

**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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Omaha Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant
Other names/site number Tip Top Products Co., Inc.; DO09:0129-003

2. Location

Street & number 1514-1524 Cuming Street Not for publication
City or town Omaha Vicinity
State Nebraska Code NE County Douglas Code 055 Zip code 68102

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

/s/ Lawrence Sommer 11/15/04
Signature of certifying official Date
Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register. _____
 - see continuation sheet. _____
 - determined eligible for the National Register. _____
 - see continuation sheet. _____
 - determined not eligible for the National Register. _____
 - removed from the National Register. _____
 - other, (explain): _____
- _____
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

Omaha Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant

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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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		Buildings
		Sites
		Structures
		Objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Industry/Processing/Extraction: Manufacturing Facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Vacant: Work in Progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation Concrete Pads on Wood Piles

Walls Brick Veneer on Concrete Structure

Roof Gravel & Asphalt over Concrete Structure

Other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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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.)

Property is:

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

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Industry

Work of a Master

Period of Significance

1916-1955

Significant Dates

1916

1932

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Albert Kahn

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Primary location for additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: Love Library, UNL;
Architecture Library, UNL

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10. Geographical Data**Acreage of property** 2

UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet).

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	15	254030	4572484	3.			
2.				4.			
				[]	See continuation sheet		

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared Byname/title Jennifer Honebrink, AIAorganization Alley Poyner Architecture, PCdate June 2004street & number 1213 Jones Streettelephone 402.341.1544city or town Omahastate NEzip code 68102**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name/title Model T Ford Building LLCstreet & number 514 Walker Streettelephone 712.647.2041city or town Woodbinestate IAzip code 51579**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determined 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, (15 USC 470 et seq.).**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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The Omaha Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant is located North of Interstate 480, opposite downtown Omaha on the edge of a mixed residential and industrial neighborhood. At the time of construction in 1916, the site was on the edge of town along a major railroad line. Industrial buildings lined the railroad and residences filled in the gaps over the years, creating a neighborhood. The Assembly Plant property included a full city block with its own spur of the railroad line for deliveries. A separate building was constructed for shipping. Loading docks lined both the Assembly Plant building and the shipping building. Over the years a variety of small out buildings were constructed to store volatile materials and hoses. In the last 10 years, the site has been cleared of the outbuildings, the railroad spur has been removed, and the shipping building torn down. The area where the railroad ran is now a grassy field.

Built in 1916, the Assembly Plant itself occupies approximately one-half of a city block. Copies of the original plans affirm that Albert Kahn designed the building as a Ford Model T Assembly Plant. Both the interior and exterior exhibit many innovative and key features of the early industrial style Kahn developed while working for Ford. At the same time, the building exhibits several classical elements of the formal public architecture Kahn was beginning to break away from. The five story building maintains a typical classical division between base, body and cornice, while also emphasizing the structure beneath the façade. Concrete pilasters on the interior are expressed with brick clad pilasters on the exterior in a pattern that emphasizes the vertical. Floor structure on the interior is expressed with decorative horizontal bands on the exterior. These bands change decorative motifs to produce the classical base, body and cornice layout of the exterior. Lower bands are simple, solid geometric details which stretch across the vertical pilasters, dividing the base from the body of the building. Middle bands are brick and terra cotta in simple diamond patterns, spanning between the pilasters. The upper band is the most elaborate; again, spanning across the pilasters and using a mix of brick and terra cotta in a diamond-within-a-square pattern. Large steel windows divided into three vertical sections dominate each of the facades. The sashes fill every opening from pilaster to pilaster and from a low sill to a tall head. The upper and lower third of each sash division operates in a hopper fashion. The building is topped by its historic water tower, where the Ford logo is still legible, along with that of the subsequent Tip Top logo, a later owner of the building.

Overall, the exterior has retained the majority of its historic fabric. The West Façade has remained almost unaltered over the years. On the North Façade however, a one-story addition to house additional fire-fighting equipment was added in the early 1930s and expanded at an unknown date. Both additions are concrete block construction. The large windows of the East Façade have been infilled with CMU over the years, leaving only a few, small openings. This entire façade has been covered in gunite. In the early years, the East façade supported a significant amount of vent pipe. Most of that pipe and all of the covered dock have been removed. On the South façade, two dock doors were added at an unknown date. Additionally, the main front entry and showroom windows were infilled with glass block, probably in the 1950s. Finally, the striped awnings from the Southwest corner of the first and second floors have been removed.

