NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. Aug. 2002)

OMB No. 1024-0018
(Expires 1-31-2009)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

RECEIVED 2280
NOV 14 2007
NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1314

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 an 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: Pence Automobile Company Building

other names/site number: Minneapolis Gas Light Company; Builder's Building; Lincoln Office, Northwestern National Bank; Gamble-Skogmo; Carmichael-Lynch

2. Location

street & number: 800 Hennepin Avenue ☐ N/A not for publication

city or town: Minneapolis ☐ vicinity

state: Minnesota code: MN county: Hennepin code: 053 zip code: 55403-1803

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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.)

Britta L. Bloomberg, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Minnesota Historical Society — 10/25/07
Signature of certifying official — Date

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 the Keeper — Date of Action

Edson H. Beall — 12.27.07

Pence Automobile Company Building
Name of Property

Hennepin County MN
County and State

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
		structure
		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)

COMMERCE/specialty store
COMMERCE/warehouse

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH & 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Classical Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: Limestone
walls BRICK, TERRA COTTA, STONE: Granite
roof ASPHALT

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

Description

The Pence Automobile Company Building at 800 Hennepin Avenue is an eight-story, reinforced concrete structure with a glazed-brick exterior and terra-cotta ornament. The building, which was completed in 1909, was designed by the Minneapolis architecture firm of Long and Long and constructed by contractor C. F. Haglin.

The form of the building has a tripartite scheme typical of Classical Revival-style commercial blocks built in the early twentieth century. The base is two stories in height with broad piers separating the window bays on the ground- and second-story levels. The six-story shaft of the building is clad in a light tan, glazed-brick veneer on the primary facades and painted utilitarian brick on the north and west facades. At the parapet level, flush bands of taupe, red, and light tan brick form a cap, replacing the original projecting cornice of highly ornamented terra-cotta.

At the ground-floor level, the primary facades are clad in red-brown, polished granite panels, which replaced the original rusticated, cream-colored terra-cotta piers in 1952. The square granite panels surround display-window groupings that are made up of three large, aluminum-framed, clear-glass windows over a band of six smaller opaque-glass windows. There is a granite bulkhead, approximately thirty-six inches high, below the windows. The two display bays on the Hennepin Avenue (east) facade flank a centered entrance, which is recessed about four feet from the front plane of the building. The double-leaf entrance doors, which were installed ca. 1985, have narrow, painted-metal frames, a broad multi-light transom, and fixed sidelights.[1]

There are six storefront bays on the Eighth Street (north) facade. The westernmost bay contains a recessed entrance with double-leaf doors that matches the Hennepin Avenue entrance. To the east of the side entrance is a rectangular, wood-framed opening that is recessed about twelve inches from the face of the adjacent granite. This opening contains two sliding wood doors that appear to date from the first half of the twentieth century and probably opened to a historic elevator shaft. The remaining five storefront bays have granite facing and metal windows matching those on the Hennepin Avenue facade.

The historic appearance of the building is more intact above the ground-floor level, beginning with a band of original bead-and-reel terra-cotta on top of the storefront granite. Above this band is a projecting cornice that serves as the sill for the second-story windows. Rusticated terra-cotta blocks form broad piers and segmental arches that frame the window bays. The tripartite window groupings, which are slightly recessed, are composed of sliding metal sashes with fixed sheet-metal panels below and clear-glass transoms above. The windows are separated by mullions with terra-cotta relief ornament in a vertical vine motif. A projecting keystone is present at the apex of each arch and a vertical swag of fruits and baskets drops from a medallion located at the top of each pier. The composition is crowned by two bands of terra-cotta in egg-and-dart and Greek key designs.

---

[1] The downtown Minneapolis street grid does not align with compass points. For ease of reference, cardinal directions have been adopted for the facades: Hennepin Avenue – east; Eighth Street – north; and so forth.

These historic elements are intact in the six second-story bays on the Eighth Street facade and two of the three bays on the Hennepin Avenue side. The southernmost bay on the east facade was altered when the windows were removed for a skyway constructed in 1993, but the terra-cotta arch, piers, and most of the remaining ornamental details of this bay are intact.

On the primary facades, the fenestration of the upper stories is rhythmic and symmetrical, with vertical, rectangular openings spaced at regular intervals. Terra-cotta ornament, including projecting sills with modillion brackets and individual monolithic headers, provides visual punctuation. The existing windows are sliding metal sashes with fixed, clear-glass transoms. A horizontal metal bar in front of the window—a modern alteration—is flush with the facade, aligned so that it covers the mullion between the window and transom. A continuous band of terra-cotta ornament—laurel-leaf roping bound at intervals with ribbons and medallions—is located at the eighth-story sill level. Another unbroken band of terra-cotta forms the header for the eighth-story windows, above which is a brickwork cap where an ornamental cornice was originally located.

The south and west facades are utilitarian, especially in comparison with the more highly ornamented primary facades. The south wall of the building, now completely exposed, once abutted a six-story hotel, which extended about halfway along the facade of the Pence Automobile Company Building. Most of the window openings on the south wall, which are clustered towards the top and rear of the facade, date from the original construction. Several openings on the seventh and eighth floors have been enclosed with brick, and a recessed balcony on the fifth floor is a modern alteration. On the west facade, the fenestration pattern appears to be about 75 percent intact. Floors three through eight have bands of four large windows of uniform size approximately centered on the facade. Most of the narrow window openings in two columns near an exterior chimney have been fully or partially infilled with brick. All of the windows on the west and south facades have been replaced with modern metal sashes or louvers. A narrow vertical addition constructed ca. 1940 rises from the west facade of the building near the northwest corner. This structure, which extends one story above roof level, is clad in painted brick and houses two elevator shafts. Another modern skyway, built in 1991, extends from the second-story level of the west facade towards First Avenue North.

The building has a flat roof ringed by a parapet with sheet-metal coping. In the northwest corner, a brick elevator penthouse extends one story above roof level, adjacent to the north parapet wall. Two modern rooftop sheds enclose mechanical equipment. Four original large, rectangular skylights have been covered with flat roofing and topped with domed or pyramidal skylight structures. These rooftop elements are mostly obscured from view from the street.

Little of the historic character is evident on the interior of the structure, which has been altered repeatedly for use as offices beginning with Harry Pence's remodeling of the building in 1929. Most of the changes are cosmetic, however, consisting largely of partition walls that define office cubes, conference rooms, restrooms, and reception areas. The poured-concrete structure of the building is visible behind the suspended acoustical tile ceiling panels and the round columns are exposed on most levels. The eighteen-foot ceiling height of the ground-floor level is evident, although an added mezzanine, corridor tube, and ramp structure detract from the

historic grandeur of the space. No historic drawings or photographs have been found that indicate the interior details and finishes of the building. The upper floors, which were used for parts storage and auto service, were likely utilitarian spaces during the building's period of significance.

Despite alterations, the essential form, materials, and setting of the Pence Automobile Company Building are intact, giving it sufficient integrity to qualify for designation in the National Register of Historic Places. Rehabilitation plans now underway will bring the building closer to its historic appearance. New display and office windows will be installed that are in keeping with the dimensions, style, and materials of the originals, and the storefront cladding and cornice will be replaced with modern materials resembling the ornamental terra-cotta. On the interior, the original ceiling heights and the cast-concrete structural elements will be revealed. These modifications, which will conform to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, will strengthen the building's historic association with the early automobile sales industry in Minneapolis and Buick distributor Harry E. Pence.

Pence Automobile Company Building
Name of Property

Hennepin County MN
County and State

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE

INDUSTRY

Period of Significance

1909-1929

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Pence, Harry E.

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Long, Franklin

Long, Louis L.

Haglin, C. F. (builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

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 of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☒ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☒ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

Minnesota Historical Society

Northwestern Architectural Archives, Elmer L. Andersen Library, University of Minnesota

Introduction

The Pence Automobile Company Building stands on the corner of Hennepin Avenue and Eighth Street in downtown Minneapolis. This eight-story edifice is one of the Upper Midwest region's most significant resources associated with the exponential growth of the automobile industry during the early twentieth century. The reinforced-concrete structure, clad with glazed brick and terra-cotta, was built to house the Buick distributorship of Harry E. Pence. At the time of its completion in 1909, the 102,000-square-foot Pence Automobile Company was said to be the world's largest building devoted entirely to the automobile trade. The building's location at 800 Hennepin Avenue firmly established that street as the city's "Automobile Row" and cemented Pence's influence and stature in the growing enterprise of car sales and service.

