

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Amhoist Tower

Other names/site number: Park Tower Condominiums; Landmark Towers/Park Towers

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

## 2. Location

Street & number: 345 Saint Peter Street/59 Fourth Street West

City or town: Saint Paul State: MN County: Ramsey

Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,


I hereby certify that this 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

    national     statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A     B     C     D

	4/25/2022
Signature of certifying official/Title: Amy Spong, Deputy SHPO, MN Dept. of Admin.      Date	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property <u>   </u> meets <u>   </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title :	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

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

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

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

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

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

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: business

DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

TRANSPORTATION: road-related (vehicular)

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: business

DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

TRANSPORTATION: road-related (vehicular)

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

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

Principal exterior materials of the property: GLASS; METAL: Aluminum; CONCRETE

### Narrative Description

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

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#### Summary Paragraph

See continuation sheet.

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#### Narrative Description

See continuation sheet.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

### Criteria Considerations

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

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☒ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE

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**Period of Significance**

1983-1985

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**Significant Dates**

1983

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**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

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**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

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**Architect/Builder**

Bennett, Ringrose, Wolsfeld, Jarvis, Gardner, Inc. (BRW) (architect)

Kraus Anderson (general contractor)

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

See continuation sheet.

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

See continuation sheet.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

See continuation sheet.

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### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office  
☐ Other State agency  
☐ Federal agency  
☐ Local government  
☐ University  
☒ Other  
Name of repository: Management Office, Landmark Towers

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** RA-SPC-11325

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** Less than one acre



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Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 44.94447 Longitude: -93.09577

2. Latitude: Longitude:

3. Latitude: Longitude:

4. Latitude: Longitude:

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

1. Zone: Easting: Northing:

2. Zone: Easting: Northing:

3. Zone: Easting: Northing:

4. Zone: Easting : Northing:

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

Lot 2, Block 1, Saint Paul Hotel Addition.

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

This boundary encompasses the city lot on which the building stands.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Charlene Roise  
organization: Hess, Roise and Company  
street & number: 100 North First Street  
city or town: Minneapolis state: Minnesota zip code: 55401  
e-mail roise@hessroise.com  
telephone: 612-338-1987  
date: December 29, 2021

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

See continuation sheet.

**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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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## 7. Narrative Description

### Summary

Amhoist Tower rises on the west side of downtown Saint Paul, overlooking historic Rice Park. The property has two sections, a twenty-five story, curtain-wall tower and a five-story parking structure clad in burnished concrete block and painted metal louvers. Separate entrances and lobbies serve the tower's offices (345 Saint Peter Street), which extend through floor twenty, and residential condominiums (59 Fourth Street West) on floors twenty-one through twenty-five. The building fills most of its site, but a small fountain with a sculpture is between the two entrances. Completed in 1983-1984, the property's Modern design reflects its period of construction. The exterior retains excellent integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. On the interior, the lobbies have had some alterations to design and materials, which affects integrity of workmanship as well, but other aspects of integrity remain very good and these spaces continue to strongly convey their 1980s character. On the upper floors, both the office and residential levels were developed as shells, finished out to the specifications of the occupants. As occupants have changed over time, so too have floor layouts. This flexibility is a characteristic feature of these spaces and an integral part of their integrity.

### Narrative Description

Located on the west side of downtown Saint Paul, the property is edged by Saint Peter Street to the east, Fourth Street West to the south, and Market Street to the west. To the north, the rest of the block is filled by the Saint Paul Hotel (332-362 Saint Peter Street/350 Market Street), built in 1910 and renovated in 1983. The Lowry Building (1912) is across Saint Peter Street to the east. Southeast of the tower, diagonally across Saint Peter and Fourth Streets, is the Streamline Moderne Saint Paul City Hall and Ramsey County Courthouse. The block directly across Fourth Street from the tower holds another Streamline Moderne building (56 West Fourth Street/59 Kellogg Boulevard), with major additions in 1968 and 1977. The complex has been used by a series of telecommunications companies, including Northwestern Bell and now Qwest.<sup>1</sup>

To the west across Market Street is one of the city's earliest parks, Rice Park, dedicated to public use in 1849. This historic open space is framed by an impressive collection of buildings, new and old, as Saint Paul mayor George Latimer observed in 1986: "Rice Park, an American version of Europe's inner-city squares, is surrounded by the castle-like Landmark Center, the classic seventy-year-old Saint Paul Hotel, the contemporary Amhoist Towers, the art-deco Northwestern Bell Telephone tower, the Florentine palazzo that is the Saint Paul Public Library, the venerable Minnesota Club, The Saint Paul Companies' modern structure, and the sparkling new Ordway Music Theatre."<sup>2</sup> (Photographs 9, 10, and 38)

Amhoist Tower was designed to accommodate multiple uses and has two main sections. The east section, at the corner of Saint Peter and Fourth Streets, is a twenty-five-story tower (Additional Documentation (hereafter, AD) Figure 1). The west section is a five-story parking structure fronting on Market Street. The half-levels of the parking structure are interconnected with the tower's first five floors and basement. The southwest corner of the tower rises above the parking structure's southeast side, supported by columns that extend through the parking structure. The western end of the parking structure's roof holds an open terrace reached from the tower's sixth

<sup>1</sup> Larry Millet, *AIA Guide to the Twin Cities* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2007), 331, 339.

<sup>2</sup> George Latimer introduction to Virginia Brainard Kunz, *Saint Paul: A Modern Renaissance* (Woodland Hills, Calif: Windsor Publications, 1986), 13.

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floor.

The tower's general form comprises three parallel, connected, rectangular blocks with the short ends stepped, creating faceted east and west facades (Photographs 1, 2, 9, and 10). Some sections rise only twenty-three or twenty-four stories to provide rooftop terraces for residential penthouses on the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth floors. The corners of the rectangles are clad in metal panels with a raised center band, emphasizing both the tower's faceted massing and its verticality (Photograph 2). The top is trimmed with flat, painted, metal panels. Walls are a glass and aluminum curtain-wall system featuring panels of vision glass above opaque spandrel panels. Balconies project from the nineteenth through twenty-third floors, designed to hold residential condominiums (Photographs 31 and 32). The residential units sold slowly, so floors nineteen and twenty were repurposed for office space. The lower levels were planned as office space and are taller floor-to-floor than the residential levels. Each use has its own name and address: Amhoist Tower (offices; now Landmark Towers) at 345 Saint Peter Street and Park Tower Condominiums (residential condominiums; now Park Towers) at 59 Fourth Street West.

The building fills most of its site of slightly less than one acre. A small plaza is on the site's southeast corner between the entries to the office lobby, which faces east, and the residential condominium lobby, oriented to the south. The plaza holds a fountain with three low, flat-topped concrete pyramids (Photograph 5). Single jets of water rise from the apex of two of the pyramids and wash the exposed-aggregate slopes. Water flows from beneath a flat, cross-shaped pedestal at the apex of the center pyramid, which holds a figurative stone sculpture, *La Nuova Vita* (The New Life), by Mexican sculptor Estanislao Contreras Colima. Born in 1936 in the western Mexican state of Jalisco, he studied sculpture at the university in the state's capital, Guadalajara, where he later taught for decades. Most of his public sculptures are on display in his native country, including two in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in Mexico City. A plaque by the Saint Paul sculpture states that it "symbolizes the strength and vitality of the many ethnic cultures that contributed to the growth of this City." It credits Contreras as the sculptor and Juan M. Munguia as the designer. The sculpture was installed by the building's developer, Yorktown Investment Company, and dedicated on October 12, 1983. The fountain's perimeter wall incorporates four planters with deciduous trees. The perimeter wall and planters were originally burnished concrete blocks. This material had been damaged by freeze-thaw cycles by 2015, when the vertical faces were covered with stone veneer and the caps were replaced with stone. The overall form of the fountain and planters was retained.<sup>3</sup>

Just north of the fountain is the entry for the office lobby in a bay that steps out from the building's east facade (Photographs 3 and 4). A large, cantilevered canopy shelters the doorway. The canopy and the bay's metal frame have gray finishes, complementing metal panels trimming the facade directly above and to the north. West of the fountain, a smaller cantilevered canopy is over the entry into the residential condominium lobby (Photograph 6). The canopy, like the surrounding curtain-wall system, has an aluminum-colored finish.

The tower's office entry is oriented to Saint Peter Street. Four exterior doors open into a foyer, separated from the lobby by a revolving door flanked by pedestrian doors (Photograph 11). The lobby ceiling rises two stories, with a second-floor balcony at the west end (Photograph 14). A glass and metal partition on the lobby's north side

<sup>3</sup> Biography, Estanislao Contreras Colima, accessed November 3, 2021, <https://estanislaocontrerascolima.com.mx/about/>; Reserve Advisors, "Full Reserve Study: Landmark/Park Towers/Ramp Condominium Association," November 23, 2020, 4.42; Christopher Sachs, "Landmark Towers Fall 2008 Exterior Review," December 17, 2008, 16, prepared by Building Restoration Corporation, at management office, Landmark Towers.

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creates a conference room (Photograph 12). A mail room and corridor are between the conference room and bank of six elevators on the lobby's west end (Photographs 13 and 14). The corridor leads north to an internal loading dock shared with the Saint Paul Hotel that has vehicular access from Fourth Street (Photographs 16 and 6). The northeast elevator in the tower's elevator bank, located nearest the loading dock, is designated for freight; the other five elevators are for passengers. Two cabs on the south side of the office elevator lobby open on both ends to serve the residential lobby as well (Photograph 23). A security desk in the office lobby's southwest corner provides a passageway into the residential lobby, which is oriented to Fourth Street. It is smaller than the office lobby, but its ceiling is nearly three stories high. A mailroom is in the west wall, near the two elevator doors on the north wall.

The office lobby's general configuration and most materials, including the travertine elevator surrounds, were retained in 2015 when the lobby was renovated. Original metal paneling frames the entryway and trims the second-floor balcony, which has an original glass railing. Four structural columns remain clad in metal panels as strong vertical elements in the space. The glass wall system between the lobby and conference room was retained, new glass double doors were installed in the existing opening, and translucent film was installed on the lower panels of the room's glazing. The travertine baseboards in the lobby and conference room were left in place and replaced in kind where damaged. Bands of dark granite tile were inserted across the elevator lobby floor but the travertine floor was otherwise retained and restored. The walls, originally burnished concrete block, were sheathed with white-birch veneer, a reversible treatment. Ceiling finishes in the main lobby and conference room were repaired as needed and gypsum-board sections were painted. LED lighting fixtures replaced existing fixtures in kind. An electronic directory sign was installed near the elevators and the security desk was modified with panels of white birch and black granite. In the elevator lobby, a new gypsum-board ceiling was installed with higher, cove-lit sections aligned with the elevator doors. On the west wall of the elevator lobby, a feature wall has letters spelling out "Landmark Tower" above a faux planter and black granite base.<sup>4</sup>

The residential lobby has an internal, single-story foyer topped with four pyramidal, skylights (Photograph 15). The lobby's character is dominated by the high, glass curtain walls forming its south and east sides. Much of the west and north walls have been sheathed with painted gypsum board, trimmed at the top with a stringcourse. The original travertine floor and elevator surrounds remain in place.

The second floor has an elevator lobby, office and storage space, a balcony overlooking the first-floor lobby, and an L-shaped corridor that is part of the city's skyway system (Photographs 17-19). The skyway corridor is well-used; finishes, including carpet and a dropped wood ceiling, have been updated in the past decade. The overall configuration of the second floor has been modified as the skyway system evolved and as tenants, including a deli and a credit union office, have come and gone. A doorway in the corridor's north wall opens directly into the Saint Paul Hotel. Skyway Bridge 95692 (built 1983) at the corridor's east end crosses over Saint Peter Street to the Lowry Building. Skyway Bridge 62600 (built 2004) runs to a two-story stair tower connecting the skyway and street levels on the south side of Fourth Street. The stair continues beneath grade to a public tunnel constructed in 2003 to link RiverCentre and Xcel Arena to the skyway system. Both skyway bridges are owned by the City of Saint Paul and display the standard design used throughout the system. They are not part of the property included in this nomination.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Tamara Lynn Moon, "Landmark Towers Interior Finishes Refresh" (drawings), June 23, 2015, at management office, Landmark Towers.

<sup>5</sup> Minnesota Department of Transportation, Minnesota Structure Inventory Reports for Bridge 95692 (Skyway over MSAS 236 [Saint Peter Street]), 2019, and Bridge 62600 (Skyway over Fourth Street [MSAS 136]), 2018; Maggie Rauch, "When the Weather Outside Is Frightful, This Tunnel Is So Delightful," *Meeting News*, May 19, 2002.

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The office floors were developed as shells, with floorplates outfitted to accommodate whatever layout a tenant desired (Photographs 20-23 and 25-31). Restrooms for men and women and a drinking fountain are located by the elevator core. None of the original office tenants remain in the building and all floors have had multiple occupants and remodelings. Current layouts vary from floor to floor with a variety of partitions, private and open offices, other workspaces, and kitchens. Ceilings, walls, and floors are finished with an array of materials. Most of the office space is now vacant.

Like the office floors, the residential condominiums were developed as shells, with layout, finishes, and even entry doors designed and paid for by buyers (Photographs 33 and 34). The penthouse unit includes 4,500 square feet of interior space and another 4,500 square feet of private rooftop terrace. A unit on the twenty-fourth floor also has terrace space, and floors eighteen through twenty-three have balconies.

The parking structure (366 Market Street) extends from the west side of the tower. Its west facade is divided into three bays (Photographs 7 and 8). Tiered, precast-concrete panels cover the lower part of the facade, with metal, painted, ventilation louvers at the sidewalk level on two bays. An opening, the vehicular entrance and exit for the garage, spans the base of the northern bay. A plaque next to this opening, placed in 1987, marks the site of the "Market Street Methodist Episcopal Church, 1849-1872, Mother Church of Saint Paul Methodism." The burnished concrete block on the upper section of the west facade forms three bas-relief panels. Large louvered, metal panels fill much of the north wall. A ribbon of flat, painted, metal panels serves as a cornice at the top of the north and west facades. Shorter painted, metal panels trim the base of the louvers on the north wall, screen the roof, and are a cornice for the office floors atop the parking structure, which have curtain walls like the tower. The parking structure's south wall has a concrete-block base with two bands of metal louvers cantilevered above. The top band is taller and wider, trimmed top and bottom with metal panels. It extends out as far as the sidewalk below, which is illuminated by a row of can lights beneath the cantilever.

On the interior, the parking structure has twelve half-levels at and above grade (A through L) and two basement levels (B1 and B2) (Photographs 35 and 36). Level A is at street level. Other levels are accessed by sloped vehicular ramps near the structure's east and west ends. Enclosed pedestrian stairways are near the east end and center of the garage. Levels A through J and B1 provide reserved contract parking (including parking for the Saint Paul Hotel) and daily public parking. The top two levels (K and L) and B2 are secured for the residential condominiums. The structure's cast-in-place, post-tensioned, concrete slabs are supported by reinforced-concrete columns, also cast in place.<sup>6</sup>

The property's historic integrity is very good. On the exterior, the facades of both sections are essentially unaltered. When the curtain wall's spandrel panels, which had problems from the time of construction, had to be replaced in 2002, glass similar to the original was used. Curtain-wall glazing shows deterioration from aging, which is common for this type of installation. The main site feature, the fountain, sculpture, and planters, remain in place and the fountain continues to operate. While the fountain's perimeter walls and coping no longer display their original materials, this is a relatively minor element of the feature's composition, which otherwise retains very good integrity of materials and workmanship and excellent integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association.

<sup>6</sup> Management agreement for parking garage between Rice Park Properties Corporation and Allied Parking, Inc., March 19, 2001, at management office, Landmark Towers; Collaborative Design Group, "Landmark Towers Parking Garage Condition Assessment," January 25, 2021, 2, 12, at management office, Landmark Towers.

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On the interior, the original location and setting of both the office and residential lobbies has been retained. The configuration and volume of these spaces reflect their construction in the early 1980s, reinforcing the integrity of feeling and association. Original materials generally remain in place and have been repaired or replaced in kind as needed. In the office lobby, the birch veneer applied to the burnished-block walls and film on the glazing of the conference room is reversible. The biggest changes are in the elevator lobby where the ceiling was modified, a feature was added to the west wall, and granite bands were inserted in the floor. The volume of the space was maintained, though, and the travertine elevator surrounds remain a strong visual element. The same is true in the residential lobby, although the lower part of the original burnished-block walls on the north and west sides are covered with painted gypsum board. The high walls of windows on the south and east sides and the interior foyer with the pyramidal skylights remain original highlights of the space.

On the upper floors, both the office and residential levels were developed as shells, finished out to the specifications of the occupants. As occupants have changed over time, so too have floor layouts. This flexibility is a characteristic feature of these spaces and an integral part of their integrity.



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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Summary

The Amhoist Tower qualifies for the National Register under Criterion A for its local significance in the areas of Commerce as the best representation of the American Hoist and Derrick Company, a major manufacturer based in Saint Paul for over a century. Reporter Frederick Melo observed that American Hoist's "longevity among private Minnesota companies is perhaps second only to the state's capital city newspaper, the Saint Paul Pioneer Press."<sup>7</sup>

From a humble start in 1882, the American Hoist and Derrick Company quickly became an international leader in the manufacture of heavy-duty cranes and other industrial equipment. The company's cranes played a critical role in construction projects large and small throughout the world, ranging from Mount Rushmore to the Panama Canal. They built fleets of ships in record time during World Wars I and II and expanded the oil and gas industry in the last half of the twentieth century, propelling the country's economy to new heights.<sup>8</sup>

American Hoist strove to make the world's biggest and best cranes, hoists, and other industrial equipment, routinely surpassing the cutting-edge capacity of its own products. As the company approached its centennial, its products continued to set new world records. In 1977, the National Society of Professional Engineers named Amhoist's 3,000-ton Revolver Crane one of ten outstanding engineering achievements of the year, "putting the crane in the ranks of the NASA Space Shuttle and the Alaska pipeline." A newspaper calculated that the crane "could lift every man, woman and child in the city of Saint Cloud, population 41,500." In 1978, ten Amhoist cranes, coordinated by computers, lifted a 3,500-ton leg of an offshore drilling platform, the largest mobile lift done on land. NASA used Amhoist's hoisting equipment to transfer the Space Shuttle to and from aircraft carriers. The \$3.8-million Super Sky Horse crane the company unveiled in 1981 "could lift 70 tons with a 600-foot boom and jib," a Minneapolis newspaper reported. "Such a feat would be the equivalent of placing a 727 jet atop the IDS Center. In an age of lightweight plastics and microelectronics, the progress of brute-force industrialism may seem to be waning, but not at American Hoist."<sup>9</sup>

In addition, the company diversified in the mid-twentieth century, becoming a major hardware wholesaler and a leading producer of equipment for recycling, firefighting, and water distribution. "The evolution of Amhoist's products in the years since [its founding] illustrates how one Saint Paul company adapted to a changing economy," historian Virginia Kunz asserted in 1986. At that time, 800 of the company's 3,200 employees worked at five locations in Saint Paul, and "the most visible" of these sites was "the worldwide headquarters atop the glittering Amhoist Tower in the heart of downtown."<sup>10</sup>

Despite a good start, the 1980s proved to be Amhoist's undoing. The crane market crashed, a victim of oversupply in the oil industry and a worldwide recession. Amhoist was not alone in predicting that the recovery would happen sooner than it did. As a securities analyst observed in 1987, "Even the pessimists didn't think the length and depth of the depression in the oil business and industrial economy would be this bad." In that year, the company's name was changed to Amdura, its headquarters were relocated to Denver, and its leadership was

<sup>7</sup> Frederick Melo, "Saint Paul Crane Company Did Heavy Lifting," *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, July 17, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Ralph Vartabedian, "American Hoist Tackles Big Jobs," *Minneapolis Star*, January 22, 1980.

<sup>9</sup> Vartabedian, "American Hoist Tackles Big Jobs"; *Amhoist 1981 Annual Report*, 3; Ralph Vartabedian, "Giant Crane Gives Them a Big Lift," *Minneapolis Star*, May 5, 1981.

<sup>10</sup> Kunz, *Saint Paul: Modern Renaissance*, 134, 140-141.

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ousted in a corporate takeover. In the following year, Amdura went bankrupt.<sup>11</sup>

American Hoist had been the country's foremost manufacturer of large cranes for more than a century and its equipment facilitated major construction projects around the world. The company was one of Saint Paul's largest employers and one of the few to join the Fortune 500 and be listed on the New York Stock Exchange. The company's Saint Paul manufacturing plant that grew along the west bank of the Mississippi River since the 1880s has been demolished, leaving Amhoist Tower is the best representation of American Hoist's legacy today. As such, while less than fifty years old, Amhoist Tower is exceptionally important, meeting National Register Criteria Consideration G.