On the interior, large column bays, natural light, and concrete construction are key elements of Kahn's style and Ford's assembly space requirements. Octagonal concrete columns with smooth faceted cone capitals are spaced 26 feet apart North to South and 20 feet apart East to West, providing large open spaces for assembly activities. Steel window sashes 20 feet wide and 10 feet high allow natural light to penetrate far into the interior of the building. Four stair cores are spaced throughout the building. Two of these cores extend through the roof and also contain elevators for moving materials from floor to floor. The remaining two cores also enclose restrooms for staff at each end of the building on each floor.

The original floor plans of the building illustrate that the public entry on the South end of the first floor led to a public corridor flanked by a show room on the West side and a stock room on the East. At the back of the show room was a waiting room that looked out into the garage. Two vestibules allowed factory workers into the garage from the West, and dock doors lined the East allowing raw material in and finished cars out to the train cars. On the Second floor, the South

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end was devoted to general office space and included several private offices, a vault, and locker rooms for the men and women. The Third floor contained a stock room in two of the East bays and a test room in one of the North bays, and was otherwise open for assembly space. The Fourth floor had a varnish room between the elevators and extending to the East wall. The remaining space was devoted to general assembly. The Fifth floor contained the rubbing deck and open assembly space. The roof probably stored completed automobiles.

Today the interior of the building exists as a fairly open factory/warehouse space, with a few offices. Over the years, the separation between the first floor showroom and stock room was removed. However, the plaster crown mold, tile floor, and decorative column heads still exist in the showroom area, defining the space. The remainder of the first floor is open. General office space on the second floor was carved into separate offices and a cafeteria for staff. The open assembly space remains intact. The Southern two bays of the third floor were also divided into office space. A number of large electrical panels were added to the Northwest corner of the third floor, but are no longer active. The divisions between the various stock rooms, etc and the general assembly space on the Fourth and Fifth floors were removed and the spaces are completely open now. Overall, the building is in good condition and retains a significant amount of its historic material.

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The Omaha Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant is significant under criterion A for its association with the Ford Motor Company and automobile mass production, and under criterion C as a representative work of a master – Albert Kahn - the first and primary designer of industrial architecture nationally in the early 20th century.¹

This building represents an early step in the industrial work of Albert Kahn and Henry Ford. Previously, each step of the assembly process for complex products such as the automobile was manufactured in a different building, often quite a distance apart. It took time and effort to move pieces to different points of assembly. Buildings such as the Omaha Assembly Plant represent an early step in streamlining that process. Known as an “all-under-one-roof” structure, Kahn designed these types of buildings for a variety of clients from 1903-1916, including the Burroughs Adding Machine Co in Detroit 1907-1912.² Within these buildings Ford developed an efficient assembly process that generally flowed downwards through the building beginning with piece work on the upper floors and ending with a finished product on the lowest floor.³ The Omaha Assembly Plant apparently reversed this model, receiving parts on the first floor and assembling them up through the building to the final finishing area on the fifth floor. It is suspected that the roof was used for storage of finished automobiles before they were picked up by local dealers or shipped throughout Nebraska.

In 1917, Kahn and Ford took the process a step further and developed the single floor assembly plant with a continuous moving assembly line at Ford’s Rouge River Plant, in Detroit.⁴ This setup quickly became more popular and is still the most common manufacturing layout today. Like many other all-under-one-roof structures, the Omaha Assembly Plant was phased out of the assembly process in the early 1930s when Model T parts were generally no longer required. The Model A, which replaced the Model T, went into production in a continuous moving assembly line that could not be incorporated in the all-under-one-roof structures. This building remained a Ford sales and service center until 1955.