The Pence Automobile Company Building is significant under Criterion A for its important role in the formative years of the automobile industry and under Criterion B for its association with Harry Pence, who was a prominent local leader of that industry. The building has statewide significance, relating to the state context of Urban Centers (1870-1940). Its period of significance in the areas of Commerce and Industry extends from 1909, when construction commenced, to 1929, when Harry Pence remodeled the building for general office use.

Set in Motion: The Growing Automobile Industry

In this day and age, automobiles are ubiquitous. American social and economic culture and the country's physical environment have been altered and defined by the impact of cars and trucks. Remarkably, cars were accepted as something other than a novelty only a century ago.

In fact, the automobile and the related manufacturing and sales industries in the United States rocketed from obscurity to prominence in the span of a single generation. The gasoline automobile originated in Europe in the 1880s, and early models were developed and refined in Germany and France. Cross-country races held in France in the early 1890s stimulated interest in the machines in Europe and America and prompted similar races and experimentation in the United States. Vehicles with gasoline, steam, and electric engines were built, tested, and raced in this country, but they were primitive compared to the technology that had already been developed in France. It took a convergence of technological, economic, geographical, and societal factors after the turn of the century for the United States to begin its ascent towards its position as the foremost automobile culture in the world.[1]

Established bicycle manufacturers and carriage makers were among the first companies in the United States to experiment with quantity production of motorized vehicles. The Duryea Motor Company in Springfield, Massachusetts, founded in 1895 by two brothers who were bicycle mechanics, was the first American company

[1] James J. Flink, *America Adopts the Automobile, 1895-1910* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1970), 4-15; James J. Flink, *The Automobile Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), 45.

to make more than one automobile of the same design. The Duryeas built thirteen cars by hand in 1896. Two successful bicycle manufacturers—Alexander Winton of Cleveland, Ohio, and the Pope Manufacturing Company of Hartford, Connecticut—were drawn into the automobile industry around the same time. One of the world's leading carriage and wagon makers, P. H. Studebaker, observed the growing industry for many years before beginning production of electric and gasoline cars after the turn of the century.[2]

By 1899, there were over 8,000 vehicles in the United States that had been made by hundreds of different manufacturers, but there was little momentum toward mass production. Inventors continued to work on individual models, developing innovative features that they hoped would be adopted by carmakers. Publications and trade journals, including *Motor World*, *Horseless Age*, and *Popular Mechanics,* spread information about cars and their development. Shortly after the turn of the century, many people came to expect that automobiles would displace horses as the primary means of personal travel and that owning a motorized vehicle would soon be within reach of the masses.[3]

The Origins of Buick and General Motors

Manufacturing capabilities expanded dramatically in the first decade of the twentieth century to meet these expectations. As industrial processes and materials were refined, several automakers gained a firm foothold in the industry. Henry Ford founded his iconic company in 1903, although it would be another decade before his motorized assembly lines would revolutionize the entire manufacturing industry. Among other emerging companies were the four that would soon be joined to form the General Motors Corporation: Oldsmobile, Pontiac, Cadillac, and Buick.

The Olds Motor Works, the first American company to achieve mass-production of gasoline vehicles, was organized by Ransom E. Olds in 1897. Four years later, following a disastrous fire in his main Detroit shop, Olds regrouped to his hometown of Lansing and focused on developing his only surviving prototype, a one-cylinder, buggy-style vehicle. The Oldsmobile runabout included a distinctive curved dash, a feature traditionally employed on carriages to protect riders from mud and stones hurled from the road by horse hooves. This model enjoyed immediate popularity and the company sold close to 7,000 vehicles during its first three years in production.[4]

---

[2] Flink, *America Adopts the Automobile*, 19-29, 58; Flink, *The Automobile Age*, 5-6.

[3] Flink, *America Adopts the Automobile*, 7-8, 31-36.

[4] The early commercial success of Oldsmobile is also reflected in the company's impact on popular culture. The 1905 tune "In My Merry Oldsmobile," with the chorus "You can go as far as you like with me in my merry Oldsmobile," is but one of many songs, poems, and stories written about the dynamic new invention. More than 12,000 Oldsmobiles had been produced by the time the song became a popular hit. "America on the Move," online collection, Smithsonian Institution: http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthemove/collection/object_909.html; William Pelfrey, *Billy, Alfred, and General Motors* (New York: Amacom, 2006), 58-60.

The Cadillac Automobile Company began operation in 1902 and produced 2,000 of its well-crafted, high-end cars in 1904, ranking second in sales behind Oldsmobile. Oakland, renamed Pontiac in 1925, began making cars in 1907. Buick became the most successful of the four GM companies in terms of sales and production and formed the base on which the corporation was built.[5]

The Buick Motor Company originated with David Dunbar Buick, a Detroit plumbing manufacturer and inventor who had patented a process for bonding porcelain to cast iron, creating the modern bathtub. When automobile fever struck Detroit in the mid-1890s, Buick began tinkering with gasoline engines and organized an engine manufacturing company in 1899. Buick hired engineer Walter Marr to help him develop an automobile and sold his plumbing business to capitalize the venture. Buick and Marr had a tumultuous partnership that ended with Marr leaving the company, but not until after the pair had produced a workable engine prototype. Buick hired Frenchman Eugene Richard to replace Marr, and together they refined the engine design, creating an innovative "valve-in-head" motor. This overhead valve position, later an industry standard, allowed a motor to draw more air and increase efficiency. In 1902, Buick and Richard successfully made a vehicle featuring this engine type, which they called the Buick Model A.

Despite the technical prowess of his firm, Buick proved to be a poor businessman and he had difficulties launching production of the vehicle. In debt for thousands of dollars to parts manufacturers, Buick agreed to outside investment and subsequent reorganization. Unable to pay his debts, Buick lost the company to his investors, who promptly sold the firm but kept him on staff. The new owners moved the company to Flint, Michigan, which was a prominent wagon and carriage manufacturing location at the time. Flint boosters, recognizing that the days of the carriage trade were numbered, had been actively seeking an automobile company to diversify the local economy. They felt fortunate to land Buick, one of the many start-up vehicle manufacturers in the area.[6]

In need of leadership, the Buick Motor Company's new board of directors persuaded William "Billy" Durant, the prosperous, charismatic co-owner of the local Durant-Dort Carriage Company, to consider heading the enterprise. Durant had been semi-retired at the age of forty, playing the stock market and enjoying his wealth in New York City. He was, by all accounts, an active man who thrived on challenge. Durant returned to Flint where he borrowed a newly developed Buick Model B—one of only a few sold to the public—and put the vehicle through its paces. After two months of driving about the countryside, stopping frequently to strike up conversation about the vehicle and its features, and breaking down on more than a few occasions, he overcame his initial reluctance and embraced the Buick version of the "horseless carriage." Durant signed on as president of the Buick Motor Company in November 1904.[7]

---

[5] Chevrolet was developed later, and became part of the General Motors Corporation in 1918. *GM: The First 75 Years of Transportation Products* (Princeton, N.J.: Automobile Quarterly Publications, 1983), 16-32.
[6] Bernard A. Weisberger, *The Dream Maker: William C. Durant, Founder of General Motors* (Boston: Little Brown, 1979), 81.
[7] Lawrence R. Gustin, *Billy Durant: Creator of General Motors* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), 49-50; Pelfrey, *Billy, Alfred, and General Motors*, 95.

When Durant took the wheel, the Buick company was near insolvency but had a good reputation, as its prototype vehicles were admired for their appearance, speed, and engineering. Durant secured capital for expansion and made plans for a huge manufacturing facility to be built in Flint. Upon completion, it was the world's largest automobile factory, with fourteen acres under one roof. While this colossal building was under construction, Durant began large-scale production of the Buick Model C, the company's third model, at a vacant Durant-Dort carriage plant in Jackson, Michigan. After producing fewer than forty cars in 1904, Buick turned out over 700 vehicles in 1905.