The property's period of significance begins in 1983, the year the company moved from its 1890s headquarters into a sleek new tower. The move was a triumphant climax to the centennial celebration two years earlier, but was shadowed by world economic forces that reversed decades of prosperity. The crisis catalyzed a decision to move crane manufacturing from the sprawling complex on Saint Paul's west side flats, the company's base since the 1880s, to Wilmington, North Carolina. Hundreds of local workers were laid off, many with generations of family ties to the company. Former employee and union leader Paul Burnquist later recalled: "The bitterness never totally leaves. . . . The long-term people felt that they were cut short." He added that "American Hoist was a good company . . . other than the fact that policies weren't set up to take care of people" after the plant closed. The 1985 closure severed the company from its long industrial history in Saint Paul and marks the end of Amhoist Tower's period of significance.<sup>12</sup>

### **American Hoist and Derrick**

American Hoist and Derrick began on September 4, 1882, as the Franklin Manufacturing Company. The business was incorporated by William R. Nicoll, Oliver T. Crosby, and Frank J. Johnson. Crosby was born in Maine and gained a degree in mechanical engineering from Maine State College in 1876, arriving in Saint Paul later that year. Crosby and Nicoll both worked as draftsmen for James J. Hill's railroads, and Johnson was apparently a freelance patternmaker.<sup>13</sup> The trio renamed their business the American Manufacturing Company in June 1883, perhaps to avoid confusion with an existing Saint Paul firm, Franklin Machine Works, which offered similar services.<sup>14</sup>

Crosby erected a small, frame building at 459 Robert Street (on the corner of Eighth Street) to hold the fledgling industrial machine and pattern shop, which repaired equipment for the state's booming lumber and iron mining industries. An advertisement in the 1883 city directory promised "patterns and finished castings, on short notice," "engines and machinery placed and adjusted," and "prompt repairs a specialty." The company also offered "mechanical engineering, draughting and blue printing."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Susan Feyder, "Amhoist Seeks Elusive Profitability," *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, February 16, 1987.

<sup>12</sup> George Beran and Don Ahern, "Amhoist Moving Headquarters to Denver," *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, February 14, 1989.

<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> *Amhoist 1981 Annual Report*, 3, 49; *Saint Paul: History and Progress* (Saint Paul: Pioneer Press Company, 1897), 113-114; *Saint Paul City Directory, 1882-1883* (Saint Paul: R. L. Polk and Company and A. C. Danser, 1882), 28; *Saint Paul City Directory, 1883-1884* (Saint Paul: R. L. Polk and Company and A. C. Danser, 1883), 2.

<sup>15</sup> *Saint Paul City Directory, 1883-1884* (Saint Paul: R. L. Polk and Company and A. C. Danser, 1883), 2; Kunz, *Saint Paul: A Modern Renaissance*, 134; business record index for American Hoist and Derrick Company at Minnesota Secretary of State website, accessed September 21, 2021, <https://mblsportal.sos.state.mn.us/Business/SearchDetails?filingGuid=ee783605-acd4-e011-a886-001ec94ffe7f>; *Amhoist Annual Report, 1981*, 49.

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By 1886, Nicoll had left American Manufacturing, which was rapidly living up to its name by producing as well as fixing equipment. The population of Saint Paul exploded during the 1880s and the frontier pushed west, fueling demand for construction equipment and materials. Within a few years, the company was listed in the city directory under a number of categories including machinists, patternmakers, and model makers, and products such as derricks, hoisting engines, and machinery for stone quarries.<sup>16</sup>

It was a time of rapid technological advancement. As power sources transitioned from animals to new forms of energy, the company kept pace, introducing steam-powered hoists in its product line in 1889 and electric hoists in 1891. The late nineteenth century also saw tremendous evolution in the scale and capacity of American industry, resulting in a demand for larger and stronger equipment. American Manufacturing responded with the help of Crosby's creative engineering skills. The company received its first patent in 1885 for a hoist friction drum Crosby designed. A year later, he patented the Crosby Clip, a device for fastening wire rope. Over 1 million Crosby Clips had been sold a dozen years later, the start of a long run as the industry standard. A report in 1965 asserted that since the time the Crosby Clip was introduced, it "has been the best-selling clip on the market." To promote the clip, the company launched a bimonthly "magazinelet" in 1913 called *The Crosby Clipper* (AD Figures 4 and 5). The first issue reported that when Admiral Peary sailed to North Pole, "The success and safety of the entire expedition hinged upon the reliability of the 'Crosby' Clip," "used to attach the tiller rope to the rudder, also to the steering wheel." The publication illustrated practical uses for the clips ranging from reinforcing concrete water towers in Massachusetts to securing radio tower guy wires in New Orleans.<sup>17</sup>

Crosby's inventive mind and his business aptitude were keys to the company's success. An article in 1897 credited Crosby with "no less than twelve letters patent for certain inventions, all of which are in active and successful use in the machines and implements manufactured by his company." It added, "The personal career of Mr. Oliver Crosby and the history of the American Hoist and Derrick Company have been so intimately connected that they cannot well be related separately."<sup>18</sup>

As the company's business grew, it needed larger facilities. In 1886-1887, it relocated to 63 South Robert Street, just across the Mississippi River from downtown Saint Paul, where its manufacturing complex would grow for nearly a century (AD Figures 2 and 3). A profile of Crosby written in the following decade provided details of the new property: "In the fall of 1886 Mr. Crosby completed the erection of the well-known Crosby Block, at the south end of the Robert Street bridge—having purchased the lot on which the building stands the previous year—and in the winter of 1886-1887 the extensive plant of the company, its offices, etc., were moved into the new building. . . . The main building is five stories in height and covers an area of 50x125 feet. The company also owns and uses four other buildings of considerable extent." At this early juncture, the city recognized the company's potential and set a precedent for offering economic incentives to retain it: "Appreciating the value of the enterprise, the city gave the company a fifty-years' lease to a considerable area of ground and donated 250 feet of riverfront, the length of one side of an entire block." The company was soon filling up the site. As one account observed, "The desire to keep all manufacturing in a single plant led [in the 1890s] to [the] addition of a foundry

<sup>16</sup> *Saint Paul City Directory, 1886-1887* (N.p.: R. L. Polk and Company, 1886), 732, 1064; *Saint Paul City Directory, 1892-1893* (Saint Paul: R. L. Polk and Company, 1892), 1500, 1519, 1524, 1532, 1538, 1548, and 1858; Kunz, *Saint Paul: Modern Renaissance*, 134.

<sup>17</sup> *Amhoist Annual Report, 1981*, 44-45; *Saint Paul: History and Progress*, 114; "The Big Boom at American Hoist and Derrick," *Commercial West*, September 4, 1965, 30; "The 'Crosby' Clip 'Farthest North,'" *The Crosby Clipper*, October-November, 1913, 13-14; see also Sept-Oct 1916, and March-April 1917.

<sup>18</sup> *Amhoist Annual Report, 1981*, 49; *Saint Paul: History and Progress*, 113-114.

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to the existing facilities, the largest west of Chicago at the time.”<sup>19</sup>

The company quickly became prominent in the booming industrial area on the river’s west side. In February 1893, it hosted a meeting of the owners of seven nearby businesses with a combined workforce of 540. Taking the name of the local political district, the group formed the Sixth Ward Manufacturing Association, dedicated to “the promotion of the manufacturing interest in Saint Paul, and particularly in the Sixth Ward.” Oliver Crosby served as the organization’s first president.<sup>20</sup>

By this time, the company had a new name, American Hoist and Derrick Company, which it adopted in 1892. In the same year, it established a branch office and distribution facility in the rail hub of Chicago. This was just in time for the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago the next year, where American Hoist received a gold medal for its display of three derricks.<sup>21</sup>

This visibility helped it land an order later that year from the U.S. Navy for a locomotive crane to lift armor plate, large guns, and other materials at its yard at Mare Island, California. Companies from Philadelphia and New Jersey also bid on the project, which American Hoist won with the low bid of \$50,000. Crosby told the *Saint Paul Daily Globe* that “it was the intention to have much of the mechanical work done” in Pittsburgh, where the wrought iron and steel would be produced, “but lately the company determined to do all the work in the shops of this city, and thus afford a great amount of work for the skilled mechanics and workmen of Saint Paul.”<sup>22</sup>

Early in 1895, American Hoist completed production of the record-breaking 400-ton machine with a 75-foot boom capable of lifting 45 tons (AD Figure 13). The “mammoth” machine was put to a public test at the company’s Saint Paul plant in March. “Fully 500 people witnessed the exhibition, applauding as the monster of iron and steel easily manipulated great burdens,” the *Saint Paul Globe* reported. The first challenge was a container with fifteen tons of pig iron. “Foreman Charles Strom touched a lever, and, with the creaking of chains, the . . . weighty freight suddenly rose forty feet in the air. The great mass dangled, turned to the right, shunted in the opposite direction, lowered, raised again, and was then allowed to descent as slowly as an old gentleman would walk down the stairway of his home.” For the next test, the crane easily lifted a railcar carrying forty tons of iron. After the day’s successful demonstration, the crane was disassembled and shipped in fifteen railcars to Tacoma, Washington, where it was loaded on a steamer for the final leg of its journey to California. The Mare Island machine held the title of world’s largest jib crane for at least fifteen years.<sup>23</sup>

This company’s innovative traveling derricks, first sold the same year, were “a combination of a simple revolving derrick and a steam hoist mounted on rail-car type wheels with its own sections of track.” Also in 1895, the company modified a boom derrick for use by sugar cane farmers in Louisiana. It was soon in demand through the South, inspiring American Hoist to adapt its equipment for other industries. The American Log Loader for lumbering came out in 1898, followed by the American Ditcher in 1904-1905. Railroads used the Ditcher to dig drainage ditches along rail lines, greatly speeding up an essential task previously done by hand.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Kunz, *Saint Paul: Modern Renaissance*, 134; *Saint Paul: History and Progress*, 113-114; “The Big Boom at American Hoist and Derrick,” 30.

<sup>20</sup> “The West Side Alive,” *Saint Paul Daily Globe*, February 26, 1893.

<sup>21</sup> *Amhoist Annual Report*, 1981, 45.

<sup>22</sup> “Saint Paul to the Fore,” *Saint Paul Daily Globe*, November 14, 1893.

<sup>23</sup> “Toyed with Tons,” *Saint Paul Daily Globe*, March 3, 1895.

<sup>24</sup> *Amhoist Annual Report*, 1981, 45-46.

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In an era where many workers were more accustomed to using animal power than mechanically driven equipment, American Hoist provided guidance to workers for operating and maintaining their products. A 1919 publication titled *Ditcherology* was subtitled *The Science of Ditching and Ditcher Maintenance* (AD Figures 6 and 7). “Keeping your machine property lubricated is one of the most important parts of your job,” it explained, and “a machine that is always kept spick and span is a sure sign of a good, conscientious operator.” For those unfamiliar with machine parts, there were carefully labeled drawings of shafts and gears, rods, brakes, and other components, and “how-to” drawings for activities such as “driving out old drum bushings.” For specific tasks, like filling grades along rail tracks, it detailed the number and roles of crew members for a project and provided directions on process.<sup>25</sup>

American Hoist had moved beyond the country’s borders by the mid-1890s with its equipment in use in Norway, Switzerland, and the Hawaiian islands. By the early twentieth century, the company’s derricks were working on warehouse construction in Japan, harbor improvements in the Philippine Islands, and government projects in Mexico. World War I stimulated more orders in the United States, as a company history reported: “The company became a major supplier of marine deck equipment for both merchant and naval ships. . . . In addition, hundreds of American hoists and derricks were supplied to the navy shipyards. . . . At the height of the conflict 500 American derricks and 500 American hoists were at work in the 50 shipways of the Hog Island Navy Yard near Philadelphia alone.” By the end of the war, the company had branches in Chicago, New York, Pittsburgh, New Orleans, and Seattle.<sup>26</sup>

American Hoist suffered along with many other businesses during a recession after the war. In April 1921, the *Minneapolis Morning Tribune* reported that “inability to market its product either in the United States or abroad caused officials of the American Hoist and Derrick Company . . . to announce yesterday that the plant would close today for an indefinite period. About 550 men will be thrown out of work.”<sup>27</sup>

During these trying years, Oliver Crosby’s health deteriorated, but he remained president of American Hoist until his death in December 1922. A contemporary newspaper observed that “his rise to affluence and power in the business world was gradual” but persistent: “His estate is estimated to amount to fifteen million dollars.” He was succeeded at the company’s helm by Frank Johnson. Johnson served until 1934, when Oliver Crosby’s son, Frederick, took the reins.<sup>28</sup>

Undeterred by Crosby’s death, the company continued its tradition of innovation. In 1923, it did a custom installation of three locomotive cranes on continuous chain treads. “Another success was born,” a company history remarked. “Quickly, the company recognized the need for cranes and shovels that could go almost anywhere under their own power. Using the same repackaging strategy that had served the company so well in the past, the newly created crawler machine was soon dubbed the American Gopher Shovel Crane.” Powered by gas or diesel fuel, the crane “quickly gained wide acceptance throughout the world.”<sup>29</sup>

The economic depression of the 1930s slowed the company’s usual business and hurt profits, resulting in an

<sup>25</sup> *Ditcherology: The Science of Ditching and Ditcher Maintenance* (Saint Paul: American Hoist and Derrick, 1919).

<sup>26</sup> *Amhoist Annual Report, 1981*, 46; *Saint Paul: History and Progress*, 114; *Ditcherology*.

<sup>27</sup> “Lack of Business Closes Plant,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, April 15, 1921.

<sup>28</sup> “Oliver Crosby, Pioneer, Dead at Flour City,” *Rochester [Minn.] Daily Post and Record*, December 8, 1922; *Amhoist Annual Report, 1981*, 47, 49; William Souder, “Amhoist Gets a Lift from the Energy Market,” *Corporate Report*, July 1981, n.p.

<sup>29</sup> *Amhoist Annual Report, 1981*, 47.

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unusual loss for the 1938 fiscal year. Even so, federal-relief projects that produced dams, bridges, and other massive civil works needed the company's cranes and other equipment. Orders surged again with the onset of World War II, when the push to arm the country brought intense demand for the company's products. "Bigger and better ships called for bigger and better marine equipment, bigger and better ship-building cranes, more blocks, more sheaves, more of everything," one source reported.<sup>30</sup>

Towards the end of the war, in January 1945, Frederick Crosby was succeeded as the president by Harold O. Washburn, who started working at American Hoist as an engineer in 1911. His father, William, was the company's treasurer and became one of its three managing partners, along with Crosby and Johnson. Harold moved up through the corporate ranks after becoming a director in 1928, when the company's ownership structure changed from a limited partnership to a privately held corporation. Under Harold's guidance, American Hoist continued to evolve with the latest technology, becoming "a leader in the field of diesel-electric locomotive cranes, hoist and derricks, and related items."<sup>31</sup>

He was followed by John E. Carroll, who became president in December 1953. Born in Duluth and trained as an engineer at the University of Minnesota, Carroll had started with American Hoist as a district salesman in Texas in 1937. He left the company for a few years but returned as general sales manager in 1949, leading "the company's movement and expansion in the excavator field." Under Carroll, sales continued to be robust in the decade after the war, reaching a new peak of \$25.9 million in 1955. To maintain this trend, stockholders approved a strategy in 1954 to pursue growth and diversification through acquisition. Carroll described the approach as "cautiously acquir[ing] companies whose products were bought by our customers and sold through our distributors, and where the engineering and manufacturing principles are consistent with ours."<sup>32</sup>

American Hoist acted swiftly (AD Figure 14). In 1955, it acquired the American Steel Dredge Company and the Wayne Crane Company in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and the Thomas Laughlin Company, which produced fittings for wire rope and chain, in Portland, Maine. Texas-based Lebus Rotary Tool Works, Saint Paul's Valley Iron Works, and Tulsa's McKissick Company followed before the end of the decade. McKissick was a particularly prominent addition and a good complement to the Crosby Clip line. It made heavy duty blocks with pulleys, which were attached to hooks and eyes and used extensively in construction, mining, and other industries. American Hoist explained that "every rotary drilling rig [in an oil field] must have a traveling block for raising and lowering pipe in the drill hole, and every well-service rig used on existing production wells must have a well-service block. . . . McKissick blocks are the world standard."<sup>33</sup>

Five years after launching the expansion campaign, the net worth of American Hoist and its subsidiaries had jumped from \$3.6 million to \$6.2 million, with sales nearly doubling from \$15.4 million to \$27.7 million. While the company stayed true to some of its old-line products—"We're practically the last derrick manufacturer in the nation," Carroll remarked—it firmly established its place as the country's leading manufacturer of crawler and

<sup>30</sup> *Amhoist Annual Report, 1981*, 47; "The Big Boom at American Hoist and Derrick."

<sup>31</sup> John A. Wickland, "American Hoist Names New President," *Minneapolis Tribune*, November 24, 1953; *R. L. Polk and Company's Saint Paul City Directory, 1911* (Saint Paul: R. L. Polk and Company, 1911), 250, 1729; *R. L. Polk and Company's Saint Paul City Directory, 1920* (Saint Paul: R. L. Polk and Company, 1920), 158, 1484; *Amhoist Annual Report, 1981*, 49.

<sup>32</sup> Wickland, "American Hoist Names New President"; *Amhoist Annual Report, 1981*, 48; Hal Quarfoth, "American Hoist Wants to Expand," *Minneapolis Tribune*, [1959], and "John E. Carroll," profile for a speech on November 17, 1966, in American Hoist and Derrick business files, Minneapolis Central Library.

<sup>33</sup> *Amhoist Annual Report, 1981*, 48; Quarfoth, "American Hoist Wants to Expand."

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rubber-mounted cranes and offered a wide range of industrial products.<sup>34</sup>

The buying spree continued in the 1960s with the acquisition of an assortment of companies around the country including Harris Press and Shear of Cordele, Georgia, which produced balers and shears used in the recycling industry. American Hoist also gained two businesses in Saint Paul: the Waterous Company and Farwell, Ozmun, Kirk and Company (FOK), acquired in 1965 and 1969, respectively. Both had long histories in the area.<sup>35</sup>

Waterous, a leading producer of fire engine pumps, fire hydrants, and valves, moved its fire engine production plant from Winnipeg to South Saint Paul in about 1885. By the 1890s, it had a factory directly across Robert Street from American Hoist's complex. Waterous's first major innovation was a fire pump driven by a gasoline engine, which it introduced around 1898.<sup>36</sup>

FOK traced its roots to 1859 when two entrepreneurs from Boston set up a hardware store in Saint Paul on Third Street, near where the Saint Paul Public Library stands today. By 1882, the wholesaler Farwell, Ozmun and Jackson was located at 225-227 East Fourth Street. In 1887, the company commandeered a full-page advertisement on the second page of the Saint Paul city directory. Jackson left, Kirk took a leadership role, and the business continued to prosper, incorporating as FOK in 1887. By the late nineteenth century, the company had a large warehouse at the corner of Kellogg Avenue and Jackson Street, conveniently situated near a busy rail corridor and the Lower Landing, a Mississippi River port.<sup>37</sup>

American Hoist's expansion elevated its stature in the business world. One sign of this was the company's listing on the New York Stock Exchange, a move in the works by January 1964. It finally made the Big Board in March 1965 with the ticker symbol "AHO," joining only a handful of Saint Paul firms on that premier trading floor. In 1969, American Hoist achieved an even more elite status with its listing in the Fortune 500.<sup>38</sup>

Throughout the 1970s, the company continued to add businesses to its portfolio, in part to expand inhouse manufacturing capacity. As the 1974 annual report noted, "American Hoist is unusually self-sufficient in its manufacture of machinery components. The firm operates two foundries, several forging plants, and has modern machining and fabricating facilities." This was particularly useful when demand for its products skyrocketed as a result of an oil embargo imposed by Arab members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries in 1973-1974 in retaliation for America's support of the Israelis during the Arab-Israeli War. As a newspaper quipped, "If there had been no Arab oil embargo, it clearly would have been a good idea for the company to invent one." The resulting energy shortage had a "catalytic effect on demand for cranes," according to American Hoist's 1974 annual report. The company's cranes were "widely used to expand power plants and oil refineries" and were "also . . . needed to support offshore oil exploration, particularly in the North Sea." This demand propelled a 20 percent increase in sales in only one year, and the company's backlog of orders doubled to about \$160 million during the same period.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *Amhoist Annual Report*, 1981, 4, 48; Quarfoth, "American Hoist Wants to Expand."

<sup>35</sup> *Amhoist Annual Report*, 1981, 48.

<sup>36</sup> *Amhoist 1984 Annual Report*, 6; Waterous Worldwide, "A Commitment to Innovation," accessed October 11, 2021, <https://waterousco.com/international/US/Our-Company/history.html>.

<sup>37</sup> Kunz, *Saint Paul: Modern Renaissance*, 104-105; *Saint Paul City Directory*, 1882-1883 (N.p.: R. L. Polk and Company and A. C. Danser, 1882), 2; *Amhoist 1984 Annual Report*, 7.

<sup>38</sup> "American Hoist to Seek Listing on Big Board," *Minneapolis Tribune*, January 31, 1964; "Checking Ticker," *Minneapolis Tribune*, March 18, 1965; Dave Beal, "Saint Paul Loses More than Jobs with Amhoist," *Saint Paul Pioneer Press Dispatch*, February 19, 1989.