Despite its short period of popularity, a striking number of buildings of this type were constructed, in part because “all-under-one-roof” structures coincided with the popularity of the Model T Ford and also because Ford initiated a manufacturing policy in 1912 to develop branch assembly plants. Albert Kahn was hired for most of the design work. Although released in 1907, the Model T did not become popular until the Transcontinental Race of 1909. Afterwards sales increased dramatically and by 1912 Ford announced the establishment of assembly plants to help keep up with the demand for its vehicles. Each plant was responsible for final assembly of the vehicles as well as maintenance service for local owners. By 1914, 22 such plants were in operation. By 1916 the company was employing 49,870 people and reported gross revenue over \$200 million.⁵ The Omaha Ford Assembly Plant rode the crest of the Model T’s popularity. Finished in July 1916, the Omaha plant produced its first car at the end of August 1916 and continued its assembly operations until 1932.

Physically, Kahn’s “all-under-one-roof” structures exemplify some of the elements that became key characteristics of the Industrial style. The Omaha Assembly Plant in particular exhibits concrete construction, large column bays, and large windows. The concrete frame and floor/ceiling structure provided large bays which were left exposed in the assembly areas. This left as much room as possible for the assembly process and revealed the structure in an honest manner that became a hallmark of the Industrial style. Extensive windows allowed natural light to reach well into the building. Operable sashes at the top and bottom of the windows allowed some control of air flow through the building.

1 Sol King, “Creative-Responsive-Pragmatic: 75 Years of Professional Practice; Albert Kahn and Associates; Architects – Engineers”, NY: The Newcomen Society in North America, 1970. Albert Kahn designed “more than 150 major structures for General Motors and over 1,000 important structures for Ford alone”, p. 16. “In 1938, when Kahns’ staff numbered nearly 600, Kahn was responsible for 19% of all architect-designed industrial buildings in this country alone...”, p. 21.

2 Federico, Bucci, “Albert Kahn, Architect of Ford”, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991, p. 37.

3 Ibid. p. 42.

4 Gordon V.R. Holness and Grant Hildebrand, “Albert Kahn Associates: Continuing the Legacy”, Milan: l’Arca Edizioni, 2000, p. 13.

5 Phillip Van Doren Stern, “Tin Lizzie”, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1955, p. 78.

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Fundamental to providing adequate lighting in early factories, such windows were eventually phased out in favor of solid walls when artificial lighting and shift work became popular. Typical of Kahn and his concern for employees, the building also contained convenient employee amenities. Restrooms were provided at both ends of each floor and a locker room provided space for winter jackets to be stored out of the way of the main assembly area.

The Omaha Assembly Plant was published in the December 1918 issue of *Architectural Record* as one of many examples in an article entitled "Modern Industrial Plants; Part II." The discussion focused on

"...the features of greatest value as represented in some of the most modern plants... and to illustrate the discussion with examples of the best industrial work by different architects."⁶

Although the article does not discuss individual buildings, the Omaha Assembly Plant included many of the values touted in the article. It was well sited on two major roads into Omaha and on a major railroad line with its own spur. It had docks at the proper height for railroad cars to receive raw materials and ship finished goods. In addition, it served a local market with its finished goods. It provided many amenities for employees and was located within walking distance of a residential neighborhood. Finally, its large windows provided excellent light and ventilation.

After Ford, the building passed through several owners and occupants. It was home to the Western Electric Company from 1956-1959. They generally used the building as a warehouse. Vacant for several years, it then became the Tip Top Plastics Products Manufacturing Plant from 1963-1986. A significant tenant as well, the Tip Top Products Manufacturing Plant produced hair accessories that were distributed to stores nationally. In later years, the Plant expanded to produce other plastic goods. After Tip Top quit production in the late 1980s, the building stood vacant again for several years before becoming Good and More Enterprises, a tire warehouse and retail outlet. The building is currently vacant, but renovation plans are progressing to convert the building into a mix of residential and commercial spaces.

Altogether, the Omaha Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant is a strong example of the work of Albert Kahn as he was beginning to develop what became known as the industrial style. Additionally, the building stands as a link to the early automobile manufacturing process and one of its primary founders, the Ford Company.

⁶ Nimmons, George C. FAIA, "Modern Industrial Plants; Part II," *The Architectural Record*, Dec 1918, p. 533.