The following year, Buick manufactured more than fifteen automobiles a day at its new plant in Flint. Unlike other automakers, Durant juggled bills and finances to keep production steady during a brief economic panic in 1907. This risky maneuver, like many others Durant took with Buick, reaped rewards—when consumers were ready to buy cars again, Buick was the only company with an adequate supply to meet the pent-up demand. Production rates kept climbing and, in June 1908, Buick set an industry record when it built 1,409 cars in Flint and 245 in Jackson. By the end of the year, Buick had made 8,820 vehicles, securing its position as the number one automobile manufacturer in the world.[8]

The same year that Buick rose to the top in fabrication, Durant used the company's capital and manufacturing success as the basis from which to launch General Motors, an integrated products corporation made up of automobile manufacturers and parts and accessory suppliers. Durant had tried for several years to form an automobile corporation along the lines of the U.S. Steel conglomerate, which had been created in 1901 by financier J. P. Morgan. With Morgan's input, Durant investigated deals with fellow automakers Ford, Briscoe-Maxwell, and REO, Ransom Olds' second automobile venture. Ultimately, the Olds Motor Works, which still made one of the most popular cars in the nation but was struggling financially after the departure of its founder, was the only company to join with Buick. Durant incorporated General Motors in New Jersey in September 1908.[9]

Using leveraged financing and stock trades, Durant quickly gained control of two more automobile makers—Cadillac and Oakland—and a number of automobile component supply companies. Within the first two years, Durant laid the groundwork for General Motors' basic strategy: a vertically integrated manufacturing network producing a variety of brands and models to appeal to a broad spectrum of consumers. Still, some of Durant's acquisitions turned out to be terrible investments and the corporation was always short on cash. When the market for large cars such as those made by Cadillac slowed temporarily, General Motors nearly collapsed.

---

[8] Ironically, David Dunbar Buick left the company in 1908, just as his name was being stamped on thousands of mass-produced vehicles. Uncomfortable with the feverish pace of production, he surrendered his stock interest in the company and died in relative obscurity in 1929. Weisberger, *The Dream Maker*, 79; John B. Rae, *The American Automobile Industry* (Boston: G. K. Hall and Company, 1984), 26; Terry B. Dunham and Lawrence B. Gustin, *The Buick: A Complete History*, rev. 6th ed. ([New Albany, Ind.]: Automobile Quarterly Publications, 2002), 10; Gustin, *Billy Durant*, 85-87.

[9] Ransom E. Olds founded REO after a disagreement with his Oldsmobile management team. In a move typical of Durant's freewheeling business style, General Motors was incorporated in New Jersey because that state had no restrictions on the amount of stock a company could issue relative to its actual assets. Pelfrey, *Billy, Alfred, and General Motors*, 108, 126.

Durant was dismissed as president of the company in 1910, although he remained on the board of directors. The corporation came under bank control and was saved by Charles W. Nash, the former general manager of the Durant-Dort Carriage Company, who was named president of the corporation. Walter P. Chrysler, an engineer, became president of the Buick Motor Company in 1912.[10]

In the hands of the bankers, General Motors quickly regained its footing, repaying debts and reorganizing its internal structure and finances. Buick continued to lead the corporation in production and sales but the other GM brands, especially Cadillac, also grew. The corporation also began to face stiff external competition from the Ford Motor Company, which had begun mass production of its "universal car," the Model T, in 1908. Through refined manufacturing processes and volume production of a single model vehicle, Ford lowered the Model T's sales price to a very competitive $440, reaching a vast number of consumers at the low end of the market. Ford's sales grew by more than 1,800 percent between 1910 and 1915, the year the company churned out close to 400,000 vehicles. During this period, GM's overall market share fell from 21 percent to less than 10 percent.[11]

In 1915, the time was ripe for Billy Durant to return to the scene. During his time away from General Motors, he had formed a new company with Louis Chevrolet, who had been a race car driver for Buick in the early 1900s. The success of the Chevrolet model allowed Durant to complete a stock trade with GM and acquire a majority share of the corporation. With the backing of other GM directors, including chemical company magnate Pierre du Pont, who admired Durant's business acumen, Durant was able to regain control of General Motors. He assumed the role of president of the corporation on June 1, 1916.[12]

The second time around, Durant was more successful with the organization and capitalization of GM. He expanded his vision of the corporation as the maker of automobiles that appealed to customers at all levels of lifestyle and price point. Under his restored leadership, General Motors made many significant acquisitions, among them a spark-plug manufacturing company run by Frenchman Albert Champion; an electrical component company, Delco, which made the self-starters that vastly improved the operation of gas automobiles; an auto-body company that revolutionized the automakers' mass-production capabilities; and the electric refrigeration company Frigidaire. Durant bought Frigidaire with his own money and sold it to GM for the same amount in 1919. Although the refrigeration company was only tangentially related to auto-making—air conditioning was not added to cars until many decades later—Frigidaire grew to the extent that, only nine years later, it provided $15 million in net earnings to GM. During this period, Durant also founded the General Motors Acceptance Corporation (GMAC), an industry innovation that allowed consumers to buy automobiles on credit through dealer financing.[13]

---

[10] Ibid., 150.
[11] Ibid., 112-115, 153-154.
[12] Weisberger, *The Dream Maker*, 153-201.
[13] Pelfrey, *Billy, Alfred, and General Motors*, 222, 250.

Despite the growth and prominence of GM, Durant was not able to keep his impulsive tendencies entirely under control. He still ran the organization as a one-man show and the entire corporation was structured around his vision. At the same time, Durant's personal investments became so extensive and tenuous that the board of directors feared that he would declare bankruptcy and ruin GM's reputation along with his own. Walter Chrysler, president of GM's moneymaker, Buick, was so aggravated by Durant's behavior that he resigned, and soon founded an automobile company of his own. The board of directors permanently removed Durant from the corporation in 1920, and Alfred Sloan, a former vice-president at GM, took up the helm.

General Motors changed drastically under Sloan's leadership. Durant had been a visionary leader, if a poor manager. In contrast, Sloan immediately implemented an organizational structure focused on the balance sheet rather than one person's inspiration. In his book *Billy, Alfred, and General Motors*, William Pelfrey explains that Sloan's model, in which professional managers were dedicated to the perpetuation of the enterprise, was readily embraced by other corporations and even non-profit organizations. Innovation, initiative, growth, and acquisition were allowed only after extensive research assured financial viability. As Pelfrey states, "Spontaneity and impulse belonged to the preceding era of the pioneer, not the era of the corporation as defined by Alfred Sloan. . . . [C]orporate America would never be the same." Sloan served as president of General Motors from 1920 to 1937. At the time of his retirement, the corporation had become the largest privately owned manufacturing enterprise in the world. [14]

Buick Distributors Held the Keys

One of Durant's most effective innovations, initiated shortly after he became president of Buick in 1904, was establishing a network of dealers and distributors. Initially, Buicks were stocked alongside carriages and buggies at Durant-Dort showrooms. Recognizing the need for national exposure, Durant sought out individual dealers who, like him, were charismatic salesmen. It was not unusual for a prospective dealer to approach him for the job, as Durant became well known by reputation after he single-handedly secured orders for 1,108 Buicks—far more than the company's production capacity at the time—at the 1905 automobile show in New York. By attracting independent dealers willing to capitalize their own businesses, Durant was able to build a dealer organization quickly and at minimum expense to the company.[15]

By the end of 1905, Durant had revised his sales plan and had promoted thirteen of his dealers to positions as Buick distributors, responsible for sales in the region surrounding their primary location. As planned, a network of distributors, once established and profitable, would recruit, set up, supply, and advise dealers throughout their territory. Buick's distributors were relatively autonomous, with a great deal of power and prestige that allowed them considerable latitude in promoting their products and establishing outpost dealers. In their authoritative book about the Buick company, historians Terry Dunham and Lawrence Gustin described the

[14] Ibid., 236; Rae, *The American Automobile Industry*, 45-53.
[15] Pelfrey, *Billy, Alfred, and General Motors*, 98; Dunham and Gustin, *The Buick: A Complete History*, 482.

distributors as twentieth-century feudal lords, not unlike Durant himself. Under this system, most of the distributors became very wealthy men with prosperous businesses.[16]

Durant applied the distributor-dealer network, proven to be a success with Buick, to the other companies within General Motors. This model was adopted by other automobile manufacturers, but ultimately it lasted only twenty years. Beginning with Alfred Sloan's leadership of GM in 1920, the corporation sought increased control as the implications of its new organizational scheme reached the local level. Regional distributorships gradually were purchased by GM and replaced with franchise dealerships. Once again, most other manufacturers followed suit, resulting in widespread sales practices that were vastly different from those in place at the dawn of the automobile era.[17]

Buick's Man in Minneapolis

Harry E. Pence, an early car dealer in Minneapolis, was Durant's appointee as Buick distributor for the upper Midwestern plains. The distributorship was a logical advancement for Pence, based both on his personal reputation for success and his location in a growing regional market.

Harry Pence was born in Ohio in 1867. He attended Springboro public schools and Eastman Business College in Poughkeepsie, New York, and worked for a time on a farm near Springboro. Pence first came to Minneapolis as a young man to work for his uncle, John Pence, as manager of the Pence Opera House on Hennepin Avenue and Second Street. Young Harry took time off to make a trip around the world and returned to Minneapolis before the turn of the century.