<sup>39</sup> Dick Youngblood, "American Hoist Converts Brokers," *Minneapolis Tribune*, April 24, 1977; "American Hoist Expects

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In December 1973, in the midst of this intense period, Robert P. Fox became the company's president. He had moved to the American Hoist from Duluth's Clyde Iron Works in 1960 to become a chief engineer. Carroll remained chairman and chief executive officer until his unexpected death following a heart attack in December 1974 at the age of sixty-two. Fox then took on those roles as well, overseeing the continued surge in the company's business. "While the U.S. economy degenerated in 1974-1975 and 'paused' in 1976," reporter Dick Youngblood observed, "there was no recession on the shores of the North Sea, where dozens of American Hoist's smaller cranes were being used to assemble huge offshore drilling platforms. And after the platforms had been towed to sea and set on the ocean floor, there were the giant, ship-mounted American Hoist cranes—worth \$10 million to \$15 million and capable of lifting 2,000 to 3,000 tons—installing the massive drilling-equipment modules." Demand for the company's products was also strong from energy-related development in the Middle East, Alaska, and Brazil. By 1976, international business represented 44 percent of the company's receipts, up from 20 percent five years earlier.<sup>40</sup>

"At the close of the 1970s, officials of American Hoist and Derrick Co. didn't need one of their cranes to get a lift," reporter Mike Meyers quipped. "All they had to do was read the company's annual report." The decade had seen a remarkable growth in major metrics: "Sales more than doubled, profits soared 11-fold, and employment was up 24 percent." (AD Figure 11) The company's 1980 annual report showed net sales jumping from around \$410 million in 1976 to \$538 million in 1980. This did not translate into a large spread for net earnings, however, which were \$16.5 million and \$20 million, respectively. The report blamed the depressed earnings on "the high cost of interest" that the company had to pay for financing its operations "and an increase in bad debt expenses, due primarily to domestic economic problems" for loans and leases the company extended to those acquiring its equipment. Still, *Forbes* magazine asserted that "the early Eighties look very promising for American Hoist and Derrick."<sup>41</sup>

Amhoist's headquarters at its manufacturing plant became increasingly untenable for a Fortune 500 company. Since the 1880s, the company's expanding operations had produced a sprawling complex with the associated grime, sounds, and smells of heavy industry (AD Figures 8 and 9). In addition, while the site had convenient access to rail and road connections, it was in a floodplain. Company vice president Kurt Williamson reported that floods in 1965 and 1969 "caused severe concern that this facility, which serves as our world headquarters and employs approximately 1,850 people with a large investment in real as well as personal property, would be in great danger. During those times, complete shutdown was a near reality." By 1980, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was advancing plans to increase the height of a floodwall that cut through Amhoist's plant. Management was in favor of gaining more protection from floods, but Williamson informed the Corps that raising the wall "would cause American Hoist extreme problems." He explained, "Our operation involves heavy equipment manufacturing and the flow of our finished product, as well as new developments, involves movement from final assembly to the north and parallel with the flood wall to our test yard. Clearance out of our building and along the flood wall is about at the minimum at present." Raising the wall "could pose impossible restrictions." In response, the Corps revised its plans, moving the alignment of the proposed wall to the river side

20-pct. Gain in Earnings, Sales, Stockholders Told," *Minneapolis Tribune*, March 5, 1974.

<sup>40</sup> "American Hoist Head, John Carroll, Dies at Sixty-two," *Minneapolis Tribune*, December 9, 1974; "People," *Minneapolis Star*, December 13, 1974; Youngblood, "American Hoist Converts Brokers."

<sup>41</sup> Mike Meyers, "Amhoist Comes to Terms with Sales Hopes," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, April 23, 1984; "Engineers Appointed," *Minneapolis Tribune*, January 4, 1960; Amhoist 1980 Annual Report, 20; Dick Youngblood, "American Hoist Gets a Lift from Energy Woes," *Minneapolis Tribune*, February 10, 1980.



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of the plant.<sup>42</sup>

Better flood protection did not, though, clean up the facility's industrial character. As Amhoist approached its centennial, a new, modern headquarters seemed an appropriate way to celebrate this impressive benchmark.

### **Post-War Saint Paul**

The company and Saint Paul shared nearly a century of history. Government and business leaders wanted to make sure that Amhoist continued to call the city home. When the company was established in 1882, Saint Paul's population was mushrooming and its economy was robust. By the mid-twentieth century, downtown Saint Paul was not faring as well. Government officials and civic leaders were attempting to address the decline by the 1940s, but the downhill trajectory continued. During the 1960s and 1970s, Saint Paul lost sixty-three businesses to suburban industrial parks and gained only six businesses from Minneapolis or the suburbs and lost jobs in construction, manufacturing, transportation, and trade.<sup>43</sup>

The tide was turning by the late 1970s, though, given an energetic boost by the election of George Latimer as mayor in 1976. Historian Kunz observed that Latimer "took office just at the point where the city's development philosophy was changing from a purely public function to a partnership with the private sector." He also benefitted from revisions to the city's charter in the 1970s that strengthened the mayor's role in government operations, giving him powers not available to previous mayors.<sup>44</sup>

Development was booming by the end of the decade with the Saint Paul Housing and Redevelopment Authority reporting downtown construction of \$298 million between 1978 and 1980. Between 1977 and 1983, that number reached over \$627 million. Less than half of this investment, around \$301 million, came from private sources. About one-third, \$191 million, resulted from revenue bonds issued by the Saint Paul Port Authority. A 1984 newspaper reporter found that "few developers of these recent projects say they were attracted to the city primarily because it is a hot real estate market. Instead, most cite the encouragement of the city government, especially Mayor George Latimer, and the favorable financing they have been able to obtain through the Saint Paul Port Authority." Eugene Kraut, the port authority's executive vice president and leader, worked very closely with Latimer, as one newspaper noted: "It has been said that power in Saint Paul shifts from Latimer to Kraut and from Kraut to Latimer several times a day, depending on the deal."<sup>45</sup>

An urban renewal project had targeted the decaying core of downtown in the 1960s and early 1970s, with ramifications for adjacent areas. One of the biggest disruptions was caused by the relocation of the federal courts to a new building in the urban renewal district, vacating the castle-like federal building on the north side of Rice Park in 1967. Concern about the landmark's fate stimulated a campaign to preserve the building and improve Rice

<sup>42</sup> Kurt Williamson to Colonel William Badger, Corps of Engineers, letter, August 5, 1981, Kurt Williamson to Colonel William Badger, Corps of Engineers, letter, January 15, 1981, and Corps of Engineers, "Public Views and Responses," September 1981, 2-5, in U.S. Army, Corps of Engineers, Saint Paul District, "Feasibility Report, Mississippi River at Saint Paul, Minnesota, Reevaluation of Saint Paul Flood Control Project," September 1981.

<sup>43</sup> Saint Paul Housing and Redevelopment Authority, Department of Planning and Economic Development (Saint Paul HRA-PED, "Citywide Redevelopment Plan," 1981, 5, at Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul.

<sup>44</sup> Kunz, *Saint Paul: A Modern Renaissance*, 37-38; Richard Meryhew, "Saint Paul Moves to Shake Little-brother Blues," *Minneapolis Tribune*, June 3, 1984.

<sup>45</sup> Saint Paul HRA-PED, "Citywide Redevelopment Plan," 6; R. T. Rybak, "Landlords Fear City Is Growing Too Fast," *Minneapolis Tribune*, June 3, 1984; Richard Meryhew, "Health Forces Kraut to Step Down as Port Authority Chief," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, February 14, 1989.

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Park. Mayor Tom Byrne supported nascent preservation efforts in 1969 by establishing a task force to explore how to save the federal building, leading to the creation of Minnesota Landmarks in 1970. The building was renovated for use by a collection of arts, education, and other groups and reopened in 1978.<sup>46</sup>

Efforts were also underway to improve Rice Park's west side, where the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts opened in 1985. On the east side, the venerable Saint Paul Hotel was no longer competitive with modern lodgings, leading to a \$25 million renovation completed in 1983, with the Saint Paul Port Authority using revenue bonds to contribute \$12 million of that amount. With the elegant Saint Paul Public Library stabilizing the south end of the park, the only other gap that needed filling was the remainder of the block south of the Saint Paul Hotel. In the early 1980s, that hole would be filled by the tower that would take Amhoist's name.<sup>47</sup>

### Turning a Dream into a Tower

Various uses had occupied the south end of the block that, since 1910, had been anchored to the north by the Saint Paul Hotel. By the mid-twentieth century, restaurants and a drug store filled the first floor of two buildings at the corner of Saint Peter and Fourth Streets, with a hotel and other uses above. At Market and Fourth Streets was a 250-car garage that incorporated a filling station at the corner (AD Figure 10). The Saint Paul Hotel relied on the garage, as well as a surface lot west of the hotel, to provide parking for the vehicles of its guests.<sup>48</sup>

By the late 1970s, the underutilized site attracted the attention of the Yorktown Investment Company, which registered as a business corporation with the Minnesota Department of State in January 1972. The most visible partner in the company was Eugene Anthony Rancone, who was born in Saint Paul in 1929. When Rancone graduated from Cretin High School in 1947, his ambition was to become an architect, but he never completed college. After serving in the military during the Korean conflict and working in sales for construction-related companies, including Mid-States Concrete, he began a career in the real estate industry, which proved to be his life's calling. On the side, he was involved in local groups promoting Italian-American commerce and culture and in civic organizations, serving as president of the Saint Paul Downtown Council in the mid-1970s. When he died in 2017 at the age of 88, his obituary noted: "Through his career in commercial real estate development, he leaves his thumbprints from Edina to Lilydale and especially his beloved downtown Saint Paul."<sup>49</sup>

The other Yorktown partner was George Ablah, described by a newspaper account as "an oil man, a real-estate man, and a builder of businesses." Based in Wichita, Kansas, Ablah flew to Saint Paul in his private jet weekly and maintained a suite of rooms in the downtown Hilton Hotel. Rancone and Ablah caught the attention of the real estate industry by buying a 125-acre gravel pit in Edina between France and Xerxes Avenues and Seventieth and Seventy-Fourth Streets, south of the popular Southdale Mall. By 1972, they had named the development after their company and planned the site's transformation into retail—including Target, upscale grocer Byerly's, restaurants, and other stores—and about 1,200 residential units ranging from townhouses to higher density apartments. Ablah and Rancone took their profit of some \$3 million from the Yorktown project and invested it in

<sup>46</sup> Kunz, *Saint Paul: A Modern Renaissance*, 44-47.

<sup>47</sup> Saint Paul HRA-PED, "Citywide Redevelopment Plan," 6.; Rybak, "Landlords Fear City Is Growing Too Fast."

<sup>48</sup> Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Maps of Saint Paul, Minnesota*, vol. 1 (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1926, updated to 1951), sheet 15.

<sup>49</sup> Information on registration of Yorktown Investment Company is at the Minnesota Secretary of State website, accessed September 22, 2021; biographical records for Eugene Anthony Rancone are available through ancestry.com, including the *Cretinite*, Cretin High School yearbook, 1947, 5; "Durox Names Sales Manager," *Minneapolis Star*, February 17, 1961; John Greenwald, "George Ablah's Business Is Money, and Business Has Been Excellent," *Minneapolis Star*, August 28, 1975; "Rancone, Eugene Anthony" (obituary), *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, April 16, 2017.

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an office building in downtown Saint Paul.<sup>50</sup>

Redeveloping the site on the Saint Paul Hotel block was a far more substantial commitment to the city and it received significant support from the Saint Paul Port Authority, which was instrumental in financing the project. Of the tower's \$25- to \$30-million budget, only \$5 million came from private investors. The remainder was funded by Port Authority revenue bonds Established in 1929 to promote industrial development, the agency broadened its mission into urban renewal in the 1950s and 1960s. By the mid-1980s, one writer hailed it as key to making Saint Paul "more successful than any other northern city in the country at retaining and expanding its base of manufacturing jobs. And it has operated at a profit. The Port Authority makes money from interest and fees on the bonds it sells, from rents and related payments on the facilities it owns or operates, and from reinvestment of its revenues and profits." The agency's A-rated tax-exempt bonds "have been used to underwrite the development of sleek office towers and small manufacturing plants, large-scale industrial parks and glittering theaters and hotels."<sup>51</sup>

Yorktown's tower would have a synergistic relationship with another project supported by the port authority, a district heating system. This system was a response to the contemporary push by the environmental movement for more efficient heating and cooling methods. As a pioneering user of this system, the tower would be a prominent model for its benefits and, as a major anchor, it would provide justification for the system's construction.

While Yorktown worked on plans for the tower, the Saint Paul Hotel renovation faced an urgent need, sheltered parking, by the time the hotel reopened in fall 1982. As a result, the garage component of the Yorktown project received financing through the port authority before the tower. Construction of the parking structure was scheduled to start in January 1982. "While the ramp is a reality," a newspaper reported in late 1981, "the tower's construction depends on developer Gene Rancone's ability to get enough firm commitments from tenants." The port authority's Eugene Kraut "called Rancone's chances excellent." The port authority felt confident enough about Rancone's success by early November 1981 to authorize the sale of revenue bonds to fund the tower's construction.<sup>52</sup>

The authority's confidence was apparently based on Rancone's securing Amhoist as an anchor tenant. On October 23, a brief article in the *Saint Paul Pioneer Press* announced "Amhoist Weighs Moving Offices." The article indicated that "a major tenant apparently has been found" for the tower and identified the tenant as American Hoist, which "has tentatively agreed to make the building the firm's world headquarters." The deal had become more certain by the time of the port authority's vote on the bond sale early the next month. A November 4 article confirmed that the "major tenant is expected to be American Hoist and Derrick Company" and referred to the development as the "Amhoist Building," revealing that the structure would take the company's name. The article explained that Amhoist would be moving its headquarters to the tower, bringing "about two hundred administrative employees into seven floors." Amhoist's Fox later explained that being the building's anchor tenant was "important because, having been in Saint Paul for one hundred years, we want to perpetuate the position of our company in this community for another one hundred years." Amhoist also had pragmatic economic incentives for being attracted to the condominium structure, according to another article: "American Hoist said that among the main reasons it decided to purchase office space rather than rent were the ability to fix costs, tax law changes two years ago that made ownership attractive and the likelihood of appreciation of its

<sup>50</sup> Greenwald, "George Ablah's Business Is Money"; Blair Charnley, "Edina Studies Apartments, Shops Plan," *Minneapolis Star*, February 4, 1972; Blair Charnley, "Yorktown Plan Gets Tentative OK in Edina," *Minneapolis Star*, February 29, 1972.

<sup>51</sup> Kunz, *Saint Paul: An Urban Renaissance*, 42; Rybak, "Landlords Fear City Is Growing Too Fast."

<sup>52</sup> "Amhoist Gets Revenue Bonds for Building," *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, November 4, 1981.

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investment.”<sup>53</sup>

Sales and leasing were going so well by the end of 1981 that Yorktown considered adding ten floors of office space, increasing the tower from eighteen to twenty-eight stories, but the design ultimately remained at twenty-five stories, eighteen floors of office space and seven of residential condominiums. By January 1982, the developer had commitments for over half of the office space. Several floors were reserved by Attorneys Office Management, a Los Angeles company that leased large blocks of office space around the county and sublet offices within these spaces to lawyers. Some local businessmen saw the tower as an investment, planning to lease the floors they purchased to others. In addition to anticipating a good return, they wanted to ensure that the Amhoist Tower would become a reality. A group of 3M executives and a local real estate broker signed up for one floor and the project architect, through an entity named Rice Park Associates, took two floors.<sup>54</sup>

A ceremony on January 29, 1982, formally marked the start of construction. A newspaper reported that “in deference to the building’s anchor tenant, the groundbreaking was done with a crane instead of the traditional shovel.” The article confirmed that Amhoist’s headquarters would move to the tower, which was expected to be completed in fall 1983.<sup>55</sup>

The importance of Amhoist and its future Saint Paul headquarters was reflected by the prominence given to the tower in the 1981 annual report of the Saint Paul Port Authority. A colored rendering inside the cover illustrated how the building would look from across the street to the southeast, “from the entrance to Saint Paul City Hall,” and a rendering on page 3 showed the view from Rice Park (AD Figure 16). The authority’s president, George Winter, wrote that “a 1981 achievement of which we are particularly proud is the new Amhoist Tower, . . . which will become the corporate world headquarters for one of Saint Paul’s oldest and largest firms.” The next year, the authority’s annual report had photographs of the tower under construction on the cover and on a page highlighting “downtown construction in 1982.”<sup>56</sup>

### **Building the Dream**

The firm chosen to design the project was Bennett, Ringrose, Wolsfeld, Jarvis, Gardner, Inc.—more commonly known as BRW. The office had originally specialized in urban planning, engineering, and transportation, and was still heavily oriented to those fields in 1982, with 195 planners and 34 engineers on staff. While its architectural division was smaller, totaling 23 architects and 4 landscape architects, its visibility rose after David Bennett became head of that practice in 1974. The firm soon gained commissions for high-profile projects including shopping centers Bonaventure in Minnetonka and the Galleria in Edina and innovative underground structures for the University of Minnesota’s Minneapolis campus (Williamson Hall and the Civil/Mineral Engineering Building), the Minnesota Historical Society (Fort Snelling Visitor Center), and the City of Minneapolis (Walker

<sup>53</sup> “Amhoist Weighs Moving Offices,” *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, October 23, 1981; “Amhoist Gets Revenue Bonds for Building”; Steve Massey, “Amhoist Struggling to Cope with Skid in Centennial Year,” *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, September 20, 1982; “Amhoist Tower,” partial clipping from *Saint Paul Pioneer Press/Dispatch*, December 26, 1983, in Lowertown Redevelopment Corp. Records, Minnesota Historical Society.

<sup>54</sup> Attorneys Office Management would declare bankruptcy in 1982, voiding its Saint Paul lease. Richard Meryhew, “35 Percent Amhoist Tower Is Troubled,” *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, May 11, 1984; Deborah Hastings, “The Commons: A Case History of Things Awry,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 4, 1986; “Amhoist Gets Revenue Bonds for Building”; Saint Paul Port Authority, Minutes of Special Meeting, December 22, 1981, 1-6, at Minnesota Historical Society.

<sup>55</sup> R. T. Rybak, “What’s Going On?,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 30, 1982.

<sup>56</sup> Saint Paul Port Authority, *1981 Annual Report*, inside cover, 1, 3; Saint Paul Port Authority, *1982 Annual Report*, cover, 9.

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Library).<sup>57</sup>

Bennett had arrived in Minnesota in 1957 to attend the university's architecture program. After graduating, he got experience at Hammel Green and Abrahamson and S. C. Smiley and Associates, then founded a practice with Jack Meyers and Sheldon Amonsens in 1965. That firm was acquired by Bather Ringrose and Wolsfeld around 1974 and Bennett replaced one of the firm's original partners, Ed Bather, as a principal in BRW. A profile of Bennett in 1984 noted that his "projects have been innovative and commercially successful, although not always at the same time. The body of his work illustrates vividly how architects often design differently for institutions than they do for clients in the business of making money."<sup>58</sup>

The general contractor for the project was Kraus Anderson. The company was originally known as the J. L. Robinson Company after its founder, who was introduced to the construction business as an employee of local contractors Leck and McLeod and the H. N. Leighton Company. He struck out on his own in 1897 and won his first big project in 1901, a new facility for George Dayton's Goodfellow's Dry Goods Store. Robinson was soon "building significant projects of every description," according to a company history, including "some of the most important building projects of the early 1900s in the city of Minneapolis." The company sought work in Saint Paul as well, but the cities—and especially the Saint Paul unions—were territorial. To eliminate this roadblock, Kraus Anderson bought a prominent Saint Paul firm, the Romer Construction Company, in 1949 after the company foundered following the death of its second-generation leader. Kraus Anderson-Saint Paul got its first large project in 1950, winning a bid to build the South Saint Paul Junior High School. By the 1980s, it was well-established in Saint Paul. As the contractor for the renovation of the adjacent Saint Paul Hotel, the company was already familiar with the Amhoist Tower site.<sup>59</sup>

Kraus Anderson applied for a permit for the Amhoist Tower's foundation, estimated to cost \$130,000, on February 2, 1982. On July 28, the company returned for a permit to erect the 100-foot by 280-foot structure, budgeted at \$17.5 million. By December, the tower was about 36 percent complete and the parking structure was 88.5 percent done. The tower was essentially finished by July 1983, although interior work remained. Yorktown, Amhoist, and subcontractors obtained permits for plumbing, electrical work, finishing, and other items between March 1983 and July 1984.<sup>60</sup>

While city records rarely indicate specific locations of work on the office floors, Yorktown and electrical, plumbing, and mechanical contractors filed a cluster of applications to build out the seventeenth and eighteenth floors, the location of Amhoist's headquarters, in November 1983. Amhoist initiated a round of unspecified alterations in summer 1984.<sup>61</sup>

While construction continued into 1984 and beyond inside the tower, the statue in the fountain by the main entries was dedicated on October 12, 1983, the anniversary of Columbus's arrival in America. Rancone's obituary noted that "he commissioned a piece of public art in the fountain on Fourth and Saint Peter Streets entitled 'La Nuova

<sup>57</sup> Information in file on BRW at Hess, Roise and Company.

