

MINNESOTA HISTORY / ARCHITECTURE INVENTORY FORM
NORTHFIELD COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT
Rice County, Minnesota

PROPERTY LOCATION	
Property Name: Bridge Square Other: Mill Square	Inventory No.: RC-NFC-400
Address: 25 Bridge Square, Northfield, MN	PIN: none
QTR/QTR/T/R/S: NW NW Section 6 T111N R19W	Plat Name: Original Town
USGS Quad: Northfield, Minnesota	
UTM Z 15 487228E, 4922551N NAD 83	

PROPERTY INFORMATION	
Construction Date: 1856-	Style:
Historic Use: market square, public square	Current Use: public square
Property Type: civic	Historic Context: "Commerce, 1856-1945"
Architect/Builder	Survey Name: Northfield Historic District Survey Revision Project, 2016
Previous NRHP Status: Not evaluated	NRHP Recommendation: Contributing to Northfield Commercial Historic District
Form Prepared by: Landscape Research LLC	Survey Date: 3/2016



2016, looking west at Civil War Monument (1921)



2016, looking east at Fountain (1980)

Description

Bridge Square is bounded by Bridge Square on the north and south, Division Street at the east, and Water Street and Riverside Park at the west. It is framed by historic commercial buildings, including the Scriver Building (1868). The current landscape design, including a concrete plaza and radiating concrete paths, dates from the mid-1970s. The red granite Civil War Monument was placed in the square in 1921 and the fountain by Raymond I. Jacobsen of Northfield (1921-2012) dates from 1980.

History

Mill Square, now known as Bridge Square, was not labeled on the original plat of Northfield (1855). A public square was set off on the present site of Central Park, one block east of Division Street. The unbuilt block at the foot of the Cannon River Bridge around Jesse Ames & Sons sawmill was the focus of a hay and wood market and was used for loading wagons and then trucks. A series of early bridges prior to the bowstring-arch iron bridge (1871) and the present structure (1914, 1986), spanned the river at the northwest edge of the square. The flood-prone riverbank and the square had uneven grades, with the square about three feet lower than the present elevation. Although primarily transportation-oriented, with a central horse watering trough installed until 1910, as well as a gasoline station (1916; on the site of the Post Office), the open space also accommodated celebrations and parades. It was paved with creosote blocks in the early 20th century. The Civil War Monument commemorating Civil War soldiers and sailors was dedicated on Memorial Day in 1921. In 1922, the Northfield Improvement Association proposed beautification of the square and adjacent Riverside Park. The Post Office was completed on a site edging

Historic photographs: Northfield Historical Society

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the south side of the square in 1936. By 1950, the square was a simply landscaped, tear-drop shaped space embellished only by the War Monument. The historic streetscape on the north side of the square was altered when the Citizens Bank was demolished in 1965 for construction of the present bank at the corner of Bridge Square and Division Street. In 1976, proposals for re-design of the traffic pattern and parking around the square were prepared; the Popcorn Wagon, seating, and other features date from this decade. The Sheldahl Company donated the fountain by Raymond I. Jacobson in 1980. Bridge Square has thus evolved through three phases. During the first, ca. 1856-1921, it was an unimproved area devoted to largely utilitarian purposes; during the second, ca. 1921-1976, it was a small simply landscaped triangular space anchored by the War Monument. Since 1976, it has been greatly enlarged, with hardscaped plazas, seating, sculpture (1980), trees and lighting as well as the Popcorn Wagon. Throughout these changes, the Civil War Monument has remained in its original location and in good condition.

Significance and Evaluation

Bridge Square is a contributing property within the Northfield Commercial Historic District. It is associated with the historic contexts “Designed Historic Landscape, 1855-1945,” and “Commerce, 1955-1945.” Although it has been significantly redesigned since its formal construction in the 1920s, it retains fair historic integrity and the retention of the Civil War Monument especially adds to its significance.

References

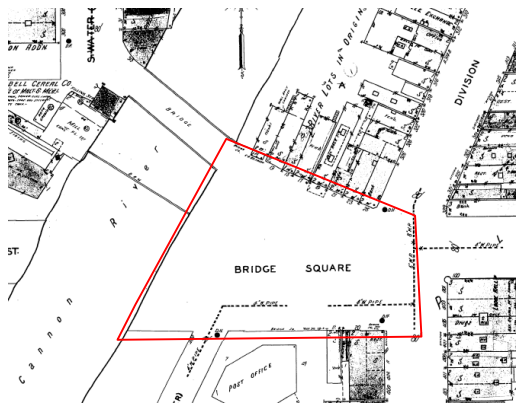
“Northfield Historic District,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 1979.
Northfield Historical Society, “01-Bridge Square-Northfield History Podcast,” August 11, 2010.
Sanborn Map & Publishing Company, New York. Northfield plates, 1886-1943.
Zellie, Carole. “Northfield Heritage Preservation Plan.” Prepared for the Northfield Heritage Preservation Commission, Northfield, Minn. by Landscape Research, 1992.



1950 (looking west from Division Street)



2016 (looking east from Cannon River)



Left:
Sanborn 1930, updated
to 1943.
Right:
Northfield USGS 1984.