Pence held several jobs in river transport and real estate before entering the automobile trade. In 1903, he opened an automobile dealership—one of the city's first—in a one-story building on Third Street South between Third and Fourth Avenues. The business had an initial capitalization of $2,200. Pence dealt in a variety of early makes featuring both electric and gasoline engines, including the Stevens-Duryea, Autocar, Packard, Pope-Toledo, Pope-Waverly, and Orient Buckboard. He sold eighty-three cars during his first year in business, an impressive start considering that there were fewer than 3,000 cars registered in Minnesota at the time. Pence was fortunate when he added Buicks to his inventory. Not only did Buick prove to be one of the most enduring brands, it also had an enviable reputation that attracted customers. One dealer later asserted: "In the early days a

---

[16] One Buick dealer who got his start by promoting himself to Durant was San Franciscan Charles S. Howard, whose only prior sales experience was in a bicycle shop. Durant was so impressed with Howard's motivation that he appointed him the sole Buick distributor for eight western states. Howard, the future owner of the legendary racehorse Seabiscuit, rose to the pinnacle of success. Durant's distributorships contrasted with the sales approach of the Ford Motor Company, which built "factory branches" (including one in downtown Minneapolis) where cars were assembled and sold. Dunham and Gustin, *The Buick: A Complete History*, 480-482; Pelfrey, *Billy, Alfred, and General Motors*, 98.

[17] Dunham and Gustin, *The Buick: A Complete History*, 480-483; Pelfrey, *Billy, Alfred, and General Motors*, 99.

Chevrolet was a Chevrolet, a Ford was a Ford, and a Plymouth was a Plymouth. But if you were lucky enough to own a Buick or could become a Buick dealer, you really had something."[18]

Pence was selected as a Buick distributor in 1905 and given control of between thirty and fifty dealerships in Minnesota, the Dakotas, and Montana. Pence wholesaled the other brands he carried in these areas as well. Buick sales rose substantially in volume in 1906 and "The House of Pence" became well established in the automobile sales business, claiming the distinction of being the largest dealership in the west. That same year, the dealership moved to a four-story building that Pence commissioned for his growing company at 717 Hennepin Avenue. In early 1908, responding to the increasing demand for Buicks, Pence eliminated some of his other lines and purchased a lot at Hennepin and Eighth Street on which to expand.[19]

Pence planned to build a six-story building at 800 Hennepin Avenue that would function as a salesroom, garage, and warehouse. Between the time that plans were announced in the summer of 1908 and when the building permit was issued in December of that year, the height of the building had been increased by two stories. Harry Pence expanded his building plans just as Durant launched General Motors. A firm correlation exists between the finished size of the Pence Automobile Company Building, the formation of GM, and Pence's role as a distributor for that corporation. Upon the building's completion, Pence began stocking additional GM brands, including Oldsmobile, Oakland, and Welch.[20]

Buick was still Pence's primary line, and a national advertisement from 1912 indicates the level of his success as a distributor. The ad proclaimed that the Buick was "the car that sells by the train load," and itemized the company's largest car shipments in January: twenty train-car loads to Dayton, Ohio; thirty to Lincoln, Nebraska; fifty to San Francisco; and a total of ninety-six—in two shipments, five days apart—to Minneapolis. An article in the local paper affirmed this record-breaking shipment and identified the Pence Automobile Company as the recipient of the 547 Buicks, valued at approximately $600,000.[21]

The role of the distributor was especially influential in the upper Midwestern plains, a largely rural area that stood to benefit immensely from automotive transport of people and agricultural goods. Pence's territory expanded beyond his original four-state area to parts of Wisconsin and Wyoming. He opened warehouses and branch dealerships under his own name in Duluth, Minnesota, Fargo, North Dakota, and Huron, Mitchell, and

---

[18] Pence also sold Pierce Great Arrow and Babcock Electric cars; "Largest Automobile House in the West!," Pence Automobile Company advertisement, *Minneapolis Journal*, February 18, 1906; "A Group of the Best the Market Affords by an Old and Reliable House," Pence Automobile Company advertisement, *Minneapolis Journal*, February 17, 1907; Dunham and Gustin, *The Buick: A Complete History*, 480; "Pence At Home to Visitors," *Minneapolis Journal*, February 20, 1910.

[19] "Pence Plant Prospers," *Minneapolis Journal*, February 18, 1906; "Pence Company Covers an Extensive Territory," *Minneapolis Journal*, February 17, 1907.

[20] "H. E. Pence Buys Good Corner," *Minneapolis Journal*, September 13, 1908; "Pence Building Now Complete," *Minneapolis Journal*, September 5, 1909.

[21] Dunham and Gustin, *The Buick: A Complete History*, 480; "Four Train Loads of Automobiles," *Minneapolis Journal*, February 13, 1912; "Business Dull? Never Better!" *Minneapolis Journal*, February 18, 1912.

Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Reportedly, one of Harry Pence's sales strategies was "to obtain new cars from Flint, round up the same number of drivers and then head west out of Minneapolis looking for buyers. The caravan would travel as far as necessary for Pence to sell all his cars, each driver returning home when the Buick he was piloting was sold." It probably was just this sort of aggressive marketing that appealed to Durant and earned Pence his elite position as one of thirteen Buick distributors.[22]

Pence boosted morale and sales by entertaining his dealers aboard his own Pullman car and, in 1909, treated them to a sales jaunt, taking a trainload of sales agents and associated businessmen to visit the Buick factory in Flint. Described by the press as "a sensation in autodom," the excursion occupied a train of six new Pullman cars, two buffet cars, and a baggage car. The trip departed December 28 and returned to Minneapolis on January 3 after a day's layover in Chicago, two days in Flint, and a New Year's Eve party in Detroit. Pence concluded the tour with a breakfast for his agents in Minneapolis, at which the men were reported to have cheered, "Buick! Buick! Well, I guess. Pence's Territory; Yes! Yes! Yes!"[23]

Historians Dunham and Gustin state that the role of the thirteen original Buick distributors, who formed a leadership organization called the Buick Pioneers, was incalculably significant in the history of the company. In addition to serving as primary cogs in the sales machine, the distributors—obviously loyal and competent men—helped to finance company operations by providing advance payment for their orders and even, on occasion, lending money to Durant to prevent a cash-flow crisis. As GM changed under Sloan's leadership, the distributorship network was gradually dismantled in favor of closer corporate control. Pence held out longer than many other dealers and distributors, ultimately retiring from the automobile business and selling his company back to General Motors in 1930.[24]

Early Automobile Shows

In the early days, Harry Pence served as a promoter and advocate for the automobile sales industry no matter what the brand. He was elected to the board of the newly formed Minneapolis Automobile Dealers Association in 1905. By virtue of his position on that board, he was installed as president of the Minneapolis Automobile Show Association in 1906 and put in charge of producing its first local exhibition. The earliest car shows were intended primarily for dealers and company representatives, but they were avidly attended by members of the general public. Then, as now, automobile shows allowed curiosity seekers and prospective buyers alike to kick the tires and see how the cars worked. The shows quickly emerged as a key vehicle for advertising and

---

[22] The Fargo location of the Pence Automobile Company was designed by Long, Lamoreaux, and Long in 1920 and is listed on the National Register for its architectural significance. Noreen Roberts, "Pence Automobile Company Warehouse," National Register Nomination and Inventory, November 30, 1993; "Buick Dealers Ready," *Minneapolis Journal*, December 26, 1909; Dunham and Gustin, *The Buick: A Complete History*, 483.

[23] Quote from "Pence Salesmen Return," *Minneapolis Journal*, January 3, 1910; "Buick Dealers Ready," *Minneapolis Journal*, December 26, 1909; "Pence at Home to Visitors," *Minneapolis Journal*, February 20, 1910.

