



## HISTORIC CONTEXT: RAILROADS AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

1870-1940

GEOGRAPHICAL LIMITS: see map

This region of large scale agriculture is characterized by a production, transportation, and processing of agricultural products. Primary features in the area's development were the network of railroads and the large scale production, first of wheat and later of a variety of farm products from more diversified farming operations. The typical production unit was the family farm (supplemented in the northern areas by the bonanza farms), developed both by European immigrants and by Americans-born settlers. This population had responded to the promotional efforts of individual entrepreneurs, railroad companies, and others who were motivated by ethnic or religious concerns.

Residents of sparsely populated agricultural areas congregated in grange halls, township halls, rural schools and farmers clubs. Such facilities provided an important sense of community, and were the sites of many social functions and political meetings.

Towns were platted on the rail lines to serve as shipping points for agricultural products and as supply and service centers. They were platted by railroad companies, individual proprietors, and combinations of the two; for

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**CONTEXT DESCRIPTION**

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most of the motive appears to have been purely economic (a variant is the several Catholic rail townsites platted by Bishop John Ireland). Industry related to the processing of agricultural products (primarily flour milling but also brewing, linseed oil, packing and canning) developed on a regional basis. Two of the most important industrial centers were the flour milling district at St. Anthony Falls in Minneapolis and the meat packing operations centered in South St. Paul. Railroads, and later, trucks connected the local markets with the grain elevators, grain exchange, processing facilities, warehouses and implement dealers in the Twin Cities, Duluth and the larger regional centers.

EXAMPLES OF PROPERTY TYPES ASSOCIATED WITH RAILROADS AND  
AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT HISTORIC CONTEXT:

Farmsteads

- subsistence level
- diversified family farm
- bonanza farm

Non-farmstead rural structures

- rural churches
- rural schools
- rural town halls
- grange halls and social clubs

Railroad structures

- freight and passenger depots
- railroad shops
- railroad sections houses

Rail townsite buildings

- residences
- commercial buildings
- churches
- schools
- public buildings

Agricultural Product Processing, Supply and Storage Facilities -----

- local and regional
- creameries
- breweries
- potato warehouses
- grain elevators
- terminal elevators
- packing and canning facilities
- linseed oil factories
- implement and supply dealers and factories
- grain exchanges
- flour mills

SELECTED EXAMPLES OF NATIONAL REGISTER SITES RELATED TO  
THE RAILROADS AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

Wulf C. Krabbenhoft Farmstead (Elmwood Township, Clay County)  
Drammen Farmers' Club (Drammen Township, Lincoln County)  
St. Nicholas Orthodox Church (Caribou Township, Kittson County)  
Lamberton Farmers Elevator (Lamberton, Redwood County)  
J.A. Anderson House (Lamberton, Redwood County)  
Main Street Commercial Buildings Historic District (Mapleton,  
Blue Earth County)  
Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Depot (Wheaton, Traverse County)  
Fairmont Creamery Company (Moorhead, Clay County)  
St. Paul Union Stockyards Livestock Exchange Building (South St. Paul,  
Dakota County)  
Pillsbury A Mill (Minneapolis, Hennepin County)  
St. Anthony Falls Historic District (Minneapolis, Hennepin County)  
Section house (Dundee, Nobles County)  
Chicago/Northwestern Railway Depot (Lucan, Redwood County)  
Close Brothers Land Company Tenant House (Beaver Creek Township, Rock County)  
Farmers Seed and Nursery Company (Faribault, Rice County)  
Gilfillan (Paxton Township, Redwood County)  
Grain Exchange (Minneapolis, Hennepin County)  
Peavey-Haglin Elevator (St. Louis Park, Hennepin County)  
Eyota Coop Creamery (Eyota, Olmsted County)  
Murray County Courthouse (Slayton, Murray County)  
Solomon Gilman Comstock House (Moorhead, Clay County)  
Commercial Hotel (Wabasso, Redwood County)

Railroads and Agricultural Development 1870-1940

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1870-1940

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Discusses rural life and changes in the material dimensions of that life in the 20th century.



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An analysis of the business side of agriculture as it developed during the period of agricultural modernization. Especially important for placing the work of farming in a context of industry that includes distribution and processing of agricultural products. Good basic understanding of an easily-overlooked part of this context.

GOALS AND PRIORITIES WORKSHEET

Date: 6/13/90

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

Railroads and Agricultural Development

1870s - 1940

PROPERTY TYPE (if applicable):

Various

Ranking key:

A = High priority

0 - 2 years

B = Medium priority

3 - 5 years

C = Low priority

IDENTIFICATION

EVALUATION

REGISTRATION:

Time-table for  
Completion

Priority  
Ranking

* Develop MPDF for Grain Elevators and nominate one example	done	
* Prepare nomination for Schmidt Brewery		A
* Research Federal land management programs of Depression era such as those of the Soil Conservation Service of 1935-1940 (Intern?)		A
* Conduct survey of farmstead types (combine with Goodhue County farmstead survey of earlier period)	FY91 cooperative agreement	A
* Conduct a thematic study on creameries		B
* Survey and develop evaluation criteria for rural churches		B
* Develop an annotated bibliography for context (intern project)	in-house	A
* Conduct a survey to identify catalog and standardized buildings		B
* Conduct a survey of country grain elevators based on Frame's recent MPDF		A
* Evaluate Lake Superior shipping industry within/ this context in completion of LCMR historic shipwrecks project	FY90-93	A

TREATMENT:

* HABS/HAER identified typical, uniques, and threatened properties	ongoing	
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CONTEXT GOALS & PRIORITIES

MN SHPO  
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Railroad and Agricultural Development Goals cont.

Treatment:

- |  |          |   |
|--|----------|---|
| * Promote program/reuse study for acquisition and interpretation of an intact diversified farm   |          | B |
| * Establish liason with Agricultural Extension Program to promote the National Register  |          | A |
| * Develop a public education program regarding identification and preservation approaches for properties related to agricultural conservation/management efforts |          | B |
| * Provide assistance to Crookston regarding establishment of local commission  | in-house | A |
| * Develop treatment strategy for small-town banks -- work with John Chamberlain  | in-house | C |
| * Prepare a general high-quality photo book on Minnesota's railroad/agricultural properties  |          | C |