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Books

- Albert Kahn Associated Architects and Engineers, Inc. *Architecture*. NY: Architectural Catalog Company, Inc., 1948.
- Bucci, Federico. *Albert Kahn; Architect of Ford*. NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991.
- The Detroit Institute of Arts. *The Legacy of Albert Kahn*. Detroit: The Detroit Institute of Arts, 1970.
- Hildebrand, Grant. *Designing for Industry; The Architecture of Albert Kahn*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1974.
- Holness, Gordon V.R. and Grant Hildebrand. *Albert Kahn Associates: Continuing the Legacy*. Milan : l'Arca Edizioni, 2000
- Johnson, Donald Leslie and Donald Langmead. *Makers of 20th Century Modern Architecture: A Bio-Critical Source Book*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997.
- King, Sol. *Creative-Responsive-Pragmatic: 75 Years of Professional Practice; Albert Kahn and Associates; Architects – Engineers*. NY: The Newcomen Society in North America, 1970.
- Lampugnani, Vittorio Magnago, ed. *Encyclopedia of 20th Century Architecture*. NY: Harry N. Abrams Inc, 1986.
- Nelson, George. *Industrial Architecture of Albert Kahn, Inc.* NY: Architectural Book Publishing Company, Inc., 1939.
- Packard, Robert. *Encyclopedia of American Architecture*. 2nd Ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Books, 1980.
- Sennott, R. Stephen, ed. *Encyclopedia of 20th Century Architecture*, vol. 2, G-O. NY: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2004.
- Van Doren Stern, Phillip. *Tin Lizzie*. NY: Simon and Schuster, 1955.
- Winter, John. *Industrial Architecture: A Survey of Factory Building*. London: Studio Vista, 1970.
- Withey, Henry F. and Elsie Rathburn Withey. *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)*. Los Angeles: New Age Publishing, 1956.
- Omaha City Directories, 1915-1999.

Maps

- Sanborn Map Company. *Omaha 1934*, vol. 2. Pelham, N.Y.: The Company, 1934, p. 207.

Articles

- Dolke, W. Fred Jr. "Some Essentials in the Construction of an Industrial Building," *The American Architect*, vol. CXI, No. 2148, Wed. Feb 21, 1917, p. 111-116.
- Gardiner, F.M. "Factory Entrances; The Architectural Opportunities Offered in the Design of Entrances to Factories and Similar Buildings," *The American Architect*, vol. CXI, No. 2148, Wed Feb 21 1917, p. 117-120.
- "In Omaha's Tin Lizzy Heyday", *Sunday Omaha World Herald Magazine of the Midlands*, March 1, 1970, p. 8-9.
- Moore, Charles J. "Some Essentials of the Modern Manufacturing Building; With Special Regard to the Packard Motor Car Co.'s Plant at Detroit," *The American Architect*, vol. XCIX, No. 1851, Wed June 14, 1911, p. 219-223.
- Nimmons, George C. FAIA. "Modern Industrial Plants; Part I," *The Architectural Record*, vol. 44, No. 5, Nov 1918, p. 414-421.
- Nimmons, George C. FAIA. "Modern Industrial Plants; Part II," *The Architectural Record*, vol. 44, No. 6, Dec 1918, p. 531-549.
- "Present Day Factory Construction," *The American Architect*, vol. XCIX, No. 1851, Wed June 14, 1911, p. 213-215.

Misc

- Original Plans. *Ford Assembly Plant; Omaha Branch*. City of Omaha Planning Department.

