, 6; Northrup, King and Company, 1919, 15.
- <sup>53</sup>*Minneapolis Journal*, March 31, 1910, 76.
- <sup>54</sup>Northrup, King and Company, 1919, 17; *Minneapolis Journal*, July 7, 1905, 6.
- <sup>55</sup>Northrup, King and Company, 1919, 17; Maurice Keating, "50 Years Association with Northrup, King & Co.", 7.
- <sup>56</sup>Abstract of Title.
- <sup>57</sup>"Robert R. Buchanan, 79, Dies," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 18, 1994, 6B; Allan Luecks, Financial Officer, Northwestern Drug Company, Personal Communication with Norene Roberts, January, 1994.
- <sup>58</sup>Rolf T. Anderson, 1987.
- <sup>59</sup>City of Minneapolis, Permit A4259, October 9, 1894; Permit A4342, December 26, 1894; *Minneapolis Journal*, October 9, 1895, 2.
- <sup>60</sup>"The H.N. Leighton Company," *Minneapolis Golden Jubilee, 1867-1917*, 160; Leighton Company biography file, North West Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota.
- <sup>61</sup>Bakke Kopp Ballou & McFarlin, Inc., 1993, 2, 3.
- <sup>62</sup>*The Improvement Bulletin*, October 12, 1894, 10.

<sup>63</sup>Sander Berman, current co-owner. Personal Communication with Norene Roberts, January 12, 1994.

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original Architectural Drawings: Not located. From available information and after an exhaustive search for an architect, the building does not appear to have been architect designed. No blueprints from the H.N. Leighton Company have been located.

#### B. Early Views:

"Northrup King Seed Company at First Street North and Hennepin Avenue, ca. 1914." Accession Number: R037. Special Collections Department, Minneapolis Public Library, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

"Aerial View of Minneapolis, showing Milling District, ca. 1938." Minnesota Historical Society, photo MH5.9/MP4.34/p35, St. Paul, Minnesota.

"First Street North from Hennepin Avenue, ca. 1912." Minnesota Historical Society, photo MH5.9/MP2.1/r289, St. Paul, Minnesota.

"In Front of the First Street Plant in 1914 with Packet Seed Salesmen Ready to Tour the Country," from the booklet "A Little History of a Big Business," 1909, 3. On file: Northrup, King and Company Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota.

"Office and Main Building 26, 28, 30, & 32 Hennepin Ave.," on the Northrup, King and Company letterhead, letter to Mr. P.B. Gaass, Red Lake Falls, Minn., dated June 11, 1908. On file: Northrup, King and Company Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota.

Change of location notice, 1895, showing the Home Insurance Building. On file: Northrup, King and Company Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota.

Streetscape photograph, ca. 1909, in the 1984 Northrup King history, *One Hundred Years of Trust, 1884-1984*, 8.

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"Northrup King Seed Company at First Street North and Hennepin Avenue, ca. 1914." Accession Number: R037. Special Collections Department, Minneapolis Public Library, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

#### C. Interviews:

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Sander Berman, current co-owner. Personal Communication with Norene Roberts, January, 1994.

Allen Luecks, Financial Officer, Northwestern Drug Company. Personal Communication with Norene Roberts, January, 1994.

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Minneapolis Riverfront Development Coordination Board. Site files compiled by Miller Dunwiddie Associates Inc. and MacDonald and Mack Architects, Ltd., files dated 1978. On file: Hess Roise Company, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Northrup, King and Company Papers. Boxes 1, 2, 12, 45, and 46. Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota.

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- Vol. 4 #3 (December 21, 1894), 17.
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- "On Bridge Square: The Home Insurance Company to Improve the Market Site," October 9, 1894, 2.
- "Mr. Northrup Chosen: To Fill the Vacancy on the Park Board," April 3, 1900, 7.
- "Flower Seed Business," April 19, 1901, 10.
- "Landed One: Mr. Northrup Secures Next National Convention of Seed Trade, June 20, 1901, 1.
- "Answers Death's Call: Harlow A. Gale Called Hence," December 17, 1901, 6.
- "A Growing Seed Concern," May 16, 1902, 7.
- "Old Piano Factory Rented," November 12, 1902, 6.

May 2, 1903, 12.

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E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: Tax records.

#### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Plans call for the demolition of the Home Insurance Company Building in 1994. This report, supporting photographs, and measured drawings were contracted for by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis in response to a Memorandum of Agreement (M.O.A.) signed August 24, 1993. The site is planned for the construction of a new Federal Reserve Bank facility.

The M.O.A. stipulated HABS recordation to mitigate demolition of five contributing buildings in the St. Anthony Falls Historic District and the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District in downtown Minneapolis. Signatories to the M.O.A. were the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis; the National Park Service; the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office; the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation; the City of Minneapolis; and the Minneapolis Community Development Agency.

This report was prepared for the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis by the firm of Historical Research, Inc., Minneapolis, Minnesota, under the direction of Dr. Norene Roberts, assisted by Dr. Joe Roberts and Laura Faucher. It is one portion of the historical and architectural recordation of the building, which also includes photodocumentation and four measured drawings. HABS measured drawings were prepared by James Thompson of MacDonald and Mack Architects, Ltd., Minneapolis, Minnesota, under the direction of Robert Mack. Large format photography was by Jerome Mathiason Photography, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Other reports in the HABS collection completed for this project include:

Minneapolis Warehouse District  
HABS No. MN-110

Minneapolis Warehouse District, Wisconsin Central Freight Station  
(Chicago Great Western Warehouse) HABS No. MN-110-AC

Minneapolis Warehouse District, Gluek Brewing Company Hotel and Saloon  
HABS No. MN-110-AD

Minneapolis Warehouse District, Dittman Building  
(American Hide and Fur Company) HABS No. MN-110-AE

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Minneapolis Warehouse District, 28 North First Street  
(Restaurant) HABS No. 110-AF.

The Minneapolis Warehouse District (HABS No. MN-110) was the subject of HABS photographic recordation in April 1990 by Jet Lowe. At that time the Minneapolis Warehouse District, Home Insurance Company Building (Berman Buckskin Company) (HABS No. MN-110-V) was included as one of twenty-eight individual buildings in the district to be photographed. No HABS reports or drawings of the district or its individual buildings were submitted to HABS/HAER in 1990.