[24] Pence served as the first president of the Buick Pioneers. "Death Ends Colorful Career of H. E. Pence," *Minneapolis Journal*, March 30, 1933; Dunham and Gustin, *The Buick: A Complete History*, 483.

promoting the new machines. Soon they became remarkable social events with live music, art displays, and a carnival atmosphere. Pence retained his position as president of the Minneapolis Automobile Show Association into the mid-1910s.[25]

The first automobile exhibition in Minneapolis was held in 1907, only seven years after the first show in the United States took place in New York City. The early date of the Minneapolis show indicates the comparative strength of the local market, as other prominent shows at the time were in the metropolises of Chicago and Philadelphia. The first exhibition, which was held at the Minneapolis Armory on Kenwood Parkway, drew a crowd of over 10,000 people. Its popularity was attributed to pent up demand by automobile enthusiasts from the Upper Midwest who had bypassed the Chicago show, held the previous fall, waiting instead for the debut of the Minneapolis dealers' lines. No automobile show was held in Minneapolis in 1908, but the exhibition became an annual event beginning the following year.[26]

Local Growth of the Automobile Trade

The success of the local automobile exhibitions was not surprising given the favorable climate for vehicles in Minneapolis, where even the topography was seen as an asset for the "greatest automobile city of the Northwest." (Saint Paul was considered at a disadvantage due to its many hills and narrow roads.) Statewide, the number of cars was also increasing. In 1903, when Pence established his first dealership, there were only a few thousand automobiles in Minnesota. By the end of the decade, more than 7,000 cars had been registered in the state. Two years later, the number had grown to 20,000. Julius Schmahl, then secretary of state, estimated that there would be 30,000 cars in Minnesota by the end of 1912. The rapid growth of car ownership in Minnesota led the state to be regarded as "better than average," according to Schmahl. In fact, throughout the first decade of the twentieth century, Minnesota ranked ninth in number of registered automobiles, behind only the heavily populated states of the mid-Atlantic region, California (where the number of cars surged following the 1906 San Francisco earthquake), and Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio, three Midwestern states with significant car-manufacturing plants.[27]

The farm economy of greater Minnesota contributed to the growth of regional automobile sales. Initially, farmers were opposed to cars, believing that they were a hazard to horses and humans and likely to cause more problems than they solved. As the economic and social benefits of the machines became more apparent, farmers generally overcame their concerns and, in fact, became the chief proponents of rural road improvements. By 1912 farmers owned about 15 percent of the automobiles in the state, and economic forecasters predicted that

[25] "Auto Dealers' Association to Incorporate," *Minneapolis Journal*, February 15, 1905; "Pence Foresees Selling Harvest," *Minneapolis Journal*, February 18, 1912; Flink, *America Adopts the Automobile*, 49.
[26] "Exhibits at Auto Show Attract Thousands," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, March 2, 1907; "Automobile Show Bigger and Better Than Ever," *Minneapolis Journal*, February 20, 1910; "Pence Foresees Selling Harvest," *Minneapolis Journal*, February 18, 1912.
[27] "Minneapolis Can Profit by Success of Chicago Automobile Show," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, February 17, 1907; Julius A. Schmahl, "20,000 Automobiles Used in Minnesota," *Minneapolis Journal*, February 18, 1912; Flink, *America Adopts the Automobile*, 45, 76.

bountiful crops that year would inspire even more farmers to purchase cars. Pence acknowledged that Minneapolis, as "the metropolis of the northwest farming territory," was ideally situated to sell cars to farmers, who were "being converted to the use of the automobile even faster than the businessmen of the cities." Minneapolis's grain and milling trade and the regional and local prosperity it wrought were a boon to automobile sales, a symbiotic relationship noted by Pence in a 1912 interview.[28]

Car ownership in Minneapolis grew at a rate that outpaced the state as a whole. In 1911, 20 percent of the cars in Minnesota were owned by residents of the City of Lakes. The city's growing suburban areas and proximity to the summer houses and resorts of Lake Minnetonka were significant factors that influenced the rapid adoption of automobiles in Hennepin County. Minneapolis came to be known as "a great motorcar center" due to both the high rate of car ownership and the presence of several prominent dealerships, which supplied cars throughout the Northwest.[29]

Minneapolis's "Automobile Row"

Communities across the nation felt the physical impact of the growing automobile industry. As cars became more numerous, roads and streets were graded and improved, leading to more favorable driving conditions year-round. The fabric of cities and towns was also altered. Commercial districts made up of dealerships, service stations, and other businesses devoted to the automobile trade were common in cities throughout the United States. From New York, Washington, Saint Louis, and San Francisco to Cedar Rapids, Fargo, and Oklahoma City, cities of all sizes had areas where showrooms and parts stores congregated. This kind of commercial area, typically located in the downtown core, was commonly known as "Automobile Row."

The south end of Hennepin Avenue and adjacent streets quickly emerged as Minneapolis's Automobile Row. The national journal *Automobile* announced the formation of the district in October 1908:

> Recent developments among the local agencies indicate that Minneapolis will have a "Motor Row" worthy of the name. Five of the large companies have closed deals involving heavy investments for sites and elaborate buildings on Hennepin Avenue, the main thoroughfare of the downtown district, and building operations have been started. . . . These are among the largest agencies in the Twin Cities and such a general movement to a new locality carries weight.

The companies identified were the Pence Automobile Company, the Stoddard-Dayton dealership, the Minnesota Motor Sales Company, the local branch of the Winton Company, and the Maxwell-Briscoe Company. The article described the location of the Stoddard-Dayton dealership at Hennepin and Ninth Street as ideal, probably because it was located in the heart of the emerging automobile district and in proximity to the

[28] "Pence Foresees Selling Harvest," *Minneapolis Journal*, February 18, 1912; Schmahl, "20,000 Automobiles Used in Minnesota."
[29] "Automobile Show Bigger and Better than Ever," *Minneapolis Journal*, February 20, 1910.

steady traffic of the downtown thoroughfare. Pence is reported to have said that he believed Hennepin would become the Broadway of Minneapolis and was the best location for a retail outlet in his business.[30]

An article in a special "garages" section of the *Minneapolis Journal* supplied additional details about the growth of the local sales industry:

> When suddenly Minneapolis sprang to the front as a great automobile distributing and sales center, three years ago, a scarcity of garages was found to be a handicap. This shortage is being corrected as rapidly as possible, and in 1909 the erection of automobile garages was an important feature. It will continue to be in 1910, as the procession of new machines seeking representation in Minneapolis continues, and the outlook is for a tremendous business the coming year.[31]

Accompanying the article were photographs of the new buildings including the Nicollet Avenue Automobile Company at 1332 Nicollet, handling the Autocar; W. R. Waters and Sons at Fourteenth and Hennepin, dealers of Stevens-Duryea models; Detroit Electric, which built a showroom for its electric cars at Hennepin and Fifteenth; and two firms that shared space in a new building at Twelfth and Hennepin, the John Burmeister Company, a Locomobile dealer, and the Northwestern Stearns Company, dealing in Stearns and Croxton-Keaton cars. The article also mentioned the planned construction of two more garages to house the Fawkes and Haynes automobile companies on Hennepin between Maple Street and Harmon Place. In 1912, a listing in the *Minneapolis Journal* identified sixty motor car dealers in the vicinity of downtown, indicating that the industry continued to grow. More than one-third of these dealerships had Hennepin Avenue addresses and sixteen more were located within a couple blocks of Hennepin.[32]

Most of the buildings of Minneapolis's Automobile Row were one or two stories in height. The Pence Automobile Company Building towered over them, literally and figuratively. An article in the *Minneapolis Journal* in July 1909 identified the building, then nearing completion, as one of the prominent landmarks of the growing Automobile Row. In February 1910, the opening of the Pence building was described as "the crowning event of the year in the garage opening line. . . . This is regarded as the finest structure of its kind in the world, and as a building is accepted as one of the most likeable in appearance in the city."[33]

---

[30] "Minneapolis to Have an Auto Row," *Automobile* 19 (October 15, 1908); "Will Erect Auto Plant: Harry E. Pence Buys Methodist Church Property at Tenth Street and Hennepin," *Minneapolis Journal*, January 28, 1912; "Hennepin Church Sold to H. E. Pence," *Minneapolis Journal*, January 25, 1912; "Cars Have Sold Well," *Minneapolis Tribune*, February 17, 1907.

[31] "Garage" was the common term for dealerships at the time. "Dealers Need Many Garages," *Minneapolis Journal*, February 20, 1910.

[32] The Fawkes and Haynes Buildings now form the nucleus of the Harmon Place Historic District, locally designated by the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission. Ibid.; "Minneapolis Motor Car Dealers," *Minneapolis Journal*, February 18, 1912.

[33] "Dealers Need Many Garages," *Minneapolis Journal*, February 20, 1910.