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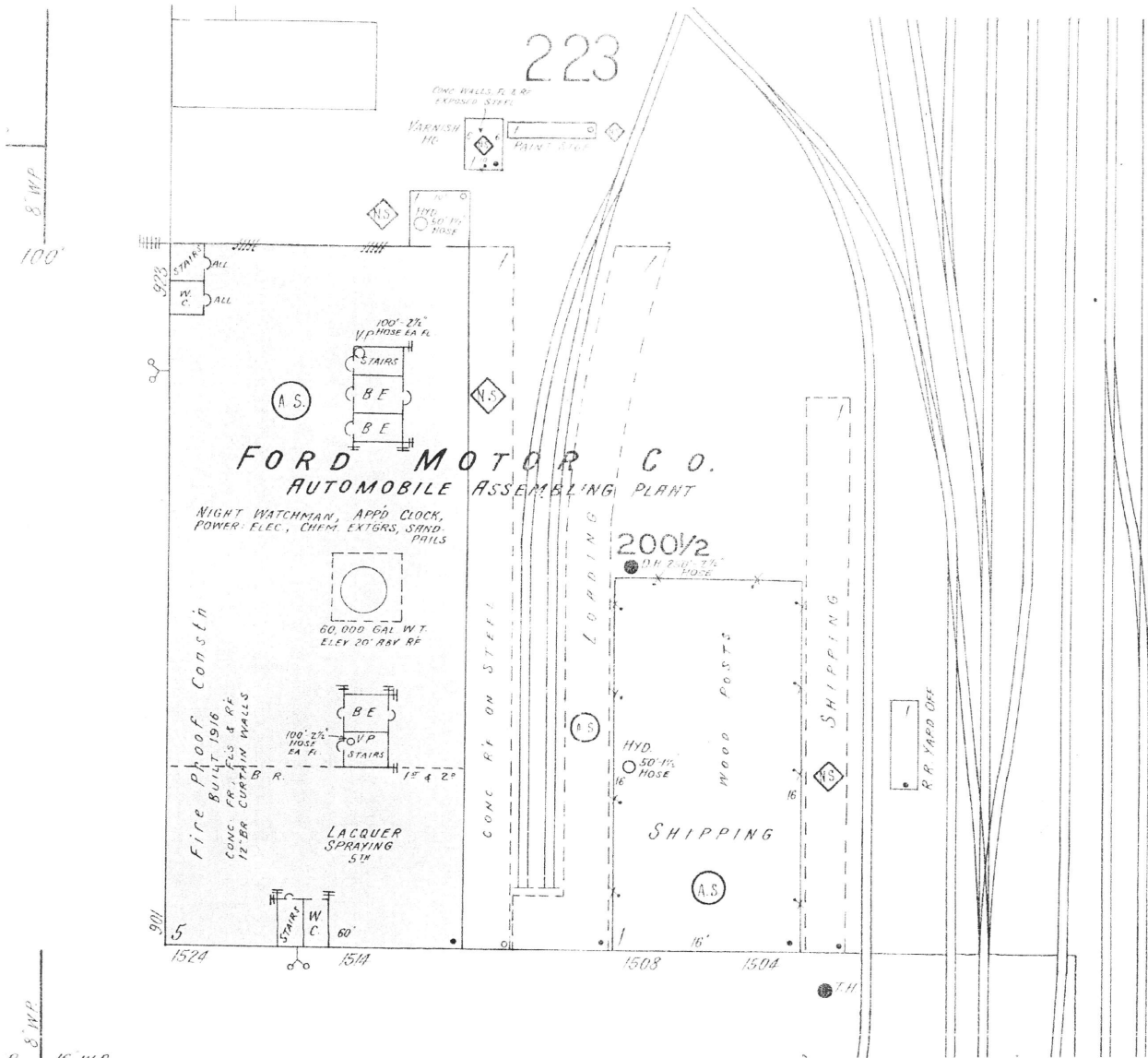
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PROPERTY BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION

Lots 3, 4, 5, and 6 in block 200 ½, in the Original City of Omaha, as surveyed and lithographed, in Douglas County, Nebraska, together with the vacated alley lying between these parcels in said block 200 ½, and that part of vacated Izard Street described as that part of said Street lying West of a line drawn 108 feet East of and parallel with the East line of 16th Street (as extended) except the North 62 feet thereof.

The above described property contains all of the land historically associated with the Omaha Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant that still maintains its historic integrity. Lots 1, 2, 7, and 8 have been excluded because of the substantial alterations to this portion of the site.