<sup>58</sup> R. T. Rybak, "Brash Easterner Makes Mark on Area Architecture," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 6, 1986.

<sup>59</sup> Mary Kaeding, *Building on a Century: The Kraus-Anderson Story* (Minneapolis: Kraus-Anderson Companies, 2001), 4-10, 71-77. "In 1982 the three KA construction companies merged into one operating unit with three divisions: Minneapolis, Saint Paul, and Building." (Kaeding, 135)

<sup>60</sup> Building Permit Index Card for 55 West Fourth Street, at RCHS; Ingrid Sundstrom, "Saint Paul Condominium Buyers Have Chance to Design Floor Plans," *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, March 17, 1984; Saint Paul Port Authority, monthly activity reports for December 1982 and July 1983, at Minnesota Historical Society.

<sup>61</sup> Building Permit Index Card for 55 West Fourth Street, at RCHS.

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Vita'—the New Life—in tribute not only to his Italian relatives, but to the gifts that all immigrants bring to Saint Paul and America.”<sup>62</sup>

Rancone settled into the twenty-fifth-story penthouse. An article in the “Shelter” section of the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune* in March 1984 explained that buyers of the tower’s residential condominiums had two options. They could pay \$110 to \$128 per square foot for the raw space and then “hire the architects and designers of their choice to arrange the space however they like. Electrical and plumbing service can be routed anywhere in each unit.” Alternatively, “Park Towers will provide finished units for \$151 to \$164 per square foot, including marble-tiled bathrooms, teak hardwood floors, plush carpeting, solid wood double entrance doors and interior doors, gas fireplaces and top-of-the-line kitchens.” The article described modifications underway in some of the units that had already been sold: “One owner has built a large bathroom with a tub overlooking the city; another has replaced his double entrance doors with doors hand-carved in Mexico. Another owner is covering most of the floors in her unit with Mexican marble.” The twenty-fifth-story penthouse, one of the first units to sell, and a large unit on the floor below had “expansive exterior terraces.” Each of the other units had at least one balcony. Two of the building’s six elevators were dedicated to the residential units. Residents of the units, as well as office tenants, could avail themselves of the laundry, valet, catering, maids, limousine, and services of the Saint Paul Hotel.<sup>63</sup>

In the end, only the top five stories actually became residences. Floors nineteen and twenty, like the floors below, were built out as office space. Following the same approach used for the residential floors, the office space was left unfinished. BRW and Kraus Anderson applied for building permits for some areas, but other architects and contractors also worked on planning and constructing office spaces.

### **Amhoist in the Tower**

Amhoist’s decision to relocate its headquarters to downtown Saint Paul came at a time when the company was riding high. Conditions would change for the company and its industry between that time and the date the move occurred.

In 1980, Amhoist’s payroll was over \$135 million, with more than 6,200 employees in the United States and another 1,300 in other countries. The company’s 1980 annual report crowed that “the heavy-lifting and construction equipment business held its sales and profit levels during 1980 near their all-time highs of 1979, despite the downturn in the nation’s economy.” It credited “several factors . . . including product diversification, market diversification and involvement in energy development.” It was also a banner year for the company’s resource-recovery and waste-management sector. Results from the Waterous division, responsible for about one-quarter of the country’s production of fire hydrants and valves, was less rosy. Sales volume was closely linked to the construction of new housing and that market “has suffered through one of its worst periods in modern history.” Sales of pumps for firefighting, though, remained stable, and FOK’s wholesale hardware operations maintained profitability.<sup>64</sup>

The nation’s economy continued to nosedive in 1981. Interest rates reached historic highs. An unexpected oversupply of oil and gasoline led energy companies to shut down production and stop exploratory drilling for new sources. Other companies, worried about economic trends, dropped plans to invest in new equipment. “Under these circumstances,” Amhoist president Fox wrote, “the year was better than the numbers indicate. Despite

<sup>62</sup> “Rancone” (obituary).

<sup>63</sup> Sundstrom, “Saint Paul Condominium Buyers.”

<sup>64</sup> *Amhoist 1980 Annual Report*, 5, 9, 11, 17.

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universally unfavorable economic conditions, Amhoist was able to maintain a level of performance close to its record performances of the previous two years.” Amhoist’s financials continued the pattern of the previous year, with net sales reaching \$574 million, a 6.6 percent increase, but earnings were down by about \$1 million. The annual report explained that the higher revenue “was more than offset by higher interest expense, other corporate expenses and a decrease in earnings of finance and other affiliated companies.”<sup>65</sup>

As the economy soured, the company began making cuts. One of the first casualties was a manufacturing plant in England. When it closed in 1981, the company’s workforce declined from 7,500 employees to 7,100. At the same time, Amhoist implemented a “Partners in Progress” program that “combines monetary-reward systems for eligible employees with an employee stock-purchase plan” intended to “make the employee a partner in the effort required to achieve improved productivity, as well as in the rewards of that improvement.” Employees were organized in “Action Teams” that met “regularly to help improve the quality of each employee’s work like and to find ways to work faster, better and smarter.”<sup>66</sup>

With measures in place to cut costs and increase efficiency, Fox predicted that 1982 “should be a reasonably good year overall for Amhoist, even though some segments of our business may reflect the full impact of the current recession.”<sup>67</sup> The annual report for the year conceded that “the worldwide recession caught up with Amhoist in 1982.” Net sales plunged to \$464 million, a 19.1 percent drop from a year earlier. For the first time since 1938, in the depths of the depression, the company was confronted by a net loss of \$21.8 million. The company’s book value went from \$32.12 per share to \$26.93. The annual report noted that the losses were largely nonrecurring, resulting from cost-cutting measures in the fourth quarter including selling assets, shutting down plants, consolidating operations in Saint Paul and other locations, and writing off inventory. The *Saint Paul Pioneer Press* reported in September 1982 the “almost half of the 1,600 employees who work at two of three Saint Paul plants have been laid off or taken early retirement in the past twelve months. Companywide, about one-third of the normal work force of 7,500 is off the job, including both blue-collar and management employees.” Lenders required the company to suspended dividend payments to shareholders to conserve cashflow.<sup>68</sup>

During this tumultuous time, Amhoist brought new blood to the executive suite. In September 1982, the company announced that forty-one-year-old Robert H. Nassau would become its chief operating officer and seventh president. The first president recruited from outside the company, Nassau had been responsible for the international sector of the J. I. Case Company, a manufacturer of farm equipment based in Wisconsin. Before joining Case in 1980, he worked with the Ford Motor Company’s international trade in tractors and construction equipment. This international experience was expected to help Amhoist strengthen and expand its business outside of the United States. Although stepping down as president, Robert Fox stayed on as chairman of the board and chief executive, tasked with business development.<sup>69</sup>

The challenges facing Nassau and Fox were new and daunting. “Forty years ago, the Germans and Japanese attacked in tanks and planes,” reporter Mike Meyers wrote in 1984. “Today, it looks as if their next assault will be in cranes.” German manufacturers were making heavy cranes capable of lifting more than 150 tons, matching the capacity of one of Amhoist’s flagship products, and selling them for less. The strong dollar undermined

<sup>65</sup> *Amhoist 1981 Annual Report*, 2, 4, 26.

<sup>66</sup> *Amhoist 1980 Annual Report*, 15; *Amhoist 1981 Annual Report*, 1, 21, 23.

<sup>67</sup> *Amhoist 1981 Annual Report*, 2.

<sup>68</sup> *Amhoist 1982 Annual Report*, n.p., 1, 13-14; Massey, “Amhoist Struggling to Cope.”

<sup>69</sup> Daniel F. Cuff, “New President Named for American Hoist,” *New York Times*, September 10, 1982; Massey, “Amhoist Struggling to Cope.”

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Amhoist's competitive edge, Meyers explained: "An Amhoist crane that cost 1 million francs in 1981 would have sold for double that price in France last year—even though the price in dollars was up only 11 percent." Japanese manufacturers were hitting Amhoist on another front, making smaller cranes costing under \$500,000. "A lot is at stake for Amhoist," Meyers observed, "because about half of its cranes are sold overseas."<sup>70</sup>

Amhoist adopted several tactics to counter foreign competition. Computer-aided design generated new models that had more power at less cost and were easier to assemble and move. On the production side, countries were increasingly demanding that equipment was produced, in whole or in part, by local labor and factories. As Amhoist's 1982 annual report explained, "These nationalistic desires were emphasized in this difficult year and are not expected to be a temporary phenomenon. Consequently, Amhoist is adapting its manufacturing strategies to compete effectively in this environment." This included expanding an existing plant in Brazil, developing new facilities in other countries, and arranging more licensing agreements like one the company had with a crane maker in South Korea. Beyond responding to political pressure, this strategy was economical: Amhoist's manufacturing costs averaged 30 percent less overseas.<sup>71</sup>

Foreign competition came at a particularly bad time. The market for cranes, which had accounted for about half of the company's sales and up to 70 percent of operating profits, was shrinking. The international glut of oil was partly responsible. Not only did oil companies pull back on plans to explore new sources and expand production facilities, major oil-producing nations abruptly stopped construction of massive commercial and residential developments. In the United States, Amhoist estimated that the sales volume of industrial cranes fell from \$700 million in 1981 to \$130 million two years later. The "sudden slump in demand for heavy-lifting equipment turned Amhoist's cranes from a major asset to a major liability," a newspaper article observed.<sup>72</sup>

At the same time, the worldwide recession was hitting other sectors of Amhoist's business, including equipment for scrap-metal recycling as the price of steel plunged. The company decided to retain the scrap-processing division, though, along with the crane and material handling divisions, after doing another deep analysis of operations in 1982. In addition, FOK and Waterous continued to be useful complements to the main divisions, "offering counter-cyclical, profitability and a positive cash flow."<sup>73</sup>

With these changes, the company felt its prospects for the following year looked positive, but Amhoist lost \$44.2 million on sales of \$315 million. "In last year's shareholders' letter, we predicted that 1983 would be a better year," the 1983 annual report observed. "We did so because we felt that actions taken during 1982 were sufficient for continuation of the depressed crane markets at the levels we had experienced during 1982, and we planned accordingly. Our assumptions were wrong. Notwithstanding our diversity, Amhoist remains heavily dependent on its crane-related businesses, and thus our financial results for 1983 show a substantial loss."<sup>74</sup>

The company had, though, made progress as a result of belt-tightening in 1982 and 1983. The company had cut manufacturing overhead costs in half, in part by closing eight manufacturing plants, including a large crane operation in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Some subsidiaries that were not leaders in their fields were sold, including the Minneapolis-based Bros Road Machinery Division. Amhoist reduced inventory in all lines and consolidated

<sup>70</sup> Mike Meyers, "Germans, Japanese Aim at Crane Market," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, April 23, 1984.

<sup>71</sup> Meyers, "Germans, Japanese Aim at Crane Market"; *Amhoist 1982 Annual Report*, 2.

<sup>72</sup> Meyers, "Amhoist Comes to Terms"; *Amhoist 1983 Annual Report*, n.p.

<sup>73</sup> Meyers, "Amhoist Comes to Terms"; *Amhoist 1982 Annual Report*, 2-3.

<sup>74</sup> *Amhoist 1983 Annual Report*, n.p.; "American Hoist Says Turnaround near Complete, Sees '85 Profit," *Dow Jones News Service*, November 16, 1984.



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distribution for crane parts at a warehouse in South Saint Paul. These actions, along with incentives for early retirement, resulted in a dramatic decline in its nationwide workforce, which dropped from 7,100 employees in 1981 to 3,700 two years later. This process was painful and expensive. The company reported that costs for “plant closings, product divestitures and relocation/reorganization programs were approximately \$23,100,000 and \$21,900,000 for 1983 and 1982, respectively.” During the same period, the company’s losses totaled \$66 million. It was able to claim a positive cash flow in 1983, though, thanks to the profitability of the Waterous, Harris, and FOK divisions.<sup>75</sup>

While slashing poorly performing divisions in declining industries, Amhoist maintained its long-established practice of seeking opportunities to develop cutting-edge products that built on the company’s strengths. In the 1970s, it had formed a subsidiary, Interbond, to develop vacuum-applied industrial coatings that extended the lifespan of cutting tools. This technology proved to have applications in high-tech as well. In 1983, to advance Interbond’s development, Amhoist purchased 60 percent of publicly traded Vac-Tec, “a manufacturer of high technology vacuum-coating equipment used to apply thin films of metals, metal compounds, ceramics and other materials on a wide range of industrial and microelectronic products.” Amhoist described this as “a first step . . . to expand its high technology business segments to offset the expected slower growth of its more mature businesses.” It pointed to the synergy between Vac-Tec, which “has a recognized marketing presence and a manufacturing capability in thin-film vacuum coatings,” and “the Interbond technology [that] applies these coatings far more rapidly than other currently available technologies.” Vac-Tec counted Hewlett Packard, 3M, IBM, and General Motors among its customers. “The combination of the two organizations and technologies creates an opportunity for Vac-Tec to be the industry leader in this fast-growing field.”<sup>76</sup>

In the meantime, the downturn in Amhoist’s traditional lines had the positive outcome of reducing competition. Bashed by the abysmal market, major crane manufacturers Northwest Engineering, Bucyrus Erie, and Harnischfeger made plans in 1983 to discontinue operations in the United States. Amhoist, still the world’s largest seller of 30- to 3,000-ton lattice cranes, announced its intention to “aggressively compete” and be “a strong survivor in the crane marketplace” by “expanding our international sourcing and consolidating crane manufacturing in our Saint Paul and Brazilian facilities.”<sup>77</sup>

Given the turmoil in the industry, Amhoist downplayed the company’s impending move into its new headquarters. Buried in the endnotes to the 1983 annual report was a mention of “additions to property, plant and equipment of \$8.4 million in 1983 and \$17.1 million during 1982. The major items in both years were for completion of building projects committed prior to the start of the recession,” including “the Corporate office building in Saint Paul, Minnesota, started in mid-1982 and completed in 1983.” A newspaper in December 1983 noted that the company was beginning to move into its new headquarters that month.<sup>78</sup>

Early in 1984, Fox stepped down from the role of chief executive officer and Robert Nassau took on that job as part of a planned succession. The company’s outlook seemed brighter by November, when it predicted a turnaround with a relatively small loss for the year and a “modest profit” in 1985. A newspaper reported on progress the company had made in streamlining its operations in response to the changing market: “In the past two years Amhoist closed 13 of 31 plants, reduced its work force from 7,400 to 3,500 employees, sold four

<sup>75</sup> “American Hoist Sells Road Machinery Division,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, December 4, 1982; Meyers, “Amhoist Comes to Terms”; *Amhoist 1983 Annual Report*, n.p.

<sup>76</sup> *Amhoist 1982 Annual Report*, 6, 12; *Amhoist 1983 Annual Report*, n.p.

<sup>77</sup> *Amhoist 1983 Annual Report*, n.p.

<sup>78</sup> *Amhoist 1983 Annual Report*, n.p.

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businesses, and made marketing adjustments as sales from construction and crane equipment shrank from 55 percent in 1981 to about 30 percent today.”<sup>79</sup>

The new tower graced the cover of Amhoist’s 1984 annual report (AD Figure 17) and Nassau was able to claim that it had been “a substantially better year.” This was despite controversy over the company’s efforts to streamline operations, including terminating defined-benefit pension plans for salaried and non-union hourly employees. In doing so, Amhoist joined “a trend set elsewhere industry by terminating several employee pension plans,” *Financial Times* reported. This and other savings led to a reduction in operating losses in the first quarter of 1984 to \$6.7 million, about half of the loss in first quarter 1983, and the net loss for the year was \$14 million, compared to 1983’s \$44.2 million. “Amhoist is now a better balanced corporation,” the annual report asserted. The role of cranes and construction equipment in the company’s overall sales had been reduced from 50 percent in 1981 to 30 percent in 1984, the same share contributed by FOK. Most of the company’s divisions were stable or recovering, and Waterous celebrated a record year.<sup>80</sup>

The company’s gain was Saint Paul’s loss. Of the many workers that Amhoist terminated across the country, around one thousand were in Saint Paul, where employment dropped from 2,420 in April 1981 to 1,425 in April 1984. The company had faced periodic strikes over the decades and workers found that strikes had generally benefited them. In 1976, for example, they had won cost-of-living increases after a fourteen-week strike. Relations between management and labor became particularly frosty, though, as the recession unfolded. In June 1983, members of two unions went on strike after the company demanded that workers agree to a two-year wage freeze and reduced medical benefits. This time, management was less willing to negotiate because of the company’s financial condition. The strike ended September 15 with the unions accepting a three-year contract with a two-year wage freeze, similar to what the company had offered before the strike. Amhoist recalled only 230 of the 600 workers at the plant, laying off the rest indefinitely.<sup>81</sup> “We’ve had many strikes in the past,” recalled Paul Burnquist, president of a local union. “But in the past, people could achieve their desires (through strikes), because the company always showed a profit.”<sup>82</sup>

Most workers were back on the job by the following year as demand for cranes picked up. The uptick did not come soon enough, though, to spare Amhoist a loss in status: in 1984, it was booted from the Fortune 500, leaving Minnesota with only fourteen representatives on the list.<sup>83</sup>

The business’s troubles had attracted unwanted attention from vulture capitalists. One of the first was infamous local businessman Irwin Jacobs, who was rumored to be considering a takeover bid as the value of Amhoist’s

<sup>79</sup> “Amhoist Tower,” partial clipping from *Saint Paul Pioneer Press/Dispatch*, December 26, 1983, in Lowertown Redevelopment Corp. Records, Minnesota Historical Society; *Amhoist 1983 Annual Report*, n.p.; “American Hoist Says Turnaround near Complete.”

<sup>80</sup> *Amhoist 1984 Annual Report*, cover, 1-4, 11; Meyers, “Amhoist Comes to Terms”; “International Companies and Finance: American Hoist Losses Show Further Rise,” *Financial Times*, June 26, 1984.

<sup>81</sup> “Strikers at Amhoist Slow Traffic,” *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, July 29, 1983; Josephine Marcotty, “Strikers at Amhoist Reach Tentative Pact,” *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, September 14, 1983; Josephine Marcotty, “Amhoist Workers End Strike; Just One-third to Return,” *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, September 16, 1983; “Amhoist Layoffs Will Affect 35,” *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, October 18, 1983; Mike Meyers, “Amhoist Studying Whether to Build New Crane in Twin Cities or South,” *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, August 17, 1984; Dave Hage, “Manufacturing Lags in Providing New Work,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 5, 1986.

<sup>82</sup> Burnquist quote in Marcotty, “Amhoist Workers End Strike.”

<sup>83</sup> Mike Meyers, “Amhoist Falls Off Fortune 500,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, April 10, 1984; Meyers, “Amhoist Comes to Terms.”

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stock collapsed to less than half its book value. The company's management was relieved when it persuaded Commercial Credit Corporation, a subsidiary of local computer giant Control Data, to acquire Jacobs's holdings as a long-term investment. Next came Sol Goldman, a New York real estate developer, who obtained over 5 percent of the company's stock by January 1983 and amassed almost 10 percent by 1985. A year later, Insituform Group Ltd. had a 5.7 percent stake and was rumored to be interested in a takeover campaign. "It wasn't too long ago" that analysts "didn't give American Hoist and Derick Co much of a chance of surviving," a *Forbes* article noted. "But many write-offs and cost reductions later, it not only looks like AHD will survive, but it actually has turned into an intriguing speculative stock." Like Jacobs, though, Goldman and Insituform backed off after the company's economic freefall leveled off.<sup>84</sup>

The performance of cranes remained terrible, with international demand only 25 percent of what it had been three years earlier. The 1984 annual report noted, though, that the company's aggressive marketing was having some success. It landed an order "for the two largest marine revolver cranes ever built" and another for twenty-five locomotive cranes, which were needed by a South Korean construction company building a water pipeline across the Sahara Desert. In addition, the division, now known as American Crane, introduced new and improved models, strengthened small crane production in its factory in Brazil and its licensing arrangement in Korea, and, "most importantly, invested in a major crane manufacturing facility in Wilmington, North Carolina."<sup>85</sup>

The Wilmington site, an abandoned factory, contained 242 acres "immediately adjacent to a deep-water port, important to low-cost international shipping." It was also served by a rail spur. Renovated and new buildings would create a 540,000 square-foot manufacturing and warehouse complex "readily adaptable to an almost ideal heavy crane manufacturing plant affording significant manufacturing economies." With "a carefully planned layout and productivity-enhancing features, the Wilmington plant will enable American to efficiently build a greater variety of conventional and custom-engineered lift equipment." To help finance the project, New Hanover County issued industrial revenue bonds and Wilmington, the county seat, obtained a \$4 million federal Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). American Hoist added \$5 million and hoped to have the plant in operation as soon as possible.<sup>86</sup>

While Amhoist had made a large investment in the Wilmington plant and was moving other manufacturing overseas, the "sophisticated work force and factory" required to produce the company's largest cranes made it "less likely" that operations of the Saint Paul plant would be transferred abroad, a 1984 newspaper article concluded. Several years earlier, though, another article noted that "if the company has a weakness, it's in the firm's older industrial plants" that saddled it with high fixed costs.<sup>87</sup>

The vulnerability of the aging Saint Paul facility became apparent after August 1984, when Amhoist reported an order for a crane "virtually twice the size" of its record-breaking 3,000-ton crane. Price tags for these behemoths topped \$20 million, making the stakes high for Amhoist's selection of a site to produce the next generation of cranes. The Saint Paul plant was in the running, but the company was also considering the Wilmington facility

<sup>84</sup> Meyers, "Amhoist Comes to Terms"; Steve Massey, "Amhoist Plans Purchase Fight," *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, January 7, 1983; Leslie Eaton, "Amhoist without Hoists Turns from a Loser into a Winner," *Barron's*, November 30, 1987; Thomas Jaffe, "Hoist a Flag," *Forbes*, August 12, 1985, 134.