Although historic newspapers and the popular press were prone to hyperbole, the flattering depiction of the Pence building is indicative of the building's prominence at the time of its construction. A 1910 article in the *Minneapolis Journal* claimed that the Pence building was the "Greatest Automobile Repository on Earth." A postcard of the building from the same period described it as "the largest, finest, and best equipped of the kind in the world."[34]

Construction of the Pence Building

The *Minneapolis Journal* announced the construction of the Pence building in 1908, shortly after Pence purchased the site. Initially, the building was planned to be six stories in height with a footprint of 160 feet by 75 feet, but the building permit issued on December 18, 1908 indicates that two stories were added to the plans before construction commenced. The finished area, including the basement, was 102,000 square feet. The building, constructed at a cost of $200,000, was occupied in the fall of 1909.[35]

The completed eight-story building had floors devoted to sales showrooms and offices; automobile assembly, finishing, repair, and service; and storage for parts, accessories, and completed vehicles. A freight elevator near the rear of the building opened directly to Eighth Street, allowing cars to be driven onto the lift and raised to the upper floors. Built-in machinery included a central air-compressor system, an electric motor supplying power to the shop floors, and an overhead crane that spanned the length of twelve steel-lined repair pits. This equipment, which cost $75,000, was installed "to facilitate the handling of cars, whether it be in repairing or getting them ready for shipment."[36]

Pence invited the general public to tour the entire building during the Minneapolis Automobile Exhibition held in February 1910, just a few months after the building was put in service. Visitors encountered a Classical Revival-style commercial block typical of the era. The building had a tripartite scheme with a base of ornamental terra-cotta, a shaft of glazed light-tan brick, and an elaborate cornice of terra-cotta and galvanized steel. At the street level, two storefront display windows flanked the main showroom entrance, which was centered on the Hennepin Avenue facade. Over the entrance was a canopy with a wire-glass roof and ornamental metal trim, suspended from the facade by four metal chains. The new models in the showroom were visible to passersby through large plate-glass windows with shallow bulkheads. Display bays extended along most of the Eighth Street facade as well, but one bay was recessed for automobiles to drive off the street into the showroom and service elevator.

---

[34] "Pence Automobile Company Building, 800-804 Hennepin, Minneapolis," postcard ca. 1910, available at Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul.

[35] "H. E. Pence Buys Good Corner," *Minneapolis Journal*, September 13, 1908; "Biggest Automobile Building Erected in City of Minneapolis," *Minneapolis Journal*, January 10, 1909; "Minneapolis Has Finest Automobile Building in World," *Minneapolis Journal*, July 19, 1909.

[36] The space allocation and use of each floor was described in detail in "Pence Building Now Complete," *Minneapolis Journal*, September 5, 1909, and "Pence at Home to Visitors," *Minneapolis Journal*, February 20, 1910.

Ironically, the building's obsolescence was anticipated from the start. Pence intended that the structure would be adapted some day for use as a hotel, office building, or mercantile house. By January 1912, the building's value had tripled, and Pence planned to remodel it into a mercantile establishment. For unknown reasons, his proposal waned until 1929, when the interior was remodeled to house the offices of the Minneapolis Gas and Light Company. In the meantime, Pence diversified his locations as the nature of automobile sales began to change. Pence desired more floor area and decreased dependence on elevators, and trade-ins and used cars became important for the industry. Pence converted the former Army and Navy Building at Hennepin and Tenth Street into a used car showroom and constructed an additional warehouse at 801 Washington Avenue North. The Pence Automobile Company retained an office on one of the upper stories at 800 Hennepin until Pence sold the company to General Motors in 1930.[37]

The exterior of the building was altered beginning in the mid-1930s when the cornice was removed. The following decade, polished, brown granite panels and smaller, metal-framed display windows replaced the original storefronts and the entrance canopy was removed. Replacement windows were installed throughout the building in the 1960s. In 1991 and 1993, two modern skyways were constructed connecting to the Hennepin Avenue and rear facades of the building. The interior has been remodeled repeatedly for office use since its initial conversion from automobile sales and service in 1929.

Harry Pence's Far-reaching Success

Harry Pence was admired as an astute businessman who had his finger on the pulse of the growing automobile industry. A 1910 article in the *Minneapolis Journal* described Pence as a man who "thinks five years ahead," and his diversification into used car sales is one example of that ability. As an entrepreneur, Pence engaged in a number of other business ventures in the early decades of the twentieth century, several related to the growing automobile presence. Pence organized a business that led sight-seeing bus tours of Minneapolis in 1906, incorporated a company to manufacture speedometer components that same year, and founded a coin-operated taxicab company in 1909. In 1914, he constructed a two-story public parking ramp, possibly the first downtown, on First Avenue South adjacent to the Pence Automobile Company Building. The facility offered services such as car washes, fueling, and oil changes in addition to convenient downtown parking.[38]

Pence also was involved in business ventures outside of the automobile industry. He renewed his activity in real estate in the late 1910s when he formed the Walker-Pence Company with descendents of T. B. Walker. The Walker-Pence Company developed locally significant properties such as the State Theater in Minneapolis and the Commodore Hotel in Saint Paul. In 1918, Pence founded the Lincoln National Bank and the Lincoln Trust

[37] The warehouse on Washington Avenue still exists, but was recently remodeled as condominium lofts. The building that housed the used car showroom has been demolished and the site redeveloped. "Hennepin Church Sold to H. E. Pence," *Minneapolis Journal*, January 25, 1912; "Will Erect Auto Plant," *Minneapolis Journal*, January 28, 1912.

[38] The parking garage was demolished in 1984. "Storage Garage Planned," *Minneapolis Journal*, May 18, 1914; "Minneapolis to Have Taxicabs," *Minneapolis Journal*, January 22, 1909; "Seeing Minneapolis Service Improved," *Minneapolis Journal*, May 6, 1906.

and Savings Bank with several partners, and served as chairman of the board of at least one of the banks. Two years later, Pence commissioned a ten-story edifice to house the banks at 730 Hennepin Avenue, directly across Eighth Street from his automobile company building. The banks were acquired by Northwestern National Bank in 1922 and became known as that company's Lincoln Office. In 1952, the branch office expanded, and it occupied space in the Pence Automobile Company Building for many years.[39]

The building at 730 Hennepin, designed by Long, Lamoreaux, and Long, is similar to 800 Hennepin in size, style, and location, and is often confused with the Pence Automobile Company Building. In actuality, the latter Pence building had only a limited connection to Harry Pence and was constructed late in his career. The building at 800 Hennepin Avenue, by contrast, had a longstanding association with Pence and the automobile sales company that made him a wealthy, powerful businessman.

In 1930, Pence sold his automobile company to General Motors and retired. His Minneapolis dealership was purchased from GM by Winfield R. Stephens Sr., who had been the sales manager for the Pence Automobile Company for the previous seventeen years. Several other longtime members of Pence's staff also joined the successor firm. Stephens Buick set up a new car showroom in an existing building on the north side of Eighth Street, across from the two-story garage built by Pence's company in 1914, and took over operation of Pence's used car department at Hennepin and Tenth Street. W. R. Stephens was succeeded as president of the company by his son, Win Stephens Jr., in 1958. Stephens Buick maintained its downtown operation until 1963, when the company relocated to Saint Louis Park adjacent to Highway 100. Win Stephens Buick operated in the Saint Louis Park location until 1993, when it was sold to another local car dealer and renamed.

Three years after retiring from the automobile trade, Harry Pence died of a heart attack at the age of sixty-five.

Conclusion

The Pence Automobile Company Building at 800 Hennepin Avenue stands as the flagship of the early automobile sales industry in Minneapolis. Clearly a product of its time, the eight-story structure was occupied by the Pence company from 1909 to 1929, a twenty-year period that represents the formation, growth, and dominance of the General Motors Corporation and the flourishing of the automobile industry in the United States.

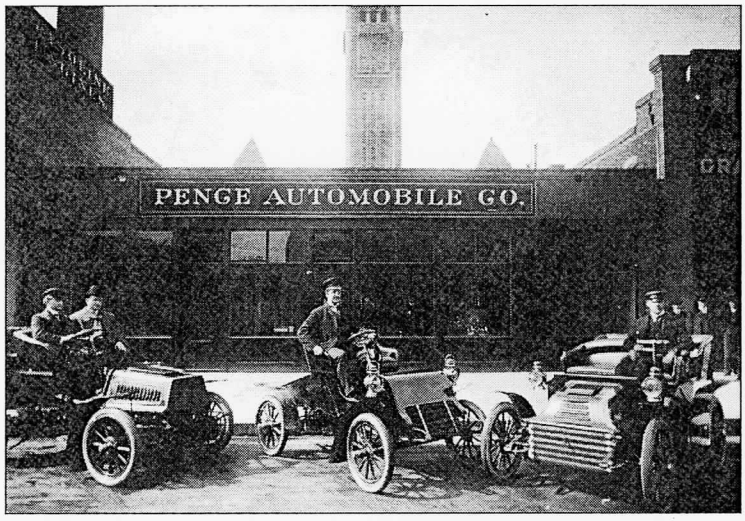
Most of Hennepin Avenue's Automobile Row has been demolished—replaced, ironically, with freeway infrastructure and surface parking lots. The Pence Automobile Company Building stands at the corner of

[39] The original Walker Art Museum was located in the house of T. B. Walker at Eighth Street and Hennepin, directly across the street from the Pence Automobile Company Building and now the site of the historic State Theater. T. B. Walker and Family Papers, 1856-1990, available at the Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul; "Death Ends Colorful Career of H. E. Pence;" Charles Sterling Popple, *Development of Two Bank Groups in the Central Northwest: A Study in Bank Policy and Organization* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1944), 114.

