The Gem City of the Mississippi Valley

South End Historic Properties Survey Report, 2008-2009

Red Wing Heritage Preservation Commission
Abstract

Daniel J. Hoisington conducted an intensive level historic sites survey of Red Wing in 2008-09. The survey was completed for the Red Wing Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) with the goal to document and assess pre-1960 historic and architectural resources. The survey area encompassed approximately 354 properties over 2,000 acres. The consultant completed inventory forms for the properties, noting their integrity and significance based on National Register of Historic Places standards. The consultant recommends National Register designation for several architecturally outstanding and significant homes, as well as local historic designation for more than two dozen properties. Survey documentation consists of individual inventory files and this final project report.
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Forty miles below St. Paul lies the city of Red Wing, bustling with life and activity on every hand; filled with cosy homes, and happy, contented, and intelligent people.

— Red Wing City Directory, 1894
I. Introduction

In the beginning, the river was the lifeblood of Red Wing, Minnesota, with its deep channels carrying ships laden with goods and passengers from points south up to the commercial center of Saint Paul. In return, the Mississippi transported timber and agricultural goods down to southern Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri. The broad vistas on the river attracted travelers who reveled in the scenery that was sometimes called “the American Rhine.” The town became a “thriving community” that reflected a wider world of architecture and style than that found only a few miles inland.

The city has a long tradition of interest in its past and its built environment. In 1977, a local ordinance established a Heritage Preservation Commission with the expressed purpose of identifying historic, architectural, and archaeological resources. There are three National Register districts within the community and a locally-designated downtown historic district.

To evaluate the city’s historic buildings in a thoughtful and orderly manner, in 2008, the Red Wing Heritage Preservation Commission applied for federal funds through the Certified Local Government Program operated by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) of the Minnesota Historical Society. In October 2008, Hoisington Preservation Consultants entered into a contract with the City of Red Wing to conduct an historical resources survey of a major residential area of the city. There are, to date, no properties in the survey area that have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places or that have been locally designed at historic properties.

The survey area illustrates the city’s diverse pattern of settlement, from its earliest years in the mid-nineteenth century through more recent developments. Looking at the map on the opposite page, drawn in 1880, you can see that houses remained close to the central commercial center, with a quick transition to the bluffs. By 1900, however, the property along East Avenue and Bush Street became increasingly fashionable. Suggesting the city’s interest in the neighborhood and the City Beautiful Movement of the early twentieth century, the entrance to Oakwood Cemetery was dramatically improved in 1907 with construction of the Betcher Memorial Chapel and Blodgett Memorial Arched Gateway.

Red Wing is not, and never has been, locked in the amber of the past, but has evolved into the dynamic community that it is today. Hopefully, this survey will help its citizens, through the work of the Heritage Preservation Commission, as they make the choices necessary to save the pieces of its heritage that give the town its character.
Survey Area
II. The Survey

I. PROJECT OBJECTIVES.

The field survey provides site specific information about the architectural and historical significance of 357 buildings and structures in the city. The survey data, primarily recorded on site forms, will assist the HPC in evaluating buildings eligible for the National Register of Historic Places or local historic site designation, and in identifying Red Wing's future preservation planning needs.

It is the goal of the HPC that the survey achieves the following:

- Provide the City with a comprehensive database containing historical information concerning the buildings in and around the designated residential area.
- Assure that all future rehabilitation is historically accurate and does not diminish the historical integrity of an individual structure.
- Provide a historical reference publication to educate the public on the city's architectural heritage.
- Encourage building owners to consider maintaining or returning their structures to the original condition and to assist them in the process of rehabilitation.
- To augment the expertise of the HPC members.

To provide a comprehensive database, the consultant examined every structure within the predetermined survey boundaries, resurveying several previously inventoried sites. He entered information on survey forms, then incorporated the completed forms into organized site files. These site files provide the HPC with a system that accommodates the collection of additional research information such as reproduced historic photographs and newspaper clippings. In addition, the consultant will submit electronic files.

II. THE FIELD SURVEY.

Survey Methods.

This study was conducted based on the planning process set forth in the rules and regulations outlined in the *Guidelines for SHPO Architecture/History Projects* (Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office, 1993) and *Guidelines for Local Surveys* (National Register Bulletin 24). The project formally began with an October 2008 meeting between the consultant and the Red Wing Heritage Preservation Commission. The survey area, as defined by the Request for Proposals,
encompassed portions of forty-three city blocks containing approximately 2,000 acres with 358 structures.