1934 Sanborn Map

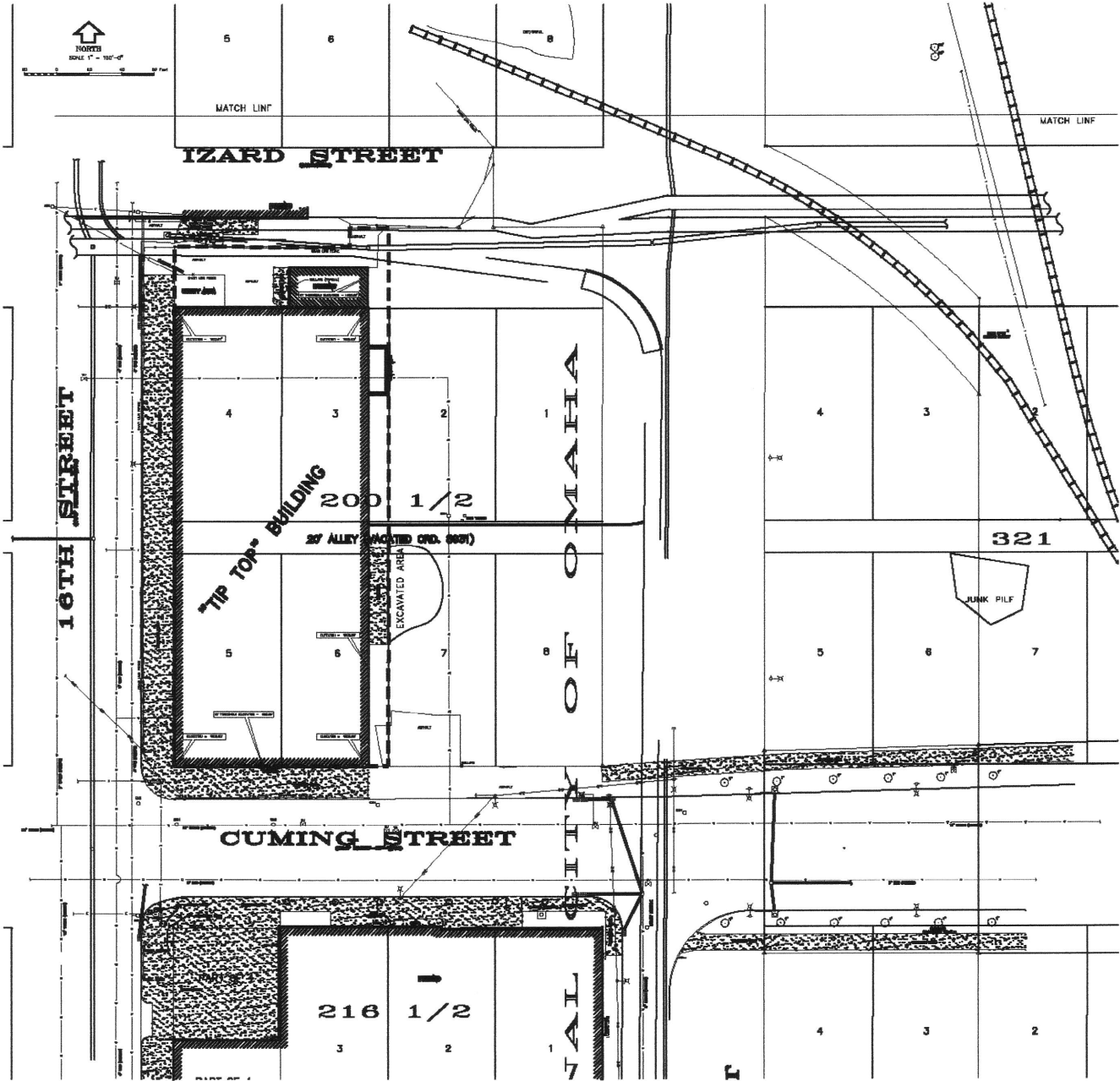


FORD SERVICE BUILDING, OMAHA, NEB.
Albert Kahn, Architect.

1917 Architectural Record, p. 540

Lots 3, 4, 5 and 6 in block 200 1/2, in the Original City of Omaha, as surveyed and lithographed, in Douglas County, Nebraska.

The above described property contains all of the land historically associated with the Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant that still maintains its historic integrity. Lots 1, 2, 7 and 8 have been excluded because of the substantial alterations to this portion of the site.