Hennepin Avenue and Eighth Street, slightly altered but retaining sufficient integrity to communicate its historical significance. The Pence Automobile Company is individually eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A as a significant resource associated with the phenomenal local and regional growth of the automobile trade during the early twentieth century, and under Criterion B as a representation of the work of Harry E. Pence, an important automobile distributor and businessman. The property is significant in the areas of Commerce and Industry, with a period of significance from 1909 to 1929.



Left: Harry E. Pence, President, Minneapolis Automobile Show Association, 1910. Portrait from *Minneapolis Journal*.

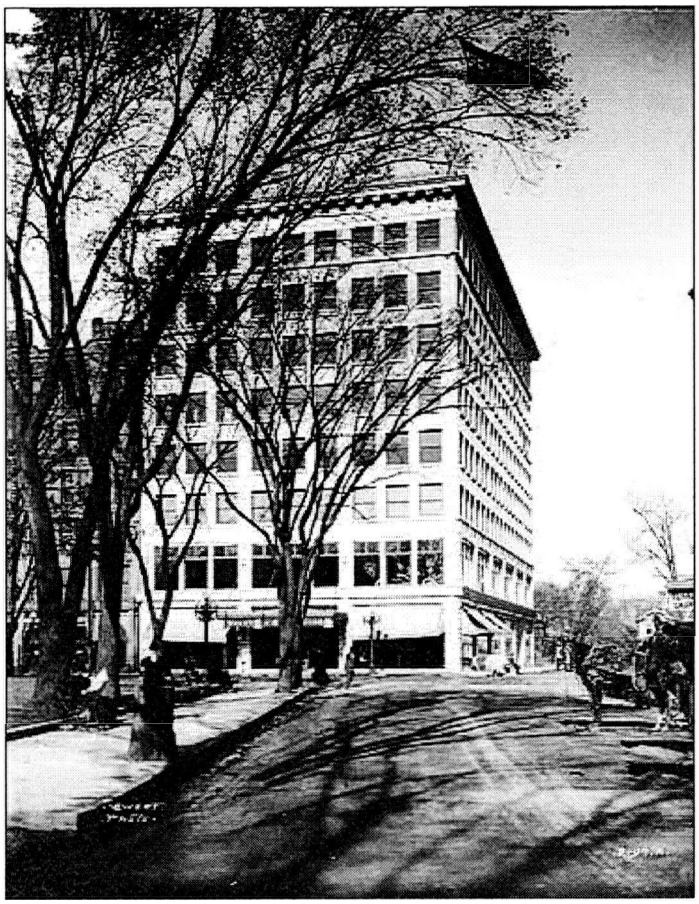


Above: Pence Automobile Company, 315-319 Third Avenue South, ca. 1903.

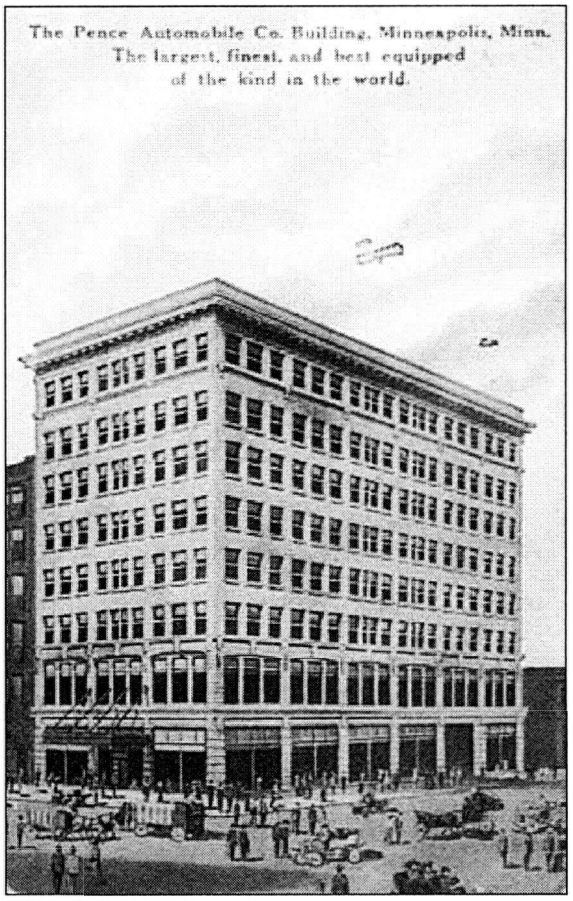
Right: Pence Automobile Company, 717-719 Hennepin Avenue, ca. 1905.

Photographs from Minnesota Historical Society Collections.





Pence Automobile Company Building, Eighth and Hennepin / Sweet, photographer, ca. 1910



Pence Automobile Company Building, 800-804 Hennepin / Postcard, ca. 1910

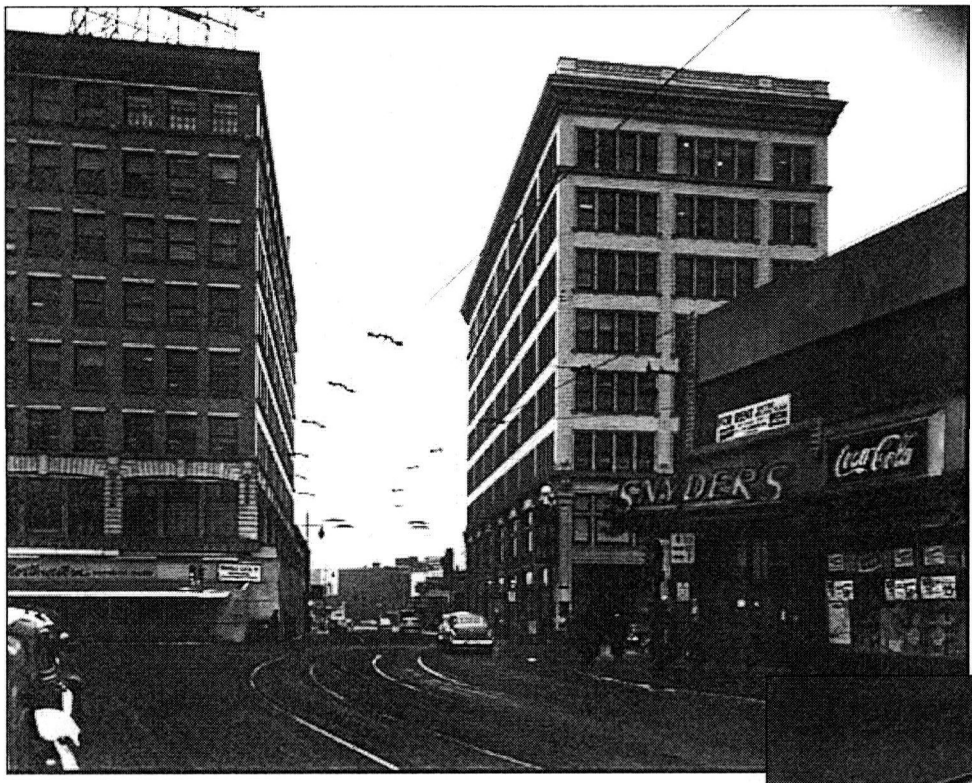
Photographs from Minnesota Historical Society Collections.



Above: Buick distributors, H. E. Pence in foreground, 1929. Photograph from *Buick: A Complete History* by Terry B. Dunham and Lawrence R. Gustin.



Right: Pence Automobile Company print advertisement, *Minneapolis Journal*, February 20, 1910.



Above: View on Eighth Street at Hennepin looking west, Pence Automobile Company Building at left / Norton and Peel, photographers, 1952.



Right: Lincoln Office, Northwestern National Bank (formerly Pence Automobile Company Building) / Norton and Peel, photographers, 1969.

Photographs from Minnesota Historical Society Collections.

Sources Consulted

Books and Other Publications

Bohon, C. D. "Survival and Triumph: 100 Years of the Automobile Dealer." *Ward's Dealer Business*, April 1996.

Dunham, Terry B. and Lawrence R. Gustin. *The Buick: A Complete History*, rev. 6th ed. [New Albany, Ind.]: Automobile Quarterly Publications, 2002.