In September and October 2008, the consultant conducted preliminary historic research to develop a sense of the physical and historic development of the area. He reviewed the files of the State Historic Preservation Office and the Red Wing HPC. The SHPO files include information on properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

This survey took advantage of Goodhue County Assessor’s online database of properties. With it, the consultant was able to find property identification numbers, legal property descriptions, and current ownership of the surveyed properties.

To structure the field survey, he created a set of maps using 1943 Red Wing Sanborn Insurance Maps—the last published edition—organized by block. This provided a survey baseline, combined with the 1940 Goodhue County Real Property tax list.

The consultant conducted this survey in October and November 2008, revisiting several significant sites in April 2009. He systematically walked every street and examined every structure within the survey boundaries. Using the field checklist, he recorded an architectural description and assessed the integrity of all pre-1940 structures. This reflects the eligibility standards of the National Register of Historic Places, which recommend that structures be at least fifty years old before designation. In Red Wing, most post-WWII homes tend to be more generically designed homes and are unlikely candidates for historic designation at present. These homes, although viewed and noted, were given a low priority.

Once the initial field survey was completed, the consultant assessed the information and completed inventory forms based on the criteria of historic significance and architectural integrity. This selection process, while inherently subjective, was guided by those two standards. However, exclusion from the inventory does not suggest that a property has no potential historical interest.

The consultant photographed properties according to Minnesota SHPO standards using a digital camera. Those images were submitted with this report.

Historic Research.

Given time constraints, the survey’s fundamental objective was not to conduct a detailed historic record of all inventoried properties. Rather, the consultant researched the properties as necessary to understand the overall building stock of the survey area and provide a preliminary evaluation of significance based on the city’s historic contexts. As part of its continuing work, the Red Wing HPC should continue to add additional information to site files.

There was one additional twist to the historic research. The city completed a major renumbering of its streets in the 1920s. This meant that the researcher continually needs to double-check which system is currently being used. Indeed, there were minor shifts in the decades preceding the major change.

1. Goodhue County Assessor’s Office Records. The Minnesota Historical Society holds all nineteenth century records plus books from the sample years of 1910-11, 1920-21, 1930-31, 1940-41, and 1950-51. The project scope did not include deed research.

2. Fire Insurance Maps. These detailed city maps were published between 1885 and 1938. Using the maps, a researcher can trace changes in the exterior “footprint” of a building and estimate the date of construction within a decade. The Sanborn Insurance Company published maps for Red Wing in 1884, 1891, 1902, 1910, 1917, 1927, and 1943.
The survey begins by walking around the district, taking notes and photographing properties. Some prove distinctive, like the stone home at 528 10th Street. But who lived here and when was it built?

Right: The first step is to find a property description through the online Goodhue County website.

Below: With that information, we can go to the Minnesota Historical Society to search the annual tax assessor’s records. In 1910, we find that Nels Nordholm was the owner of the property.
In addition, there are two panoramic maps, published in 1868 and 1880, that show the area.


5. Census Records. The consultant reviewed census records, including the federal census and the 1895 and 1905 Minnesota State Census.

6. City Directories. The consultant used city directories for 1894, 1907, 1912, 1924, 1932, and 1948 to determine the name of occupant and occupation. While these are great resources, only the 1932 and 1948 directories had a reverse compendium, that is, where you could look up my street address rather than by name.

The 1905 Minnesota Census provides a house-by-house list of occupants, and city directories offered further information on past residents. The consultant reviewed related scholarly studies to gain a sense of the architectural trends shaping the city. These include David Gebhard's Guide to the Architecture of Minnesota and Roger Kennedy's Minnesota Houses: An Architectural and Historical View.

Survey Reports.
The final survey report takes several forms.

Project Report. The consultant prepared a survey report according to the standards found in SHPO Architecture/History Projects (January 1993) and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines. This report summarizes the survey's objectives and methodology, as well as its findings in terms of the number and type of properties inventoried. Based on the results of the survey, this report makes recommendations concerning the selection of sites for possible national or local historic nominations.

Inventory Forms. The consultant submitted two sets of the 357 inventory forms with attached contact sheets: one set for the State Historic Preservation Office with the other submitted to the Red Wing Heritage Preservation Commission. As required by SHPO, the project's inventory form contain at least one digital image of the property’s main facade, as well as pertinent data concerning the property’s legal description, architecture, history, and historical context. The surveyor provide basic data concerning construction date, original ownership, and original use.
What do we know about Nels Nordholm? One place to look is in census records. The 1905 Minnesota census shows Nordholm worked as a stone mason.