<sup>85</sup> Massey, "Amhoist Plans Purchase Fight"; *Amhoist 1984 Annual Report*, cover, 1-4; Meyers, "Amhoist Comes to Terms."

<sup>86</sup> *Amhoist 1984 Annual Report*, 3-5, 10; Mike Meyers, "Amhoist to Cut 500 Saint Paul Jobs," *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, January 12, 1985; Steve Berg, "Snag in Amhoist Move Perplexes Wilmington," *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, March 9, 1986.

<sup>87</sup> Meyers, "Germans, Japanese Aim at Crane Market"; *Amhoist 1982 Annual Report*, 2; Vartabedian, "American Hoist Tackles Big Jobs."

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and locations in South Carolina and Alabama. In August, Amhoist said that its feasibility study to evaluate plant options would take about six months. The first weeks of 1985 brought bad news. On January 12, the headline in the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune* announced: "Amhoist to Cut 500 Saint Paul Jobs." The article explained that the actual loss of jobs would be more than five hundred, "about a third of the company's jobs in Minnesota at a time when Amhoist is hiring workers by the hundreds in North Carolina."<sup>88</sup>

Amhoist asserted that around 560 employees who worked for the crane division in engineering, marketing, service, and the foundry would remain in the city. At the company's annual meeting in April 1985, Nassau "affirmed Amhoist's commitment to maintain its headquarters and other operations in Saint Paul, which employ about 1,100 people even after 200 jobs are shifted" to the new Wilmington plant.<sup>89</sup>

This was little comfort to the workers terminated at the Saint Paul crane plant. When Amhoist had announced the closure in January, a welder working there pointed to the UDAG funding given to Wilmington for Amhoist's new plant. "The part I can't understand is that they put in for a grant from HUD to move our jobs to another state." He added, "To me, it's using our tax money to take our jobs. I feel like it's a raw deal."<sup>90</sup>

So did Congressman Bruce Vento, an author the UDAG legislation, whose father had worked at the Amhoist plant. At the congressman's request, the federal General Accounting Office (GAO) conducted a study of the grant and, in a report released in March 1986, concluded that the funds had been used illegally. Vento charged "that the Regan administration pushed the grant through to assist the 1984 reelection campaign of Senator Jess Helms," a Republican representing the Wilmington district, "even though they knew it violated 'job-pirating' provisions of federal law." As one report put it, "The purpose of the UDAG program is to provide new jobs, not transfer old ones." Not all of the grant had been distributed to Wilmington, so HUD suspended payment of the remaining \$1.2 million and asked the Justice Department to sue Amhoist for supplying misleading information in the grant application. The stakes were high, a reporter noted: "A suit could place the entire grant in jeopardy as well as the tax-exempt status of \$10 million in bonds that also helped finance the Wilmington factory." The lawsuit wended its way through the courts for years. In 1988, Amhoist decided to return the UDAG funds to end the dispute. The federal government shifted \$2.8 million to the City of Saint Paul as a job training grant, which funded the Amhoist Dislocated Workers Project to counsel and retrain laid-off Amhoist workers.<sup>91</sup>

Amhoist's 1986 annual stockholders' meeting occurred while the Justice Department was still reviewing the

<sup>88</sup> Meyers, "Amhoist Studying Whether to Build New Crane in Twin Cities or South"; Meyers, "Amhoist to Cut 500 Saint Paul Jobs."

<sup>89</sup> Neal St. Anthony, "Amhoist Chief Says Cost-cutting Was Essential to Survival," *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, April 12, 1985.

<sup>90</sup> Meyers, "Amhoist to Cut 500 Saint Paul Jobs."

<sup>91</sup> Conrad deFiebre, "Amhoist Illegally Granted Funds to Move Factory, Study Reports," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 1, 1986; Berg, "Snag in Amhoist Move Perplexes Wilmington"; Susan Feyder, "Amhoist Defends Use of Grant," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, April 4, 1986; Thomas B. Koetting, "Amhoist Workers to Get Job Funds," *Saint Paul Pioneer Press Dispatch*, January 14, 1988; "A New Day for Amhoist" (editorial), *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, February 5, 1989; Beran and Ahern, "Amhoist Moving Headquarters."

During a hearing in before a House subcommittee in March 1986, HUD's general counsel asserted that the agency had assumed Amhoist would manufacture cranes in Wilmington that could not be made at the Saint Paul plant. Amhoist's general counsel admitted that the company had "produced 46 cranes in Wilmington of the same types that had been made in Saint Paul," but he claimed the company would have closed the Saint Paul plant regardless. If Amhoist had not developed the Wilmington plant, the jobs would have been transferred to factories in Brazil or South Korea. (Steve Berg, "HUD Asks US to Sue Amhoist in Grant Dispute," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 21, 1986)

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potential lawsuit. Nassau dismissed the GAO's conclusion, asserting the funds had been used properly. He stressed that Amhoist's headquarters and four of its six divisions remained in the Saint Paul area, where its work force numbered 850, and turned the focus to the company's improving prospects. While the first quarter of 1985 had shown a loss, the company finally claimed a profit of \$480,000 in the second quarter after an eleven-quarter string of losses. Although the year had ended with a net loss of \$7.3 million, this was an improvement over previous years, and Nassau predicted that the company would break even in 1986. Sales were up, even for cranes, although that market continued to be well below the heady years of the 1970s.<sup>92</sup>

The company ended 1986 with its fifth year of losses, though, despite "another round of restructuring, which, like previous efforts, has focused mostly on its ailing crane business," the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune* reported (AD Figure 12). While cranes were "traditionally the flagship business for Amhoist," it "has come to realize that it must depend less on cranes and focus on its other capital equipment industrial product and hardware wholesaling businesses." Symbolizing this shift was Amhoist's announcement in December 1986 that it would sell the fifty-acre site of its venerable Saint Paul crane plant, which had held 900,000 square feet of buildings used for manufacturing, office space, and storage.<sup>93</sup>

Amhoist "has had to deal with the perception that by closing the crane manufacturing plant, it was abandoning Saint Paul," a reporter wrote in February 1987. "The suggestion of abandonment rankles Nassau, who points out that Amhoist still has its corporate headquarters and the headquarters for four of its six divisions in the Twin Cities"—namely American Crane, Harris Press and Shear, Waterous, and FOK. At the same time, the company grew further distanced from its past that month by selling the marine and energy unit of the crane division, dropping cranes to only 15 percent of the company's total revenues and eliminating around one hundred of its Saint Paul labor force.<sup>94</sup>

The company's final tie to its crane-building legacy came in June 1987 when it announced plans to sell the remnants of that division to an affiliate of a competitor, Ohio Locomotive Crane Company, based in Bucyrus, Ohio. Amhoist planned to use the proceeds from the \$40 million sale to reduce debt. Nassau called the sale "the most dramatic step in Amhoist's return to attractive levels of profitability." It was a 180-degree turn from his statement in 1984 that "our heart and soul are in cranes, our names says cranes, and we have always been in cranes," and his assertion that "I don't think we should get out of the business just because it is not going to make as many million dollars in sales as it used to." By 1987, Nassau's vision had changed to "Amhoist without the hoists."<sup>95</sup>

The strategy seemed to be working. In November 1987, *Barron's* reported that "Amhoist without Hoists Turns from a Loser into a Winner." The article noted that "without the drag from cranes, Amhoist is a comfortably profitable company. In 1986, for example, Amhoist's operating earnings, without cranes, would have run as much as \$10 million. This year, the crane-less total should be double that."<sup>96</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Feyder, "Amhoist Defends Use of Grant"; "American Hoist Posts Earnings of \$480,000 for Fiscal Second Period," *Wall Street Journal*, June 20, 1985.

<sup>93</sup> Feyder, "Amhoist Seeks Elusive Profitability"; "Amhoist Studies Use of Main Plant," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 18, 1985; Anthony Carideo, "Amhoist to Sell Saint Paul Crane Site," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, December 24, 1986.

<sup>94</sup> Feyder, "Amhoist Seeks Elusive Profitability."

<sup>95</sup> Mike Meyers, "Amhoist Will Sell Its Crane Business," *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, June 19, 1987; Anthony Carideo, "After Down Years, Amhoist Could Be Poised for Better Days," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, May 2, 1988; Julie Ann Gold, "Profits Prompt Optimism for Amhoist," *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, October 29, 1984.

<sup>96</sup> Eaton, "Amhoist without Hoists."

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Even with this good news, the company remained shadowed by takeover threats. In 1986, Amhoist developed “golden parachute” packages giving executives up to two years’ salary in the event of a takeover. This was intended to discourage takeovers as well as persuade key executives to remain at the company. It proved unsuccessful, though, in warding off the vultures. In 1988, two groups appeared to be making a play. One, led by New York investor Frank Cilluffo, acquired nearly 12 percent of the company’s stock. The other, organized by Connecticut investment banker Allan S. Gordon, held over 5 percent. To counter these unwelcome advances, the board adopted a “shareholder rights plan” in September that “under certain circumstances . . . allows holders to buy stock in American Hoist, or an acquiring company, at half price.” This strategy, a newspaper article explained, was intended “to make a hostile takeover of the company prohibitively expensive.”<sup>97</sup>

In October 1988, in another move to make the company an unattractive target, Amhoist announced a \$110 million bid to buy CoastAmerica, founded in Saint Paul in 1928 as Coast to Coast Stores. Amhoist would take on a large debt for the purchase, the largest in its history. Executives justified this move as advancing the company’s goal to expand its fastest-growing division, FOK. The combined entity would be the only hardware store wholesaler serving every state in the country. In November, Amhoist announced that it would sell its Waterous division to help fund the CoastAmerica purchase.<sup>98</sup>

The first week in February 1989, a headline for a *Minneapolis Star Tribune* editorial proclaimed “A New Day for Amhoist.” It stated that “Saint Paul’s star-crossed relationship with its longtime corporate citizen Amhoist is on an upswing, lifted by the city’s hopes to remain Amhoist’s headquarters when it consolidates with a new acquisition, CoastAmerica.” Saint Paul faced competition from Denver, CoastAmerica’s base, which was trying to lure Amhoist west. Midmonth, Saint Paul’s hopes were dashed by Amhoist’s decision to move to Denver by year’s end. Only a small cohort of employees, including the Harris division, would remain in the Saint Paul tower. Nassau claimed the decision was based on economics. With the addition of CoastAmerica, more than half of the company’s workers were in the Denver area, and it was cheaper to move the company’s executives to Denver than move those workers to Saint Paul. He revealed that incentives offered by Denver were “more modest” than the package presented by local agencies. “Saint Paul and the state made a substantial effort, but incentives were really not a factor of great significance.” In a final severing of the company’s ties to its industrial history, American Hoist and Derrick was rechristened the Amdura Corporation.<sup>99</sup>

Another drama was playing out behind the scenes. Investor Cilluffo was not happy with Amhoist’s decision to acquire CoastAmerica, which raised the company’s debt load from 48 percent to 80 percent of its capital. *Forbes* reported that “Nassau needed time” to integrate the two companies and reduce debt, but Cilluffo, who by now controlled 18 percent of the company’s stock, grew impatient. In August 1989, he launched a proxy battle to replace Amdura’s board and Nassau. When shareholders voted the following month, Cilluffo won by a narrow margin of 51 percent.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Susan Feyder, “American Hoist Predicts Profits after a Five-year Drought,” *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, April 10, 1987; “Amhoist Adopts Antitakeover Plan,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, September 9, 1988; Susan Feyder, “Amhoist Bids for Hardware Company,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, October 29, 1988; Barbara Pokela, “Amhoist Says It Plans to Sell Waterous Co.,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, November 8, 1988.

<sup>98</sup> Susan Feyder, “Amhoist Bids for Hardware Company,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, October 29, 1988; Barbara Pokela, “Amhoist Says It Plans to Sell Waterous Co.,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, November 8, 1988.

<sup>99</sup> “A New Day for Amhoist”; Beran and Ahern, “Amhoist Moving Headquarters to Denver”; Jim Jones, “Saint Paul Chamber’s CEO Is Ready to Rally Troops,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, April 3, 1989.

<sup>100</sup> Alyssa A. Lappen, “We Were Shaking with Rage,” *Forbes*, October 30, 1989, 119, 122; “Company News; Dissenter Resumes Fight for Amdura,” *New York Times*, August 31, 1989.

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Cilluffo planned to reduce the company's debt by selling off some divisions, including Harris, but his initial steps were ham-handed, alienating staff and customers. "Cilluffo must deal with the havoc he has wreaked inside the company," *Forbes* observed, and "defections could be a problem among Amdura's hardware franchisees, too." The article concluded: "At the moment, Amdura seems a rudderless ship." It floundered for only half a year, gaining \$70 million more in debt along the way, before filing for bankruptcy in April 1990. In a ranking of investment managers by Maryland-based CDA Investment Technologies, Cilluffo was considered the worst, losing an estimated "38.5 percent of the money it had invested"—a statistic Cilluffo disputed.<sup>101</sup>

Later in 1990, as part of Amdura's reorganization, CoastAmerica became an independent cooperative. Amdura emerged from bankruptcy in 1991, with the group of banks that carried most of the company's debt as the primary stockholders. The company's headquarters moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma, where one of its two operating units, the Crosby Group, was based. The other unit, the Harris Waste Management Group, soon moved its headquarters to Peachtree City, Georgia. The company claimed a \$7.2 million operating profit in 1994. The following year it was acquired for \$64.4 million by a British company, ADU Acquisition, a subsidiary of FKI Plc.<sup>102</sup>

A last vestige of Amhoist remained in Minnesota until the twenty-first century. The company's marine and energy group had merged with Clyde Iron of Duluth in 1987. Clyde's history had many parallels to American Hoist's. Established in 1899 to make hand tools for lumberjacks, Clyde quickly expanded into steam- and gas-powered loaders, skidders, and other equipment for the lumber industry, which was hitting a peak of activity in the region. By the 1920s, lumbering was in decline as local forests were logged out, but the company developed hoists and derricks for a broader range of uses. It obtained a license to manufacture a heavy-duty pivoting crane, known as the Whirley, from the Maryland-based Whiley Crane Company just before the onset of World War II. Clyde's innovative in-house engineering staff modified the Whirley crane for use in shipyards and in battle, and they were in high demand. The cranes remained popular after the war for constructing dams, bridges (including spans at the Brooklyn Narrows and Michigan's Straits of Mackinac), and other large infrastructure projects. In 1965, Clyde installed a 500-ton Whiley crane with a 245-foot-long boom on an oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico, the world's largest of its type. The accomplishment was marked by the Minnesota Society of Professional Engineers, which hailed the crane on its annual list of the state's "Seven Engineering Wonders." Clyde won the award again in 1973 with a 1,600-ton barge-mounted crane. The following year, the company completed a \$3-million expansion of its Duluth plant. The economic downturn in the 1980s led to a consolidation with its counterpart at Amhoist. The unit was acquired by National Oilwell Varco (NOV) in 2008. It remained in Saint Paul, near the site of Amhoist's 1890s plant, for several years, but was ultimately relocated to Texas where NOV was based. According to NOV's website, AmClyde remains "the world's premier designer and builder of mega-cranes."<sup>103</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Lappen, "We Were Shaking with Rage"; "Amdura, Failing to Get More Credit, Files for Chapter 11," *Wall Street Journal*, April 3, 1990; Floyd Norris, "Market Place; Ranking the Money Managers," *New York Times*, July 6, 1990; John R. Dorfman, "Issues Brokers Buy Often Don't Do Well," *Wall Street Journal*, April 24, 1987.

<sup>102</sup> Timothy O'Brien, "Franchises Spearhead Renewed Popularity of Co-Ops," *Wall Street Journal*, November 29, 1993; "Amdura Corp.'s Plan for Reorganization Confirmed by Court," *Wall Street Journal*, September 9, 1991; "Amdura Eyes Exit from Chapter 11," *Dow Jones Factiva*, September 18, 1991, accessed October 21, 2021, <https://global-factiva-com.ezp2.lib.umn.edu/ga/default.aspx>; "American Brief: Amdura Corp.," *Wall Street Journal Europe*, June 12, 1992; "Amdura in Agreement with ADU Acquisition," *Dow Jones Factiva*, March 29, 1995, accessed October 21, 2021, <https://global-factiva-com.ezp2.lib.umn.edu/ga/default.aspx>.

<sup>103</sup> Glenn Sandvik, *Duluth, An Illustrated History of the Zenith City* (Woodland Hills, Calif.: Windsor Publications, 1983), 104-105; Frederick Melo, "Innovative Saint Paul Company Ends 132-year Run with Acquisition," *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, July 17, 2016; Melo, "Saint Paul Crane Company Did Heavy Lifting"; AmClyde, NOV website, accessed November 10, 2021, <https://www.nov.com/products-and-services/brands/amclyde>.

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**Meanwhile . . .**

While Amhoist moved into and out of its new downtown headquarters, activity continued on other floors of the tower. In August 1983, Peter Popovich, chief justice of the Minnesota Court of Appeals, announced a five-year agreement to lease around 12,400 square feet, including all of the thirteenth floor and part of the twelfth, for two courtrooms and chambers for its twelve judges.<sup>104</sup>

This promising start was not followed by a rush to lease other office space. In May 1984, eight months after the dedication ceremony for the sculpture, only 35 percent of the commercial and residential space was filled, well below projections. The recession had hurt demand for office space, causing leasing rates to drop just as Saint Paul's supply of office space burgeoned. A few blocks from Amhoist, the new Town Square development had two towers totaling 430,000 square feet and the nearby World Trade Center, with two more towers, was scheduled to open in 1987. To the east, Galtier Plaza would introduce another 60,000 square feet of office space in 1986. Like Amhoist Tower, these projects were "part of a downtown Saint Paul renaissance that has been planned, encouraged and partly financed by the city and its Port Authority," a newspaper reported. Office vacancy rates stood at 13 percent in downtown Saint Paul and 10 percent in Minneapolis, "raising fears that the development efforts of the city and Port Authority may have been too successful."<sup>105</sup>

To make matters worse for Yorktown and other investors in the Amhoist Tower, buying an office condominium rather than renting space was a novel concept in the country's real estate market, and it was not catching on in the Twin Cities. With no income from the five floors it owned, Yorktown was \$104,000 behind on payments to the Saint Paul Port Authority. Rice Park Associates and T & H Enterprises, investors in other floors, were \$77,000 and \$17,500 in arrears, respectively. Anticipating that the problem would only grow worse, the port authority announced its intent to repossess the eight office floors owned by these companies. The agency had experienced over a dozen defaults since the mid-1950s, but this was the largest. Kraut acknowledged that "we've had a number of properties in which we had to jump in and lease out ourself. . . . But we've never had a major office building on our hands before." The agency had helped finance the project by issuing \$16 million in long-term bonds with 14 percent interest. It could pay off this debt and issue new bonds with a lower interest rate of around 8.5 percent. Lower loan payments would allow lease rates to drop from \$15 per square foot to around \$12, closer to the average for comparable space in downtown Saint Paul.<sup>106</sup>

After acquiring the property, the port authority launched an aggressive leasing campaign touting the amenities of "Saint Paul's newest and most prestigious office building" including the view and "proximity to the Minnesota Club, Saint Paul Hotel, Ordway Theatre, and Civic Center." In addition, the tower offered "a courtly atmosphere where lawyers abound adjacent to City Hall and the Ramsey County Court House plus the on-site Court of Appeals." A display advertisement in September 1985 claimed "the Amhoist Tower . . . is almost filled! (Less than 19,000 sq. ft. remain available for lease in this 190,000 sq. ft. building.)" Targeting legal practices proved successful. Prominent litigators Robins Zelle Larson and Kaplan had offices on the fourteenth and fifteenth floors and Meshbeshner Singer and Spence were on the twentieth floor. Other professional firms were attracted as well. Stockbrokers Miller and Schroeder Financial and an investment management firm, Colorado Commodities Management Corporation, joined Meshbeshner on the twelfth floor, and accountants Touche Ross and Company

<sup>104</sup> *Minnesota Legislative Manual, 1985-1986* (Saint Paul: State of Minnesota, 1985) 232-233; "State Rents Space for Appeals Court," *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, August 26, 1983.

