

Minneapolis and St. Louis Depot, Waseca

(Currently Zinnias)

July 2009

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Brief Background

The railroad is an integral part of the history of Waseca. It was partly because of the railroad that many of the movers and shakers of Waseca's early history arrived and thrived. The fact that the City of Waseca became the county seat is also partly a result of the railroad.

The Minneapolis and St. Louis Depot in Waseca is one of only two remaining passenger depots in Waseca County. Thus, being able to not only save, but also restore the depot, is important in maintaining a visual part of our local history.

There have been passenger and freight depots in Waseca for over 140 years. The first passenger depot was built in 1867. That building burned down in 1869 and was rebuilt the same year. The current depot, constructed of yellow "Chaska brick," was built in 1913 to serve the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad. Passengers were served until 1959. The building later housed Depot Liquor until it closed in 2000. By this time the building was showing its age and there were those who suggested that it be torn down. The Waseca City Council authorized the purchase of the Depot in 2000 to save it from possible destruction.

The Waseca Minneapolis and St. Louis Depot Society was formed in 2002 to restore and renovate the building using a mix of public and private funding and volunteers. Using about 150 hours of volunteer labor, the building was gutted, removing all remnants of the liquor store, and windows that had been bricked up were opened. Thanks to a Minnesota Historical Society Grant, exterior woodwork was restored. Plans for a full, professional restoration were prepared. Due to an unexpected event, the loss of one of the main organizers to two National Guard tours overseas, the Society struggled to maintain volunteer and community interest and raise the funding necessary to complete the project. A second grant was submitted to the Minnesota Historical Society and approved, however, that grant was not accepted due to lack of local in-kind funding. These challenges led to the Depot being listed as one of the "Ten Most Endangered" buildings by the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota in 2007 and to the Waseca City Council considering other alternatives to save the building.

In 2007, Tim and Tamie Collins approached the City with an idea for completing the restoration and renovation. Their desire was to use the building for a small specialty shop. Due to the lack of progress and funding issues, the City Council agreed to lease the building to them. As agreed, the Collins' completed the restoration and "Zinnias," a specialty boutique, opened for business in October 2007.

Photos Before

The Minneapolis & St. Louis Depot was built in 1913. This photo is from 1920.



The Depot closed for passenger service in 1959. It was later opened as Depot Liquors – the liquor store closed in 2000. This photo is from 1983.



The Depot was purchased by the City of Waseca in 2000. It is hard to see, but there is serious structural damage near the corner of the building. This photo is from around 2000-2001.



Another photo from around 2000-2001



Photos After

Tim and Tamie Collins leased the Depot from the City of Waseca in 2007. After finishing the restoration, “Zinnias” opened in October 2007. Photos are from July 2009.



Community Preservation Award 2008

Zinnia's (The Depot)
231 West Elm Avenue
Tamie Collins

The railroad is an integral part of the history of Waseca. It was partly because of the railroad that many of the movers and shakers of our early history arrived and thrived. It was also partly because of the railroad that the City of Waseca became the county seat.

There have been passenger and freight depots over the years. The first was built in 1867. It burned down in 1869 and was rebuilt the same year.

The current depot was built in 1913 to serve the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad. Passengers were served until 1959. The building later became Depot Liquor until it closed in 2000. The City of Waseca purchased the Depot to save it from possible destruction. The Depot Society was formed to save and renovate the building. The Society struggled with funding and the City agreed to lease the building to Tim and Tamie Collins in 2007. Zinnia's opened in October of 2007.

2007 – 10 Most Endangered (Preservation Alliance of Minnesota)

Waseca Depot, Waseca

This small, well-built depot was constructed of yellow "Chaska brick" in 1913, to serve the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway. As one of two remaining passenger depots in Waseca County, the depot is a rare artifact of the era of railroads that contributed to Waseca's growth and role as county seat. The depot served rail passengers until 1959; most recently it functioned as a liquor store, which was closed in 2000. The City Council of Waseca authorized purchase of the depot that year with the intent of preserving it.

Volunteers donated more than 150 hours to gutting the liquor store and opening up the bricked-in windows of the depot. A grant from the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) paid for restoration of the depot's exterior woodwork. The project received an additional MHS grant in 2005, the Waseca City Council has pledged another \$20,000, and a non-profit organization has raised another \$10,000. Plans for a full, professional restoration have been prepared. In spite of these efforts, the project has stalled. A former Mayor was a champion of the project, but his two overseas deployments with the National Guard since 2003, difficulty in maintaining volunteer and community interest, and a new Council have caused the project to lose momentum. The current Council may wish to sell the building, which could result in its demolition.

Located just two blocks off the main street in downtown Waseca, and with the recent efforts to stabilize and begin to restore the building, the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway passenger depot is well situated to be renovated and re-used, but is in desperate need of renewed focus..

January 1, 2006

WASECA M & STL DEPOT SOCIETY RECEIVES CAPITAL GRANT

The Waseca M&StL Depot Society was awarded a matching grant of \$30,000 for continuing preservation work at the Minneapolis and St. Louis Depot from the State Capital Projects Grant-in-Aid County and Local Preservation program, through the Minnesota Historical Society on behalf of the Minnesota State Legislature. The grant program is administered by the Society's historic preservation department. The program assists county and local jurisdictions with historic preservation projects of a capital nature. Recipients of these grants are public entities with publicly owned properties.

The purpose of the grant is to assist the Waseca M&StL Depot Society with the third phase of the Minneapolis and St. Louis Depot restoration. Work will include roof replacement, the reconstruction of a missing chimney and platform, and the installation of a new plumbing, electrical, heating, ventilation and air-conditioning system. The City of Waseca owns the building and leases it to the Waseca M&StL Depot Society. Once restored, the depot will be used as a multi-purpose community facility. The Minneapolis and St. Louis Depot has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The public is encouraged to watch the progress of the restoration over the coming months. For more details, the public may contact Margaret Sinn, at 507-835-7700.

Since 1969 the State of Minnesota has appropriated funds to encourage the development of historical organizations and historical programming, and for the preservation, restoration and stabilization of irreplaceable, historically significant buildings open to the public.

The Minnesota Historical Society is a non-profit educational and cultural institution established in 1849 to preserve and share Minnesota history. The Society collects, preserves and tells the story of Minnesota's past through museum exhibits, extensive libraries and collections, historic sites, educational programs and book publishing.