To find out more, we turned to another online source: the death certificate index at the Minnesota Historical Society's website. It shows that he died on October 30, 1926 (below, left).

Armed with that information, we looked at the Red Wing Republican newspaper around that date and found a lengthy obituary (right).
Database. The consultant provided a computer database of all surveyed properties.

Files. The consultant organized research information and inventory forms into file folders organized by street address. The files create an organized system for continuing research by the HPC. In addition, the consultant provided 35mm color slides of all inventoried properties.

III. A GUIDE TO THE SURVEY FORM.
The consultant submitted survey forms for 357 properties, using the format developed for the 2005 survey. The forms include the following information:

Property Identification.

Site Number. The SHPO assigns site numbers to inventoried properties according to a standard statewide inventory site number system. The site number consists of a two-letter code for the county (GD), a three-letter code for the city (RWC), and a property number. This site number identifies the property on all survey maps.

Property Address. Current street address of the property.

PIN. The county tax assessor’s office assigned a Property Identification Number to properties for tax purposes. In addition, the Block and Lot numbers are provided.

Historic Name. This is usually the first known name associated with the property based on tax assessor’s records. If the information was questionable or unknown, this line was left blank. At times, especially as property was developed for resale or rent, the first owner never lived at that house. For that reason, some frequently recurring names were not entered into the form.

Common Name. Current or commonly used name of the property. These names were used for public and commercial buildings and not for single dwellings.

USGS Quadrangle. The United States Geographic Survey topographical map quadrant gives the general location of the property. SHPO requires this information.

UTM. The UTM (Universal Transverse Mercator) gives the coordinates of the property using a global grid system. The first number listed is the Zone, which identifies the Red Wing location within one of sixty north-south zones. The second number is the Easting, which identifies the distance in meters between the central meridian of the Zone and the property. The third number is the Northing, which identifies the distance in meters between the equator and the property. SHPO uses UTM coordinates to enter the location of the property into the Minnesota GIS/LIS (Geographic Information System/Land Information System) cultural resource database.

Property Description.

Date Built. The Goodhue County Assessor’s Office maintains property cards with an
estimated construction date. These dates, when checked against other evidence, ranged in accuracy. Some dates proved correct, some were close—often rounding off to the nearest zero-digit year, and some were quite wrong. The survey forms give this date with that corollary. Other dates were approximated by analysis of Sanborn Maps and county tax records. Given the scope of the project, year-by-year review of county tax assessor’s rolls was not feasible. However, taxes were reviewed for all properties for the years 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, and 1940.

*Historic Use.* The historic use was determined through an analysis of Sanborn Maps. Within the survey area, all properties were single dwellings with the exception of a few churches. Terminology for historic and present use conforms to categories listed in *National Register Bulletin 16: How to Complete the National Registration Form.*

*Present Use.* The consultant recorded present use based on his visual survey.

*Architect.* Without complete building permits, it is difficult to determine the architect in most cases. They rarely advertised, undoubtedly relying on word of mouth recommendations for new clients. The exceptions are public buildings.

*Contractor.* Building contractor or person who built the feature. This was found in rare instances. A day-by-day review of local newspapers might provide further clues.


*Stories.* Number of stories.

*Foundation.* Type of foundation material. This is often based on tax assessors’ records when foundations are obscured.

*Frame.* Skeletal system of the feature. This was determined by Sanborn Maps and assessor’s records.

*Exterior.* The primary material sheathing the exterior.

*Roof Form.* The shape of the roof.

*Roof Materials.* The materials sheathing the roof.

*Significant Details.* Brief summary of exterior details.
Assessing Integrity

Under National Register standards, a building must retain the general look of its original intent. Age alone is not sufficient. Here is an excellent comparison: two houses, both mid-nineteenth century Greek Revival homes. The top picture is of the Charles Booth House at 519 W. 7th Street. It shows excellent integrity and is recommended for the National Register. The lower picture is of the William Howe house. Note that the two properties have the same general lines, and, indeed, the Howe house has kept its fine paired brackets. But the asphalt shingle siding detracts from the original look. It is not recommended for the National Register.
Integrity. The consultant evaluated the property’s integrity based on the degree of alteration, indicating:

- **Unaltered.** No alteration.
- **Slightly Altered.** Basic shape and window arrangement intact, roofline intact, and only mild alterations to porch, simple covering of original siding with removable material, or aluminum combination windows installed.
- **Moderately Altered.** Basic shape and window arrangement intact but two of the following have occurred: new siding, porch altered or enclosed, window openings or type changed, dormer added or roofline changed, unobtrusive rear or side addition, or storefront altered.
- **Significantly Altered.** Basic shape and window arrangement usually changed and two or more of the following have occurred: new siding, porch removed or enclosed, major addition, window type changed, original design elements removed or covered, or roofline altered.