<sup>105</sup> Meryhew, "35 Percent Amhoist Tower Is Troubled"; Rybak, "Landlords Fear City Is Growing Too Fast."

<sup>106</sup> Lori Sturdevant, "Latimer Scuttled Audit of Port Authority," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 26, 1986; Meryhew, "35 Percent Amhoist Tower Is Troubled."



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were on the sixteenth floor. An architecture practice, McGuire Courteau Lucke, had space on the seventh floor.<sup>107</sup>

A rapidly growing financial firm, Green Tree Acceptance Corporation, established its corporate office in the building in 1985. As part of the deal, the company obtained a five-year option to buy as many as thirteen floors of the building and basement. The company, which provided loans to buyers of mobile homes and recreational vehicles, started in 1975 as a subsidiary of a well-established local financial institution, Midwest Federal Savings and Loan. Midwest's chairman, Harold Greenwood Jr., had tapped Lawrence Coss to lead the new venture, which quickly grew from a two-person shop into the largest mobile-home lender in the country. It went public in 1983. When Green Tree moved into its new offices in May 1985, the tower's office space reached 80-percent occupancy.<sup>108</sup>

While leasing of the tower's office space gained momentum, the residential market in downtown Saint Paul remained sluggish. A news report in 1987 counted 400 vacant units in the area with another 600 units under construction, but "city planners say population growth has been filling units only at the rate of 150 to 250 a year." Downtown's population stood at 3,500, gaining only about 1,000 since 1980. By 1985, only seven units had sold at Park Towers, which was on the high end of the condominiums available downtown. Acknowledging the challenges of the residential market in 1985, the port authority gave up on trying to sell residential units on the nineteenth and twentieth floors and fitted out the space for its own offices.<sup>109</sup>

By 1987, the port authority had succeeded in leasing almost all of its office space in the tower. Being in the business of developing properties, not managing them, it began looking for a buyer for this property as well as the adjacent Saint Paul Hotel. It took over the hotel in February 1986 after Lincoln Hotels, a Dallas developer, defaulted on a \$12 million port authority loan, which had helped finance the building's \$20 million renovation in 1980. The hotel had not performed well and was valued at only \$5.5 million by the time of Lincoln's departure. Hotel investors from Atlanta had tried to buy the property soon after the port authority gained title but were unable to arrange financing.<sup>110</sup>

In December 1987, the port authority reached an agreement with Green Tree Acceptance for the sale of its three floors of the tower, the parking structure, and the hotel for a price of \$29 million. The company had mushroomed since moving to the Amhoist Tower. By 1988, the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* reported that Green Tree "provides financing . . . in forty-eight states, employs about 1,000 people in 41 regional service centers, and extends nearly \$900 million a year in consumer credit."<sup>111</sup>

The transaction between the port authority and Green Tree was scheduled to close in February 1988. While losing money on the sale to Green Tree, the port authority found this justified to maintain the hotel "as a 'four-star' facility" and keep Green Tree in downtown Saint Paul. The company had considered moving somewhere else in the Twin Cities or another state after its lease in the Amhoist Tower ended in 1989. Further sweetening the deal

<sup>107</sup> "Saint Paul's Amhoist Tower" (classified advertisement), *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, July 15, 1984; "The Amhoist Tower . . . Is Almost Filled," *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, September 23, 1985; *Polk's Saint Paul City Directory, 1985-1986*, 393; *Polk's Saint Paul City Directory, 1987*, 403; *Polk's Saint Paul City Directory, 1988*, 412.

<sup>108</sup> "Potential Sale of Part of Amhoist Tower OK'd," *Saint Paul Pioneer Press Dispatch*, January 23, 1985; Richard Meryhew, "Saint Paul Port Authority Sells Off \$29 Million Interest," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, December 30, 1987; Allen Short and David Phelps, "Green Tree's Coss Gets Embroiled in Conflict," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, December 22, 1988.

<sup>109</sup> Meryhew, "Saint Paul Port Authority Sells Off \$29 Million Interest."

<sup>110</sup> Meryhew, "Saint Paul Port Authority Sells Off \$29 Million Interest."

<sup>111</sup> Meryhew, "Saint Paul Port Authority Sells Off \$29 Million Interest; "Potential Sale of Part of Amhoist Tower OK'd"; Short and Phelps, "Green Tree's Coss."

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was Green Tree's plan to buy the five stories of the tower Amhoist owned, sparing the port authority from the possibility of another default.<sup>112</sup>

The closing did not happen in February. In April, the port authority confirmed that Green Tree had second thoughts about the hotel purchase. Kraut tried to put the best spin on this turn of events, emphasizing that Green Tree still planned to buy fifteen floors of the Amhoist Tower for a price of \$19.5 million, with \$2 million down and the rest on a twenty-two year loan from the port authority. Kraut claimed to have other prospects for the hotel and by June had reached an agreement for a sale to the Saint Paul Companies, which had its corporate headquarters a few blocks away.<sup>113</sup>

Before 1988 ended, it became apparent why Green Tree had dropped out of the hotel deal. The mobile-home industry's growth waned with the oil industry's slump, hurting Green Tree's business. Its reputation had been tarnished by "federal investigations [that] have faulted the company's loan practices, and two costly settlements . . . in lawsuits by disgruntled Green Tree customers in Georgia and Iowa for excessive finance charges and consumer fraud." Executives and staff resigned, citing Coss's mercurial management style. Then in September, because of disagreement over a 1985 arrangement related to Midwest's servicing of loans originated by Green Tree, the companies sued each other. The lawsuits, a reporter noted, "commenced a battle that could ruin the financial positions of both companies." Green Tree's stock, which peaked at \$38 a share in early 1987, dropped to \$10.50 by the end of 1988. Regardless, the company proceeded with its purchase of the tower floors and garage, paying about \$8 million in cash to Amhoist plus the \$2 million down payment to the port authority for the other floors. Purchase of the Amhoist floors gave Green Tree naming rights to the building, which soon became Landmark Towers.<sup>114</sup>

Drama over ownership of the office floors continued. By January 1991, Green Tree was negotiating to return title of the building to the port authority in exchange for a commitment to keep its headquarters there. Office floors continued to change hands in subsequent years, sometimes going back to earlier owners. By the early twenty-first century, the office floors were owned by Rice Park Properties, at this point a subsidiary of Consecro Finance. The Indiana firm had purchased Green Tree, and most of the tower's offices were filled with its employees. Consecro Finance went bankrupt in 2003 and its assets were later transferred to CFN Investment Holdings, an investor group from New York, and a finance unit of General Electric. In the meantime, keeping the space occupied remained a challenge as tenants came and went.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>112</sup> Meryhew, "Saint Paul Port Authority Sells Off \$29 Million Interest"; Beran and Ahern, "Amhoist Moving Headquarters to Denver."

<sup>113</sup> Meryhew, "Saint Paul Port Authority Sells Off \$29 Million Interest"; Richard Meryhew, "Prospective Hotel Buyer Checks Out," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, April 16, 1988; Thomas B. Koetting, "Port Authority OKs Amhoist Tower Sale," *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, April 28, 1988; Richard Meryhew, "Third Time the Charm?" *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, June 17, 1988. The stress of the port authority job strained Kraut's health; he had a heart attack in 1988 as he was dealing with Amhoist, the Saint Paul Hotel, and other defaults on port authority loans. Poor health forced him to retire in February 1989. (Meryhew, "Health Forces Kraut to Step Down")

<sup>114</sup> Short and Phelps, "Green Tree's Coss"; Walter Parker and Steve Brook, "Green Tree's Office Tower Deal Goes Sour," *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, January 16, 1991. Midwest Federal, a casualty of bad management and the melt-down of the savings and loan industry in the late 1980s, was seized by the federal government in 1989. In 1990, the U.S. attorney general indicted Greenwood and other top executives of Midwest Federal on fraud and conspiracy charges. (Tony Kennedy, "Ex-Officials of Minnesota Thrift Indicted," *Washington Post*, June 27, 1990)

<sup>115</sup> Parker and Brook, "Green Tree's Office Tower Deal Goes Sour"; Walter Parker, "Port Authority Files Suit against Meritor Tower Owners," *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, March 2, 1991; Jean Sheryl, "Consecro Finance Units File—Subsidiaries to Seek Chapter 11 as Part of the Deal," *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, February 4, 2003; "Consecro Sells a Finance Unit for \$1

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Another long-time issue was the building's exterior wall system, a subject of concern early on. In May 1982, architects at BRW had expressed concern about the ability of the curtain wall to handle movement from wind pressure. The spandrel glass was displaying condensation issues by the end of 1983. When Yorktown Properties contacted Kawneer, which had fabricated the curtain wall, the company's initial response was that "the system should perform down to an outside temperature of approximately -18 degrees F. Below this temperature, you will expect to see condensation on the system." Kawneer added that conditions presented by Saint Paul winters "far exceeded published design standards" for the system.<sup>116</sup>

In early July 1984, Kawneer provided remedial detailing for the spandrel weather seals. By the end of that month, Twin City Testing was examining specific failure issues. The results of additional tests were reported by the Robert H. Hunt Company in the following month. By mid-August, a host of problems had been identified including failing column-cover sealants, staining on the glass, delaminating PTI panels, broken spandrel glass, and noise from covers on curtain walls and columns. In addition, spandrel gaskets were falling out of the wall. In October, Gateway Glass, which had done the installation, acknowledged leakage problems caused by the failing gaskets. Repairs were scheduled for the following spring. Apparently, the work did not go smoothly. In August 1985, Yorktown sent a list of issues to Gateway related to the column cover joints; the attachment of mullion covers, some of which had been blown off that month; exposed raw aluminum when vertical mullions expanded; and broken spandrel glass.<sup>117</sup>

Kawneer became involved again in 1988 to explore why ice formed inside the spandrel glass, causing condensation gutters to overflow. The problem was caused by debris in the single weep hole in each unit, preventing water from draining to the exterior. Kawneer recommended drilling additional weepholes and cleaning the condensation gutters.<sup>118</sup>

Issues continued into the 1990s including interior moisture damage to ceilings and walls as well as exterior decay. Starting in 1996, another round of consultants conducted tests, analyzed results, and offered solutions. The situation came to a head early on February 29, 2000, when five spandrel panels fell from the building, requiring Saint Peter Street and Fourth Street to be closed temporarily. The management company called in a Chicago-based engineering consultant, Rath, Rath and Johnson (RRJ). They interviewed maintenance workers, who reported the building "had experienced at least one spandrel glass failure every year in early Spring" since the time it opened, "with the exception of two or three year where no failures had occurred. . . . The failures typically occurred in the early morning hours during windy conditions" and "on the south or west elevations located at mid-height or higher on the building." Based on research, field observations, and lab tests, the engineers came to the preliminary conclusion that "the failures are likely the result of improper heat-strengthening." Also, "the lack of four-sided support may additionally contribute to the failure mechanism."<sup>119</sup>

In December, after more in-depth study, RRJ confirmed that the gaskets were failing and speculated that the heat-strengthening process when the glass was manufactured was substandard. The consultants warned "the glass will continue to fall out or break." Building owners faced the need to replace all of the spandrel panels. The process

Billion," *New York Times*, March 6, 2003.

<sup>116</sup> Rath, Rath and Johnson, "Landmark Tower Curtain Wall Non-Performance Investigation Interim Report," November 3, 2000, 2, at management office, Landmark Towers.

<sup>117</sup> Rath et al., "Landmark Tower Curtain Wall Non-Performance," 2-3.

<sup>118</sup> Rath et al., "Landmark Tower Curtain Wall Non-Performance," 3.

<sup>119</sup> Rath et al., "Landmark Tower Curtain Wall Non-Performance," 6, 10.

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would be particularly challenging because “both the vision and spandrel lights were installed from the interior side of the system prior to installation of interior finishes. . . . Reglazing of the spandrel lites is impossible without removal of interior finishes, or modification of the system to facilitate glazing from the exterior.”<sup>120</sup>

As the building owners evaluated long-term solutions, they installed scaffolding at the street level to protect pedestrians in the immediate vicinity from falling glass, and maintenance staff were tasked with looking at each facade every half hour to identify panels that might be failing. The sixth-floor deck was closed. Finally in 2002, the spandrel glass was replaced.<sup>121</sup>

### Conclusion

In 1986, historian Kunz wrote, “Through its first 104 years and the major restructuring of the corporation . . . in the 1980s, continuity has been a hallmark of Amhoist.” While true in some respects, change was also at the core of Amhoist’s culture. The company’s decision to diversify in the 1950s exemplified this characteristic. Even during the boom years of the 1970s, President Fox stressed that Amhoist was looking for new opportunities. In a centennial message in the company’s 1982 annual report, he observed, “One of the things we find in reviewing Amhoist’s past is that a major ingredient in the company’s success has been change.” Asserting that “growth will come through change, just as it has for 100 years,” Fox made a commitment “to being as successful at managing change in the next 100 years as the leaders of our company have been during the first 100.” He added, “In far less than 100 years, our history of change will still be the most obvious.”<sup>122</sup>

As highlighted during the company’s centennial, American Hoist’s history was marked by progressive evolution, despite occasional ups and downs. Its innovative cranes and other heavy equipment set industry standards throughout the world and facilitated the construction of bridges, dams, and skyscrapers that were marvels when built—and many remain so today. Amhoist’s products propelled the country’s rapid response to war and its oil- and gas-fueled boom after World War II. In the process, the company became one of Saint Paul’s largest employers. It was justifiably proud of its accomplishments. “Of the hundreds of thousands of businesses that have begun operating in the United States, a comparative handful have managed to last 100 years,” its annual report observed. “Now, Amhoist joins that select few.”<sup>123</sup>

When the supercharged 1970s gave way to the downturn of the 1980s, Amhoist’s leadership took it as another challenge. “Growth through 1982 and beyond will require new products and new capabilities,” the 1981 annual report stated before listing the many new products that had been introduced that year. By 1982, the company was “restructuring of our crane-related divisions” to be “well positioned to meet the challenge of a vastly changing world marketplace” while continuing to produce the enormous and complex machinery that maintained Amhoist’s international reputation. As a reporter noted in 2016, “The company holds the Guinness World Record for the largest lift ever made, with the use of twin 6,600-ton floating marine cranes, and it gained industry fame in 1986 when it completed the crane that sits atop the Saipem 7000, the world’s second-largest crane vessel.”<sup>124</sup>

<sup>120</sup> Jack Erskine, president, Rice Park Properties (and Consecro), to Mark Shepherd, Brian Corey, and Tony Bonacuse, Consecro, memorandum on Landmark Towers glass issue, December 21, 2000, at management office, Landmark Towers; Rath et al., “Landmark Tower Curtain Wall Non-Performance,” 5.

<sup>121</sup> David Charles, “Report of Meeting Held January 23, 2001, Addressing the Spandrel Glass Failure Situation,” January 24, 2001, prepared by Loss Control Division, Chubb Group of Insurance Companies, Minneapolis; Rose Marie Van Zandt, Ellerbe Becket, to Jeff Hackenmueller, Harmon, letter, January 14, 2002, at management office, Landmark Towers.

<sup>122</sup> Kunz, *Saint Paul: Modern Renaissance*, 134; *Amhoist Annual Report*, 1981, 2-3.

<sup>123</sup> *Amhoist Annual Report*, 1981, 3.

<sup>124</sup> Frederick Melo, “Saint Paul Crane Company Did Heavy Lifting,” *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, July 17, 2016.

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At the same time, the company perpetuated its quest for innovative ways to build on existing strengths. Looking beyond its centennial, “The important areas of growth for our company over the next quarter century . . . may be in markets, and through products and services, which are not significant factors in our business today.” In 1981, the company created, “at the corporate level, . . . a research and development division that will thrust us into new areas of high technology and high growth.” The following year, President Robert Nassau and Fox, who then served as chair of the board and chief executive officer, explained that “in the longer term, to provide the potential for attractive growth, Amhoist will be in high-technology businesses.”<sup>125</sup>

This future was better accommodated by a modern setting than by the utilitarian offices at the riverside plant. Moving the company’s headquarters to a new downtown tower that carried its name was a capstone to the accomplishments of Amhoist’s first century. It was also an appropriate setting for the high-tech future that Amhoist’s leaders were pursuing. *Building for a Better World*, a promotional film from 1980, considered the company’s legacy and looked to the years ahead: “As Amhoist nears its one hundredth birthday, it can be said that it has had a memorable past, a strong, sound present, and a secure, predictably greater future.” A 1982 film to celebrate the centennial emphasized the company’s ability to adapt to changes in markets and technologies, noting that “the real expansion came” after World War II “with the acquisition of companies with related products.” The film, *Amhoist, A Century of Progress*, pictured recent accomplishments, including an Amhoist crane lifting the Space Shuttle onto a 747 plane, and discussed Interbond and other new directions for the company’s growth. Near the film’s conclusion, the narrators highlighted the company’s plans to move the headquarters “across the river” to “downtown Saint Paul” as the camera dwelt on a rendering of the completed tower, which was under construction at the time (AD Figure 15).<sup>126</sup>

When Amhoist committed to the downtown tower, the downturn in the market for its cranes and heavy equipment was thought to be a temporary condition, not the tectonic shift that the industry ultimately experienced. Layoffs, plant closures, and divestment of subsidiaries while the tower was under construction were painful but necessary actions to stop the financial bleeding. As Amhoist moved into the new building, it maintained its long-standing embrace of change by taking on new, cutting-edge ventures while continuing to make advances in lines it had traditionally offered. Purchasing a controlling interest in Vac-Tec in 1983, for example, enhanced the Interbond line Amhoist had been developing. Yet the company continued to be pummeled by bad returns, leading to additional cuts. One of the most wrenching was the 1985 decision to close the factory at 63 South Robert Street, the company’s main crane plant since the 1880s, even as Amhoist’s leadership pledged loyalty to Saint Paul. In 1989, though, company relocated its headquarters to Denver, adopted a new name, and succumbed to a corporate takeover, which led to bankruptcy the following year.

This unfortunate end does not negate the company’s significance under Criterion A in the commercial development of Saint Paul, where it started as a small repair shop in 1882 and grew to be an international leader in its field and one of the city’s few Fortune 500 businesses. The South Robert Street plant has been demolished, leaving Amhoist Tower as the best representation of this exceptionally important history under Criteria Consideration G. The tower symbolizes the American Hoist and Derrick Company in its prime, the culmination of a century of success.

<sup>125</sup> *Amhoist Annual Report, 1981, 2-3; Amhoist Annual Report, 1982, 1.*

<sup>126</sup> The films are available at the Minnesota Historical Society.