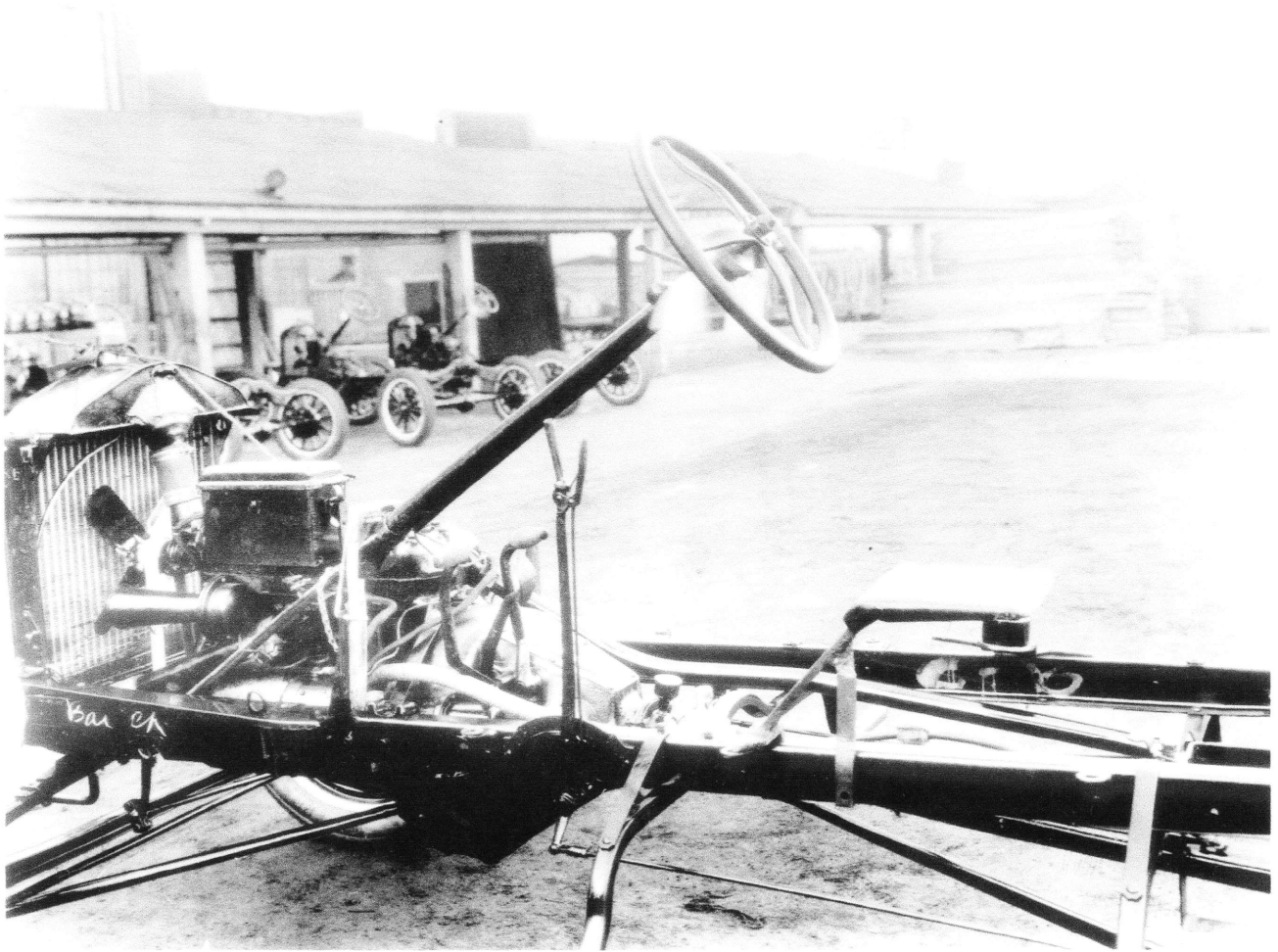
SE Corner

1930



NE Corner

1930



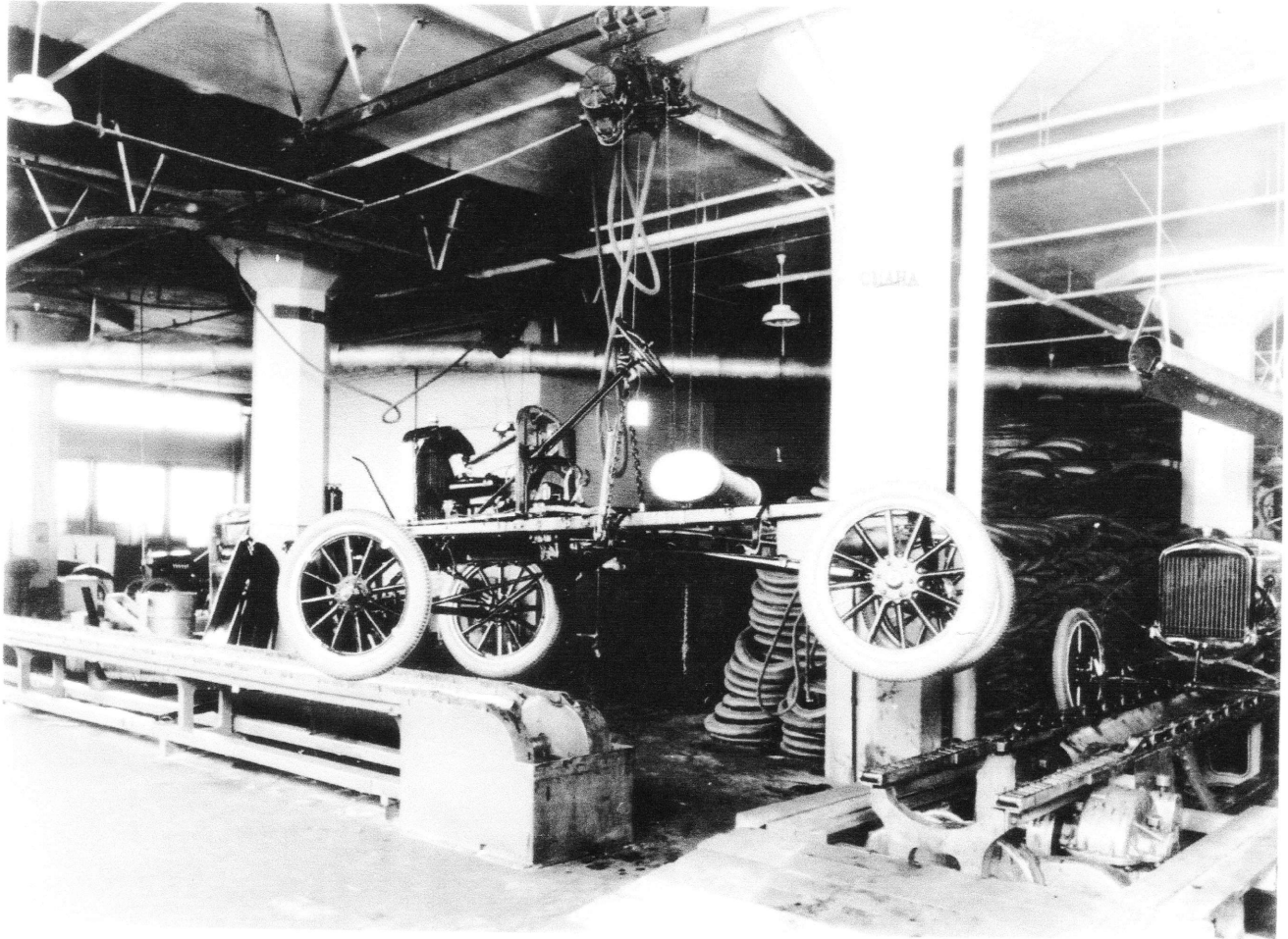
Shipping Yard

date unknown



Show Room

1938



First Floor Assembly Area

date unknown



NW Corner

1954

All photos by Jennifer Honebrink, 2004, Alley Poyner Architecture, Omaha



Photo 1 — south facade



Photo 2 — west facade



Photo 3 — north facade



Photo 4 — east facade



Photo 5 — north façade of north addition



Photo 6 — first floor showroom looking southwest



Photo 7 — fifth floor looking southwest