Historical Background.

*Original Owners’ Names.* Names of the original owners. This could not be determined for all properties. It is further obscured when one person owns several properties, especially after 1900, when contractors began to build homes for sale.

*Current Owner.* The consultant obtained the name of the current property owner from the Goodhue County Assessor’s Office. The list, obtained from the online database in January 2009, has undoubtedly changed and will continue to change. If specific questions develop, the HPC should obtain the mailing address and telephone of the current owner from the Assessor’s records.

*Historic Background.* This is a general summary of the history of a property. Typically, it included a review of tax records, U.S. census records, and the biographical sections of the two major histories of Red Wing. The intent is not to write a history of each property, but to determine whether a resident played a significant role in the community that might be sufficient for historic designation.

*Sources.* This section lists the sources including Sanborn Insurance Maps, City Directories, published sources, manuscripts, and historical photographs.

Evaluation.

*Statement of Significance.* This is a brief comment on the significance of recommended property within the framework of the city’s historic contexts. If left blank, the property is not recommended.

*Historic Context.* This entry lists the historic contexts that the property represents. Given the scope of work, almost all represent the residential context.
National Register Eligible. Required by the SHPO and used by that office to help assess the eligibility of the property as an individual National Register site, or as a contributing property to a potential historic district or thematic multiple property listing. The surveyor makes the assessment, considered only a preliminary opinion of National Register eligibility. If the property is located in a potential National Register or local historic district, the form lists the name of the district.

To be eligible, the property must be a site, building, structure, or object that is at least 50 years old (unless it has achieved exceptional significance) and meets one of the following criteria: (a) it is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; (b) it may be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; (c) it is architecturally significant, that is, 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 may lack individual distinction. It must also possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

HPC Eligible. The Red Wing Heritage Preservation Commission is enabled by city ordinance to recommend to the City Council that properties be designated as Heritage Preservation Landmarks or Districts. The Commission’s enabling ordinance established general eligibility criteria for local designation, stating that “Heritage Preservation Designation” means an official action by the Council which proclaims a building, land area or district located within the limits of Red Wing to be worth saving. The property should hold “a special historical, architectural, archaeological or aesthetic interest or value.”

Local Significance Evaluation. Significant properties must possess the following:

- Age. Must be at least fifty years old.
- Architectural Merit. Must possess architectural distinction in one of the following when compared with other buildings of its type: architectural style or type valuable for a study of a period, style, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials; exceptional craftsmanship; work of a master builder or architect.
- Integrity. High Style examples must possess a relatively high degree of integrity in its design, materials, workmanship, setting, location, feeling, and association. Allowed alterations for significant high style buildings include replacement windows in original openings with appropriate configurations; replacement porches; side additions that are set back from the front façade; and replacement siding that is either historically appropriate or removable. Vernacular and popular types must have a very high degree of integrity in its design, materials, workmanship, setting, location, feeling, and association, for example, all architectural detailing in place; no historic materials or details covered up; no unsympathetic and/or overpowering additions.

Potentially significant properties must possess the following:
• Age. Must be at least fifty years old.
• Architectural Merit. Must possess architectural distinction in one of the following when compared with other buildings of its type: architectural style or type valuable for a study of a period, style, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials; exceptional craftsmanship; work of a master builder or architect.
• Integrity. High Style examples must display a moderate degree of integrity. Allowed alterations are similar to those for a significant rating, but also include some replacement windows in altered openings and side additions that are flush with the front façade but are clearly discernible from the original structure. Vernacular or popular types must have a high degree of integrity in its design, materials, workmanship, setting, location, feeling, and association, for example, some architectural detailing in place; minor or reversible alterations

Survey Information.

Name of Surveyor and Date of Survey. Daniel Hoisington completed the initial field survey work during October and November 2008.