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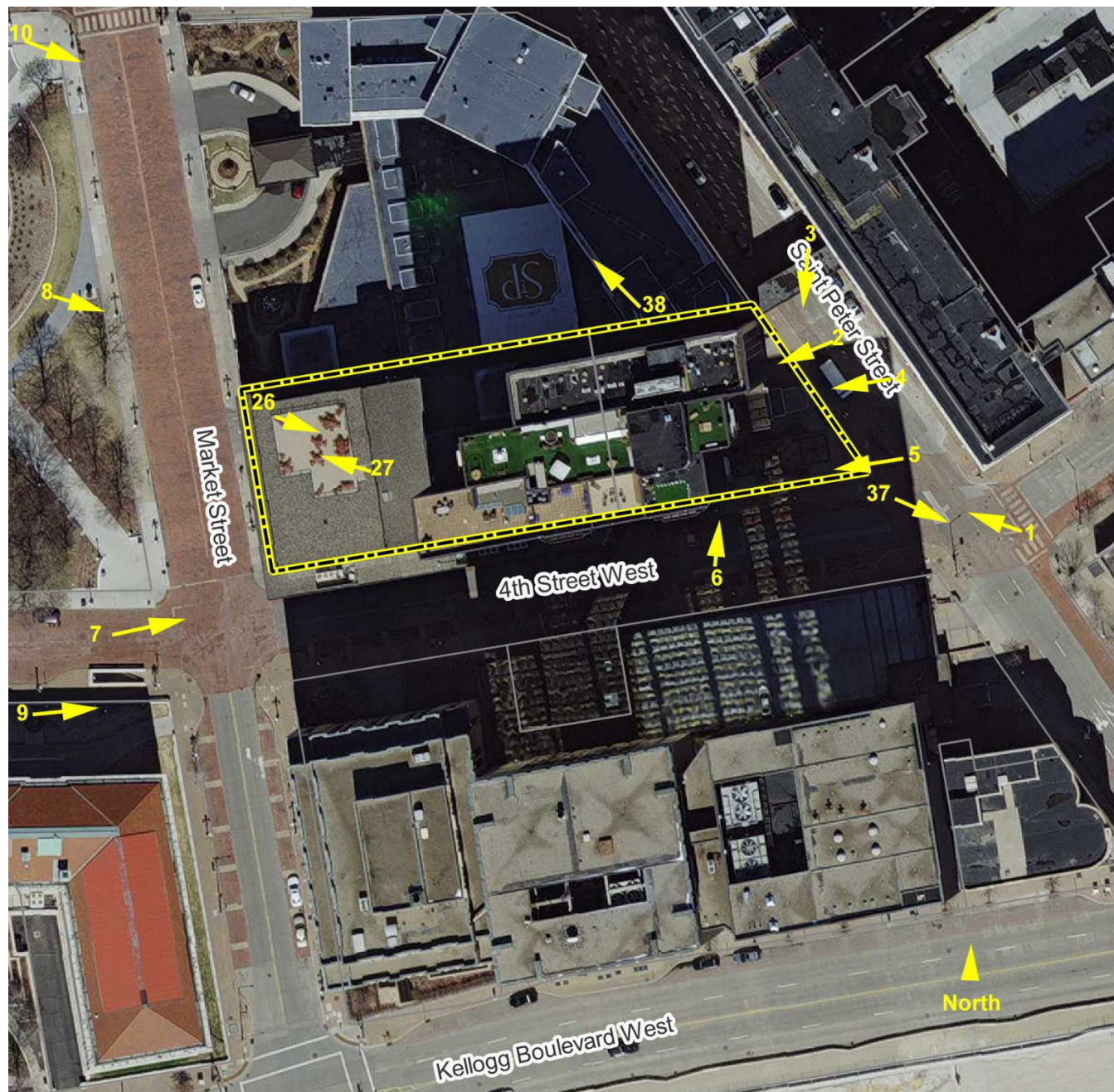
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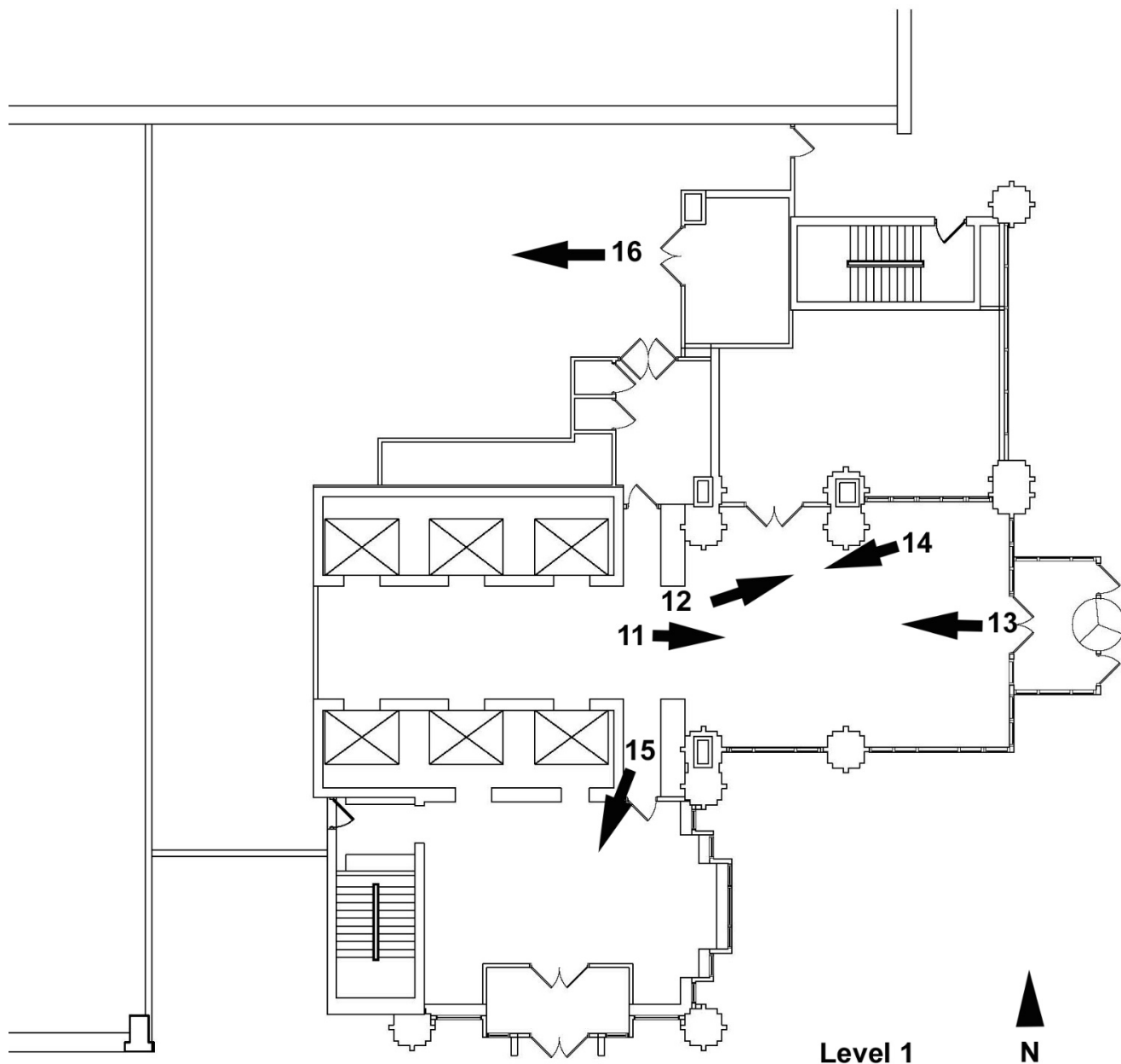
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Note: Interior keys are provided for Levels 1 and 2. Photos on the other floors show the variety of finishes and layouts.





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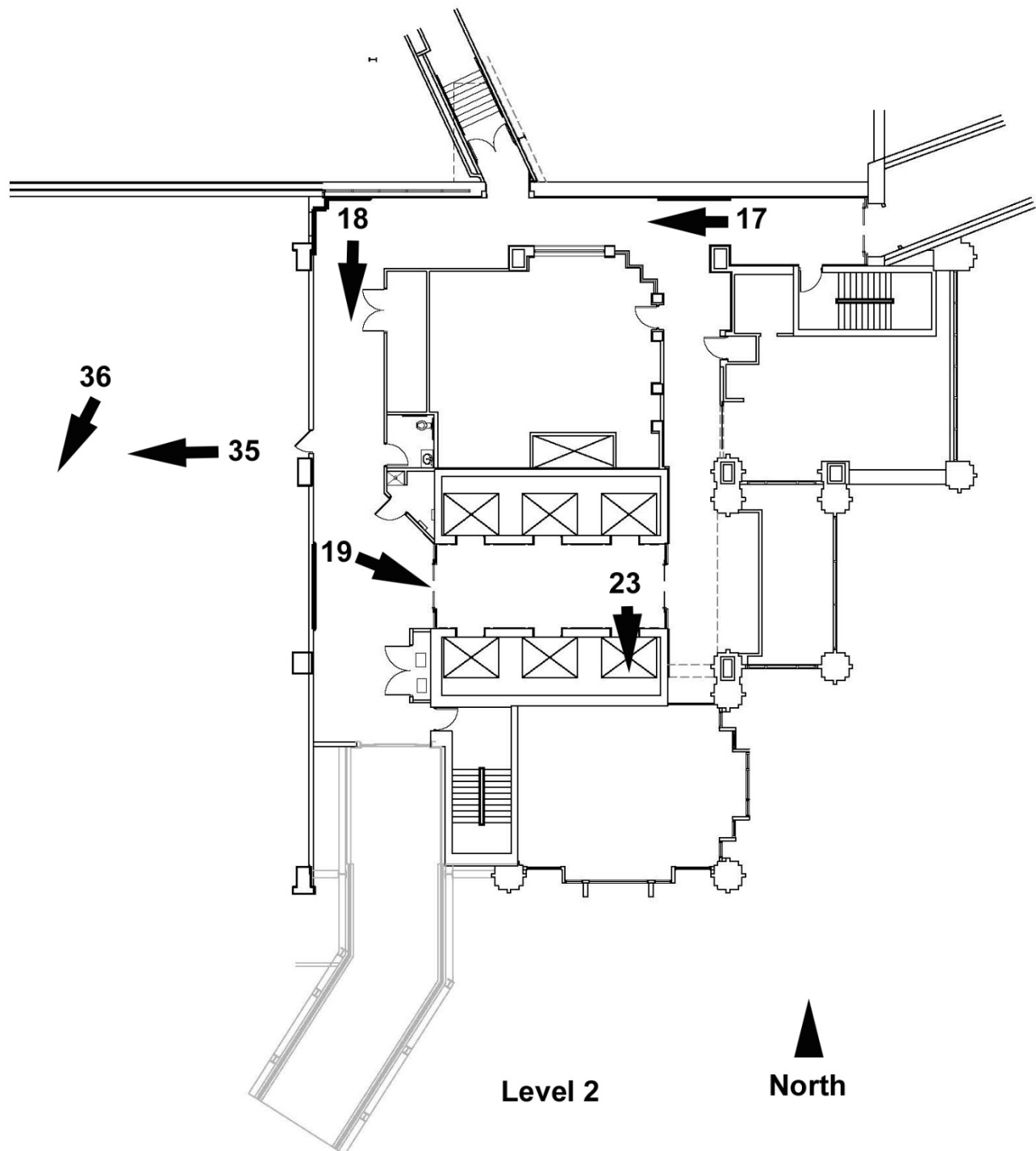
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**Photo 1 of 38**

Name of Property: Amhoist Tower  
City or Vicinity: Saint Paul  
County: Ramsey County  
State: Minnesota  
Name of Photographer: Charlene Roise  
Date of Photograph: November 2021

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0001  
South (left) and east (right) facades, looking northwest.

**Photo 2 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0002  
Detail of east facade, looking west. Canopy for office lobby entrance in lower left corner.

**Photo 3 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0003  
Base of east facade, looking southwest. Skyway over Saint Peter Street is in foreground. Office entry is in center.

**Photo 4 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0004  
Base of south facade at office entrance, looking west. Fountain is to left.

**Photo 5 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0005  
Fountain with sculpture, looking west-northwest.

**Photo 6 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0006  
Park Tower Condominiums entrance on south facade, looking north-northeast. To the left is the skyway over Fourth Street and the loading dock entry beneath it.

**Photo 7 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0007  
West (left) and south (right) facades of parking structure, looking northeast.

**Photo 8 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0008  
North (left) and west (right) facades of parking structure, looking southwest.

**Photo 9 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0009  
West (left) and south (right) facades of tower and parking structure, looking east-northeast.



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**Photo 10 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_00010

North (left) and west (right) facades of tower and parking structure, looking southwest. The Saint Paul Hotel is to the left.

**Photo 11 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0011

Interior of office lobby, looking east towards entrance from Saint Peter Street.

**Photo 12 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0012

Interior of office lobby, looking northeast at conference room.

**Photo 13 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0013

Interior of office lobby, looking west towards elevators.

**Photo 14 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0014

Interior of office lobby, looking southwest at elevators, guard station, and a second-floor balcony.

**Photo 15 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0015

Interior of residential condominium lobby, looking southwest interior foyer, from second-floor balcony.

**Photo 16 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0016

First-floor loading dock, looking west. A door to the Saint Paul Hotel is to the right, and a door to the parking structure is in the background.

**Photo 17 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0017

Second-floor skyway, looking west. A door to the Saint Paul Hotel is to the right.

**Photo 18 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0018

Second-floor skyway, looking south. A door to the parking structure is to the right.

**Photo 19 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0019

Elevator lobby on second floor, looking southeast from the skyway.

**Photo 20 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0020

Elevator lobby on third floor.

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**Photo 21 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0021

Doors to elevator lobby on sixth floor.

**Photo 22 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0022

Elevator lobby on eighteenth floor.

**Photo 23 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0023

Elevator cab looking south. Two of the six elevator cabs have doors on the south end as well as the north end to serve both the residential condominiums and the office lobby.

**Photo 24 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0024

Office drinking fountain and restroom door. Finishes vary from floor to floor.

**Photo 25 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0025

Office restroom door. Finishes vary from floor to floor.

**Photo 26 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0026

Terrace on roof of parking structure, looking southeast. Terrace is accessed from sixth floor of office tower, in background.

**Photo 27 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0027

Terrace on roof of parking structure, looking northwest.

**Photo 28 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0028

Office floor. Layout and finishes vary from floor to floor.

**Photo 29 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0029

Office floor. Layout and finishes vary from floor to floor.

**Photo 30 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0030

Office floor. Layout and finishes vary from floor to floor.

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**Photo 31 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0031

Office floor with balcony in background. The nineteenth and twentieth floors were originally intended to be residential condominiums and have balconies. Because residential sales were slow, these floors were used for offices instead. Layout and finishes vary from floor to floor.

**Photo 32 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0032

Balconies are on floors nineteen through twenty-three.

**Photo 33 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0033

Elevator lobby on residential condominium floor, looking east. Finishes vary from floor to floor.

**Photo 34 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0034

Elevator lobby and corridor on residential condominium floor, looking west. Finishes vary from floor to floor.

**Photo 35 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0035

Interior of parking structure, looking west.

**Photo 36 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0036

Parking structure ramp, looking southwest.

**Photo 37 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0037

View from tower to southeast. Former site of American Hoist and Derrick plant is visible on the opposite side of the river.

**Photo 38 of 38**

MN\_RamseyCounty\_Amhoist Tower\_0038

View from tower to northwest. The Saint Paul Hotel (right) and Rice Park (left) are in the foreground; Landmark Center is in the center. Domes of the Minnesota State Capitol (right) and Saint Paul Cathedral (left) are in the distance.

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Amhoist Tower/Park Tower Condominiums  
345 Saint Peter Street/59 West Fourth Street  
St. Paul, Ramsey County, Minnesota

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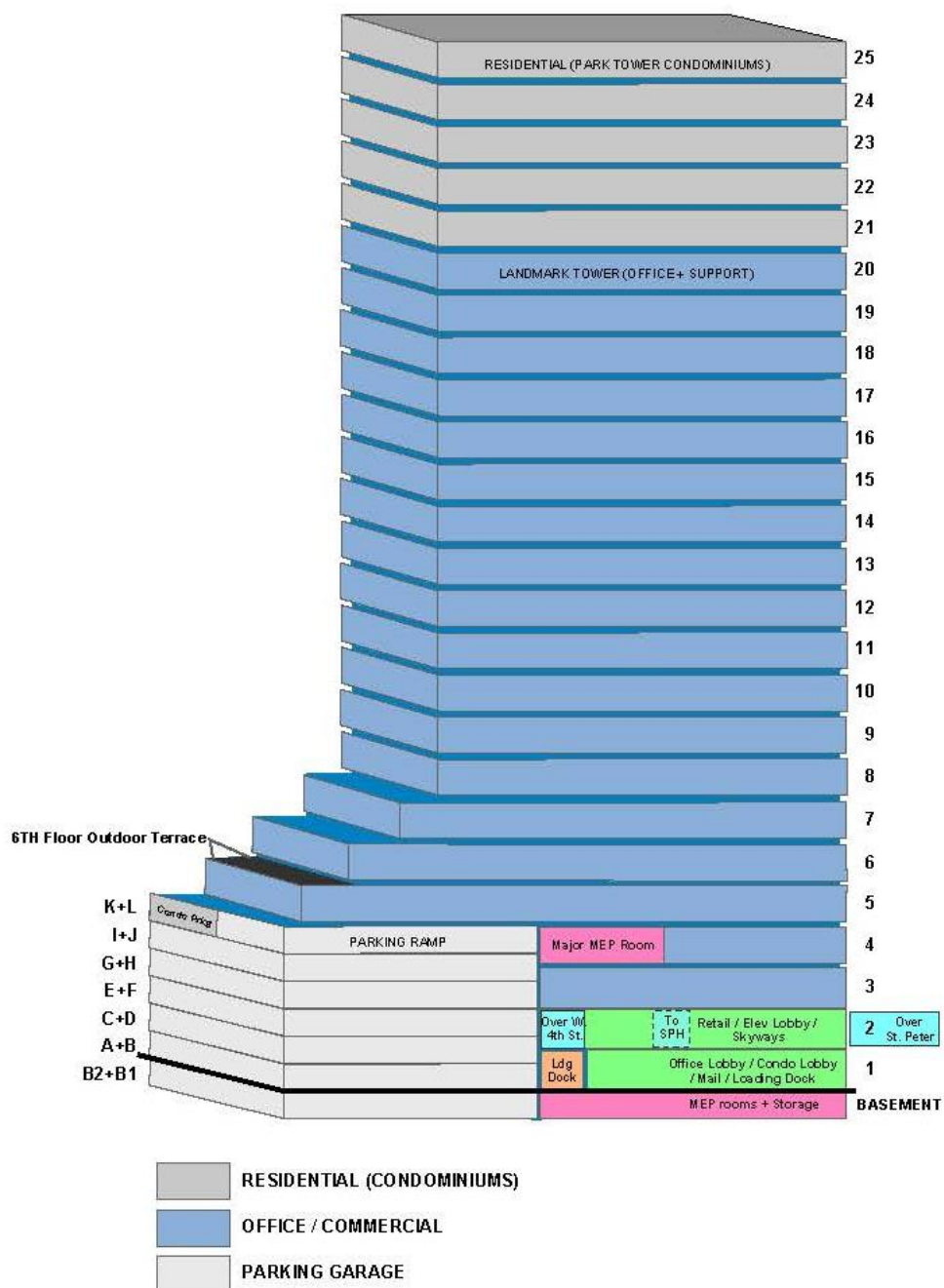


Figure 1: Diagram of uses.

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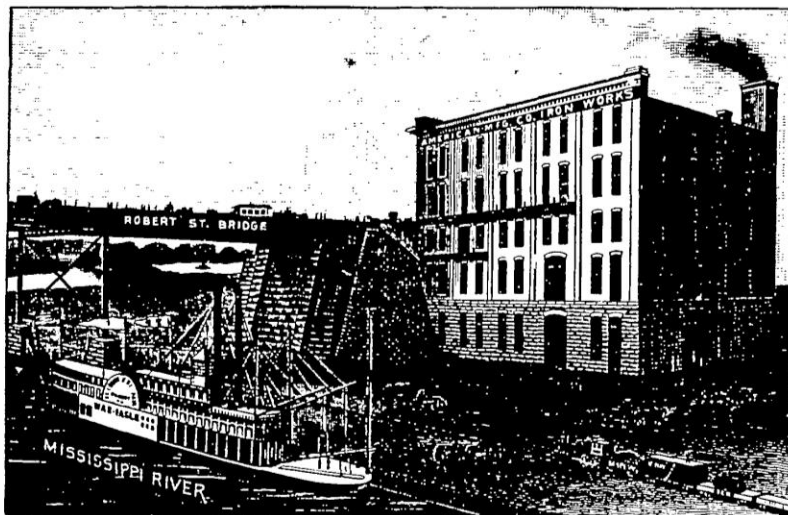
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**American Hoist and Derrick Company**

63 South Robert Street, St. Paul, Minnesota 55107



Figure 2: Circa 1890s woodcut of plant at 63 South Robert Street with boat in Mississippi River in foreground and Robert Street Bridge in background from Amhoist's 1981 annual report. A logo celebrating the company's centennial is at the bottom of the page.



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Figure 3: Photograph of entry to company offices at 63 South Robert Street.

*(Products of American Hoist and DC-Catalog No. GC-2, n.d., in American Hoist and Derrick Company file at Minneapolis Public Library Business Department)*

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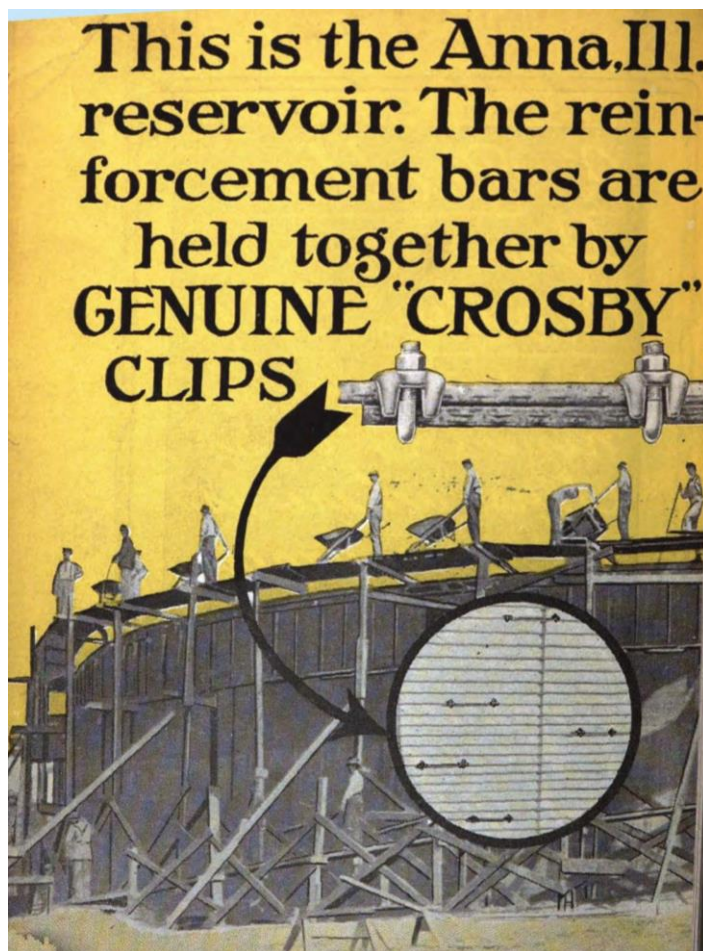
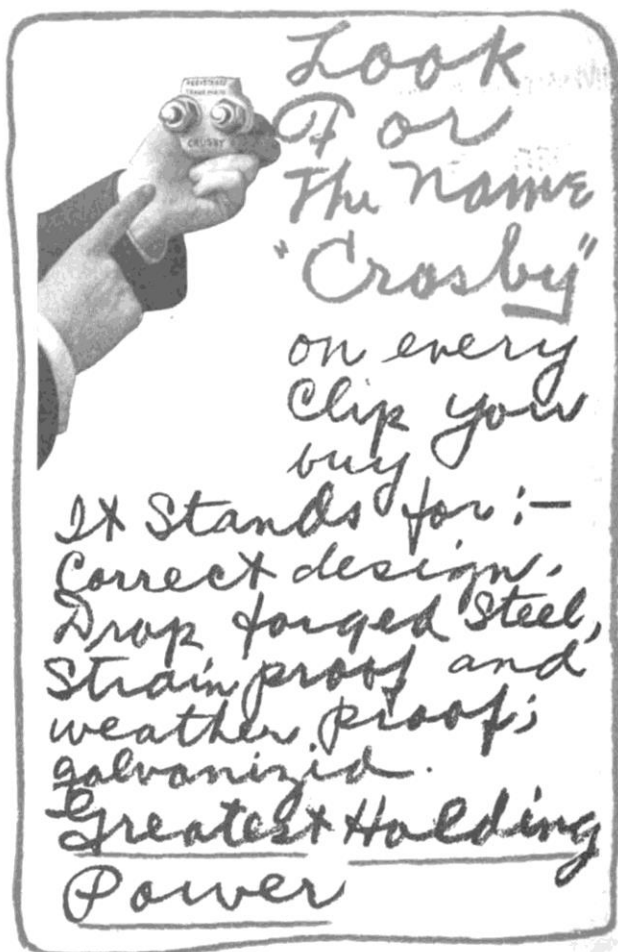
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Figures 4 and 5: Promotion for Crosby clips in American Hoist's *Crosby Clipper* "magazinelet" from December 1913-January 1914 (left) and April-May 1914 (right).



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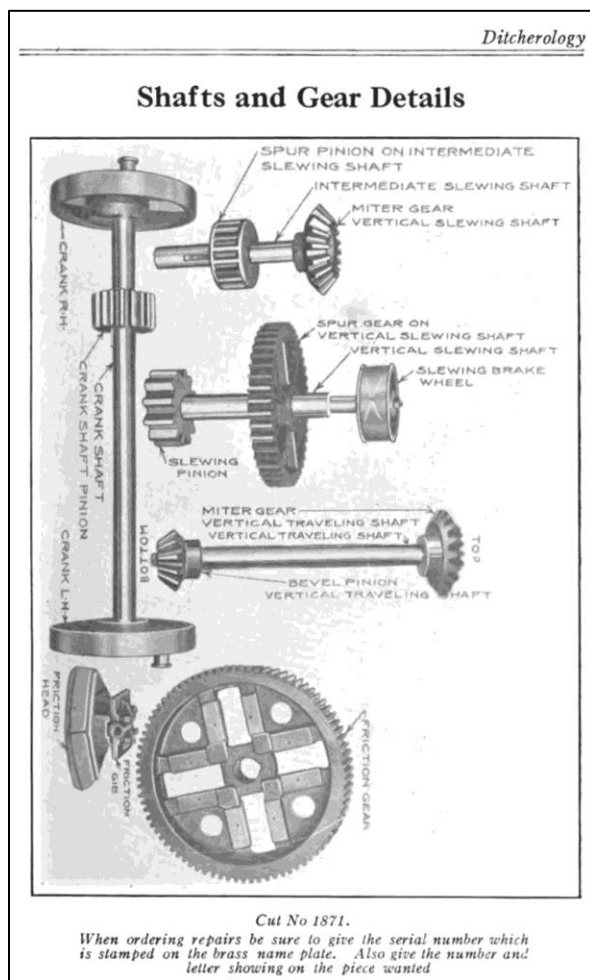
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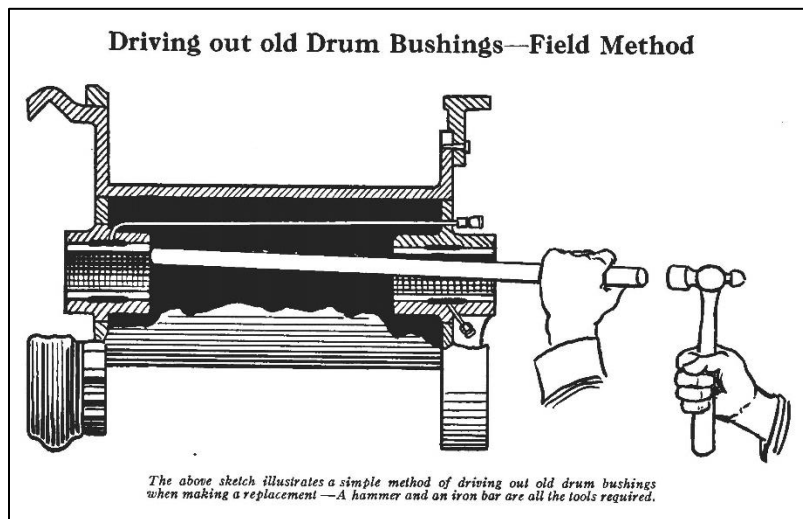
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Figures 6 and 7: Illustrations from American Hoist's *Ditcherology* identifying shaft and gear components (page 17, top) and providing instructions for driving out drum bushings (page 44, bottom).



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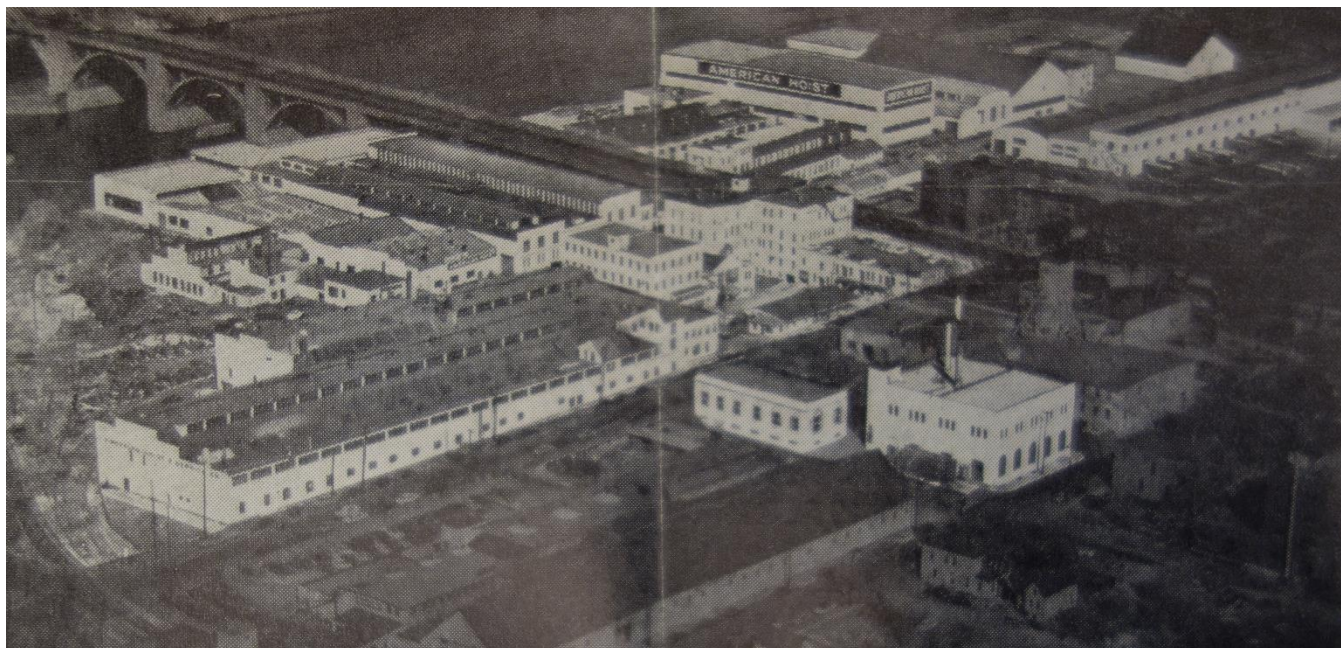


Figure 8: Aerial of Robert Street plant in 1965, looking northeast. The Mississippi River and Robert Street Bridge are visible top left.

("The Big Boom at American Hoist and Derrick," *Commercial West*, September 4, 1965)

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Figures 9 and 10: Aerials of Robert Street plant, looking south, from 1963 (top) and around 1965 (bottom). Downtown Saint Paul is in the foreground in the bottom image and the Saint Paul Hotel is visible on the right side of the photograph. A surface parking lot is visible behind (to the right) of the hotel, edged to the west by Market Street. North of the surface lot is a parking structure at the corner of Market and Fourth Streets, the future location of the Amhoist Tower garage. When the hotel was renovated, the main access was shifted to the former back of the building and the surface parking lot became a landscaped entry drive with a porte cochere.

(Minnesota Historical Society photographs)



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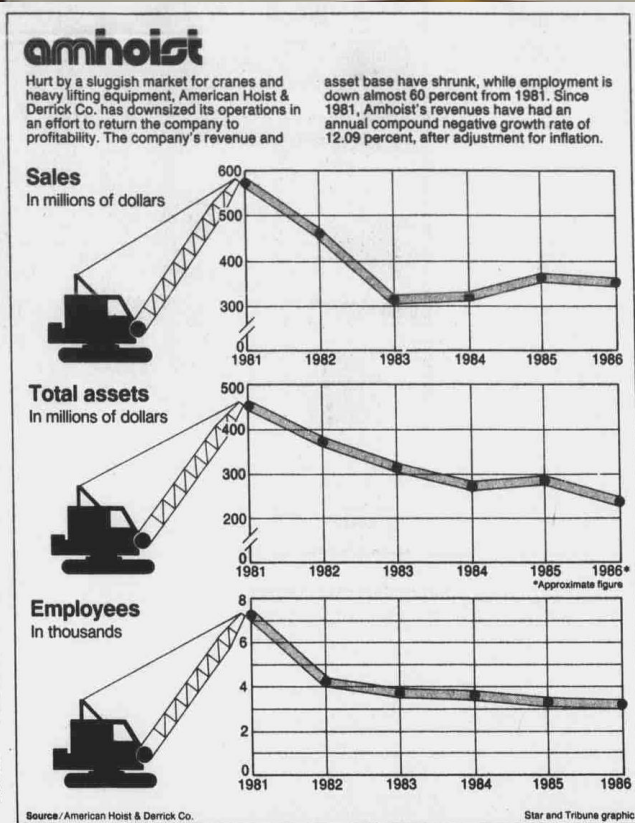
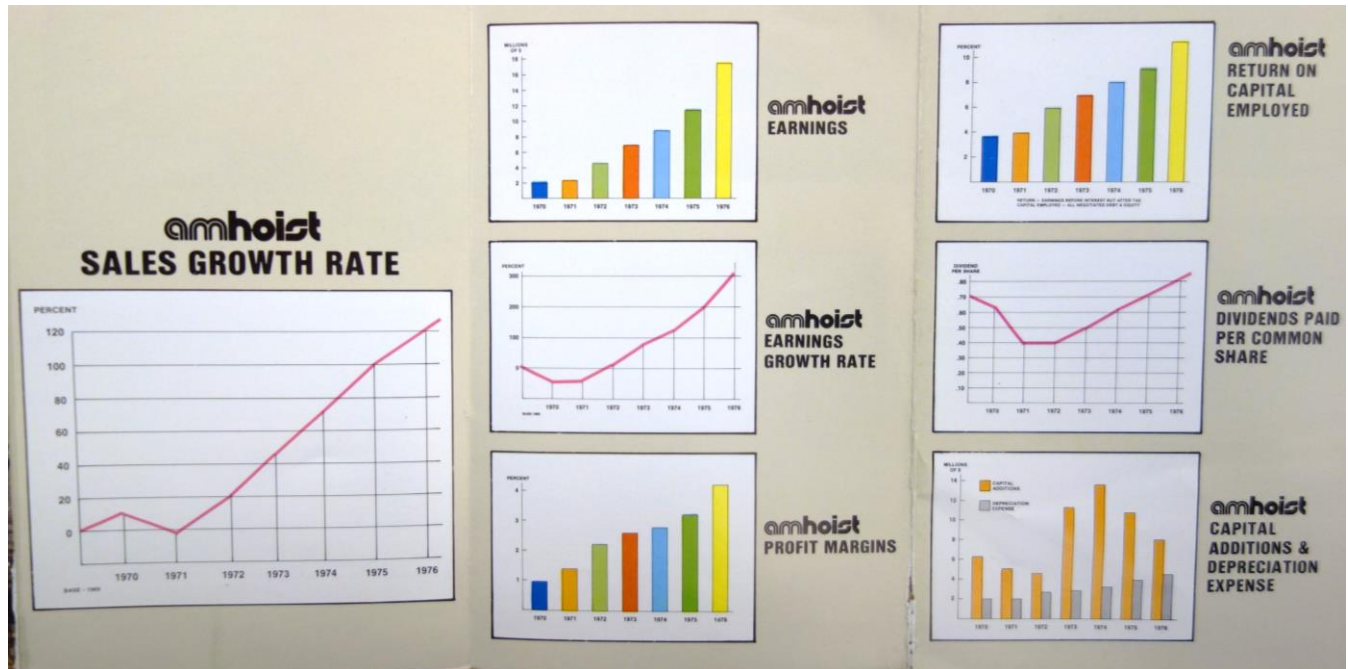
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Figures 11 and 12: A picture tells a thousand words: Amhoist's business expanded rapidly in the 1970s (top), then crashed in the 1980s (left).

(Top: Amhoist brochure, ca. 1977, in American Hoist and Derrick Company files, Minneapolis Public Library Business Department. Left: Graphic in article by Susan Feyder, "Amhoist Seeks Elusive Profitability," *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, February 16, 1987.)

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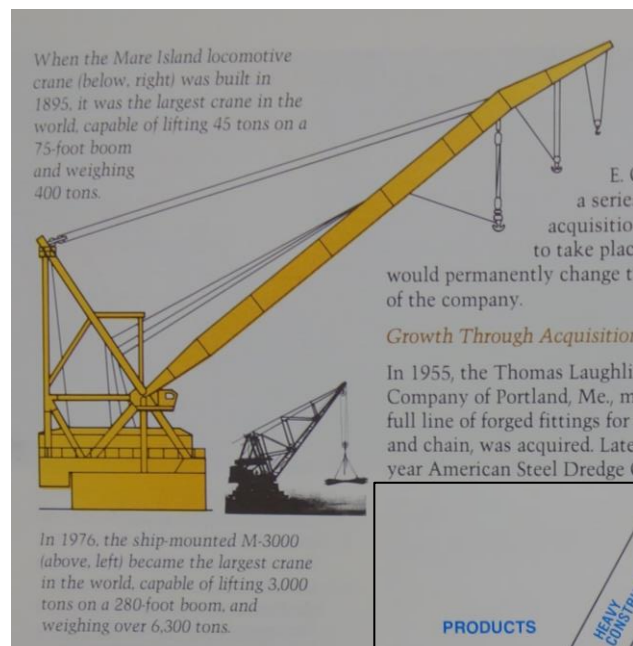


Figure 13: Amhoist's 1981 annual report illustrated how the scale of its cranes had grown, using two cranes that were the world's largest when they were built. In 1895, the company produced a crane for the Navy's Mare Island shipyard that had a 75-foot boom and could lift 45 tons. This was dwarfed in 1976 by the M-3000 with a 280-foot boom capable of lifting 3,000.

Figure 14: Amhoist's campaign to diversify, initiated in the mid-1950s, resulted in the broad range of products delineated in this table in the company's 1979 annual report.

PRODUCTS	HEAVY CONSTRUCTION	MARINE ENERGY	ROAD & BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION	RESOURCE RECOVERY	HEAVY CONSTRUCTION HARDWARE	TIMBER HARVESTING	WASTE MANAGEMENT	MATERIAL HANDLING	FIRE PROTECTION	SEWER & WATER WORKS	CONSUMER MERCHANDISE	EXCAVATING & PIPELINE
CRAWLER CRANES	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
TRUCK CRANES	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
PEDESTAL CRANES	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
DRAGLINES	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
REVOLVER CRANES	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
LOCOMOTIVE CRANES	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
ANCHOR HOISTS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
DERRICKS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
FAIRLEADS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
HOISTS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
HYDRAULIC BACKHOES	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
SCRAP GRABBERS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
LOG LOADERS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
VIBRATORY COMPACTORS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
PNEUMATIC COMPACTORS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
SOIL STABILIZERS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
WHEEL TRENCHERS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
SCRAP BALERS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
PAPER BALERS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
SCRAP SHEARS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
SOLID WASTE BALERS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
FORKLIFTS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
BLOCKS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
SHEAVES	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
FITTINGS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
CHAIN	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
SLING FITTINGS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
LOAD BINDERS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
HYDRAULIC PULLERS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
CARGO HANDLING HDW.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
HYDRAULIC SWAGE EOP	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
LOGGING TOWERS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
YARDERS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
PIPE FITTINGS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
HYDRANTS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
FIRE PUMPS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
VALVES	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
SPRINKLER SYSTEMS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
HAND TOOLS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
LIGHT HARDWARE	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
HOUSEHOLD ITEMS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
RECREATION ITEMS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
PAINT	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•

• HEAVY LIFT & CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT  
 • MATERIAL RECOVERY AND WASTE MANAGEMENT  
 • WHOLESALE HARDWARE  
 • FIRE PROTECTION, WATER DISTRIBUTION EQUIPMENT



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

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

Amhoist Tower

Name of Property

Ramsey County, Minnesota

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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Figure 15: Two screenshots from the film *Amhoist, A Century of Progress* (1982)  
(Minnesota Historical Society)

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

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

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Amhoist Tower

Name of Property

Ramsey County, Minnesota

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

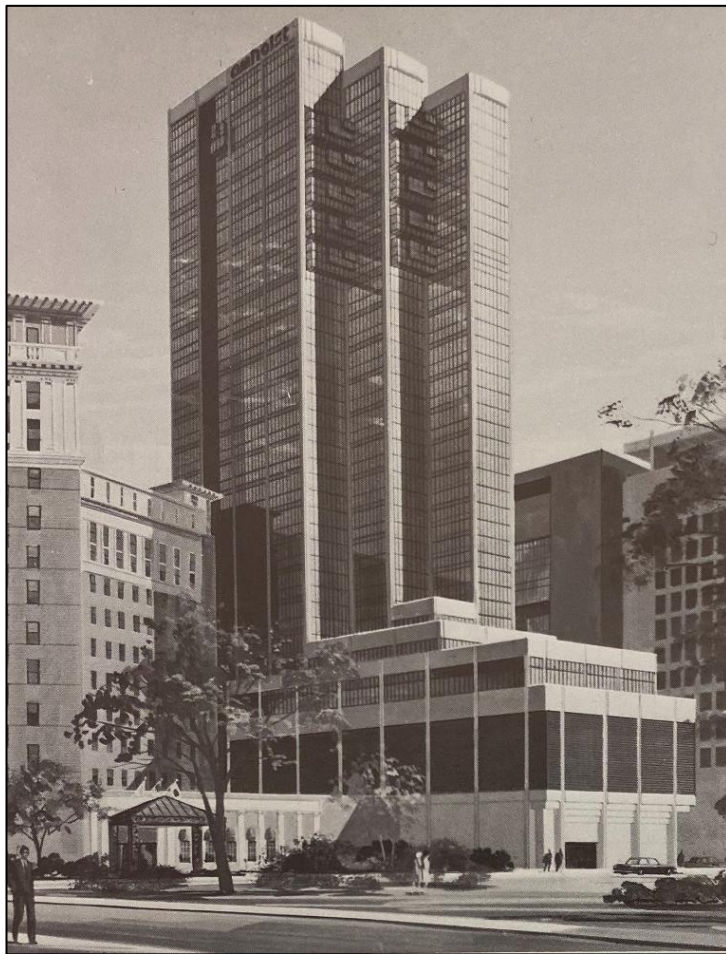


Figure 16: The Saint Paul Port Authority's 1981 annual report featured a color rendering of Amhoist Tower on the inside of the cover, looking at the front of the building from the entry to the Saint Paul City Hall/Ramsey County Courthouse (left). A black-and-white rendering looking across Rice Park was on page 3 of the report (right). (Saint Paul Port Authority, *1981 Annual Report*)



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

Additional Documentation      Page 13

Amhoist Tower

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N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Figure 17: Amhoist featured the new headquarters building on the cover of its 1984 annual report.