Epstein, Ralph C. *The Automobile Industry: Its Economic and Commercial Development*. Chicago: A. W. Shaw Company, 1928.

Flink, James J. *America Adopts the Automobile, 1895-1910*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1970.

———. *The Automobile Age*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988.

Fullerton, Hugh S. "Bringing the Market Nearer: The Automobile is Doing Good Work for the Farmer." *Collier's*, April 17, 1909.

Genat, Robert. *The American Car Dealership*. Osceola, Wisc.: MBI Publishing Company, 1999.

General Motors, the First 75 Years: A History of Transportation. New York: Crown Publishers, 1983.

Gustin, Lawrence R. *Billy Durant: Creator of General Motors*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973.

"How 'Tis Done in Northwest." *Automobile* 20 (January 21, 1909): 182.

Madsen, Axel. *The Deal Maker: How William C. Durant Made General Motors*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1999.

Marquis, Albert Nelson, ed. *The Book of Minnesotans: A Biographical Dictionary of Leading Living Men of the State of Minnesota.* Chicago: A.N. Marquis, 1907.

McShane, Clay. *Down the Asphalt Path: The Automobile and the American City*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

"Minneapolis to Have an Auto Row." *Automobile* 19 (October 15, 1908): 97.

Ominsky, Alan. "A Catalog of Minnesota-Made Cars and Trucks." *Minnesota History* 43 (Fall 1972): 93-97.

Pelfrey, William. *Billy, Alfred, and General Motors: the Story of Two Unique Men, a Legendary Company, and a Remarkable Time in American History*. New York: AMACOM, 2006.

Rae, John B. *The American Automobile Industry*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984.

Newspaper Sources

"A Million in Buicks." Pence Automobile Company print advertisement. *Minneapolis Journal*, February 18, 1912.

"Argument for the Automobile." *Minneapolis Journal*, October 8, 1911.

"Auto Demand Exceeds Supply." *Minneapolis Journal*, February 20, 1910.

"Auto Trade Has Rapid Growth." *Minneapolis Journal*, January 10, 1909.

"Automobile Dealers Fresh from Trip to Factory." *Minneapolis Journal*, January 3, 1910.

"Automobile Is Not a Fad but Is Here to Stay." *Minneapolis Tribune*, March 3, 1907.

"Automobile Show Bigger and Better than Ever." *Minneapolis Journal*, February 20, 1910.

"Automobile Today." *Minneapolis Journal*, February 18, 1912.

"Automobile Trade." *Minneapolis Journal*, March 20, 1906.

"Biggest Automobile Building Erected in City of Minneapolis." *Minneapolis Journal*, January 10, 1909.

"Buick Dealers Ready: Train Load of Automobile Men Starts from Minneapolis December 28." *Minneapolis Journal*, December 26, 1909.

"Buick: Easily the Most Popular Automobile in the World!!" Pence Automobile Company print advertisement. *Minneapolis Journal*, April 24, 1910.

"Buick: The Car of Universal Satisfaction." Pence Automobile Company print advertisement. *Minneapolis Journal*, February 20, 1910.

"Business Dull? Never Better! One Motor Company Gets Order for $600,000 Worth of Cars and Fills It." *Minneapolis Journal*, February 18, 1912.

Butman, John R. "Auto Show: Minneapolis Right to the Front in Chicago's Big Exhibition." *Minneapolis Tribune*, February 3, 1907.

———. "Minneapolis Can Profit by Success of Chicago Automobile Show." *Minneapolis Tribune*, February 17, 1907.

"Buys Four Laughs at $1,000 Apiece: Harry E. Pence Becomes Member of Chamber of Commerce to Foil the Doorkeeper." *Minneapolis Journal*, September 4, 1914.

"Cars Handled in Minneapolis." *Minneapolis Journal*, February 20, 1910.

"Cars of All Kinds are Already in Demand." *Minneapolis Journal*, February 18, 1906.

"Chicago Exhibit Shows What Minneapolis Has In Sight: Scarcity of Minneapolitans at Windy City Show Indicates that They Are Relying on the Minneapolis Show—Minneapolis Dealers Active in Chicago." *Minneapolis Journal*, February 10, 1907.

"Dealers Need Many Garages." *Minneapolis Journal*, February 20, 1910.

"Death Rends Colorful Career of H. E. Pence." *Minneapolis Journal*, March 30, 1933.

"Eight-Story Building Exclusively for Auto Purposes." *Minneapolis Journal*, April 25, 1909.

"Exhibits at Auto Show Attract Thousands." *Minneapolis Tribune*, March 3, 1907.

"$48,000 in Trophies: Buick Collection Shown by Chevrolet in Pence Exhibit." *Minneapolis Journal*, February 20, 1910.

"Four Train Loads of Automobiles: Record Shipment of Cars Made to Minneapolis Dealer, Storage a Problem." *Minneapolis Journal*, February 13, 1912.

"Gas Company Moving to its New Offices." *Minneapolis Star*, February 22, 1930.

"Gas Company To Move into Auto Firm Building." *Minneapolis Star*, December 24, 1929.

"Group of the Best the Market Affords by an Old and Reliable House." Pence Automobile Company print advertisement. *Minneapolis Tribune*, February 17, 1907.

"H. E. Pence Buys Good Corner." *Minneapolis Journal*, September 13, 1908.

"Harry Pence Has Praise for Show." *Minneapolis Tribune*, February 5, 1907.

"Hennepin Church Sold to H. E. Pence." *Minneapolis Journal*, January 25, 1912.

"Largest Automobile House in the West!" Pence Automobile Company print advertisement. *Minneapolis Journal*, February 18, 1906.

"Long List of Entries for First Automobile Show." *Minneapolis Tribune*, February 24, 1907.

"Looking Ahead Pence's Secret." *Minneapolis Journal*, April 24, 1910.

"Minneapolis and Chicago Compared." *Minneapolis Tribune*, February 17, 1907.

"Minneapolis Automobile Show Association Officers." *Minneapolis Journal*, February 18, 1912.

"Minneapolis Has Finest Automobile Building in World." *Minneapolis Journal*, July 19, 1909.

"Minneapolis Motor Car Dealers." *Minneapolis Journal*, February 18, 1912.

"Minneapolis Show Will Be a Big One." *Minneapolis Tribune*, February 11, 1907.

"Minneapolis to Have Taxicabs." *Minneapolis Journal*, January 22, 1909.

"Minnesota Has 67,365 Autos." *Minneapolis Journal*, May 16, 1915.

"New Faces on Minneapolis Automobile Row." *Minneapolis Journal*, February 20, 1910.

"1908 Buick Here." Pence Automobile Company print advertisement. *Minneapolis Journal*, January 5, 1908.

"Pence at Home to Visitors." *Minneapolis Journal*, February 20, 1910.

"Pence Auto Co." Pence Automobile Company print advertisement. *Minneapolis Tribune*, March 9, 1907.

"Pence Building Now Complete." *Minneapolis Journal*, September 5, 1909.

"Pence Building Open." *Minneapolis Journal*, February 20, 1910.

"Pence Company Covers an Extensive Territory." *Minneapolis Tribune*, February 17, 1907.

"Pence Foresees Selling Harvest." *Minneapolis Journal*, February 18, 1912.

"Pence Gives Out $200,000 Building Plan." *Minneapolis Star*, December 25, 1929.

"Pence Plant Prospers." *Minneapolis Journal*, February 18, 1906.

"Pence Salesmen Return." *Minneapolis Journal*, January 3, 1910.

"Pence Showing Pleases the Prospective Buyers." *Minneapolis Tribune*, March 3, 1907.

"Preparations for the Big Auto Show Are Going Merrily On." *Minneapolis Tribune*, February 17, 1907.

"Record Auto Sale Season Expected." *Minneapolis Journal*, February 18, 1912.

Schmahl, Julius A. "20,000 Automobiles Used in Minnesota." *Minneapolis Journal*, February 18, 1912.

"Seeing Minneapolis Service Improved." *Minneapolis Journal*, May 6, 1906.

"Supremacy of the Knight Type Motor." Pence Automobile Company print advertisement. *Minneapolis Journal*, February 18, 1912.

"Storage Garage Planned: Harry E. Pence Begins Erection of Two-Story Building to Cost $50,000." *Minneapolis Journal*, May 18, 1914.

"30 Carloads of Buicks." Pence Automobile Company print advertisement. *Minneapolis Tribune*, February 17, 1907.

"Will Erect Auto Plant: Harry E. Pence Buys Methodist Church Property at Tenth Street and Hennepin." *Minneapolis Journal*, January 28, 1912.

"Year's Output About 200,000: American Makers Busy Trying to Keep Up with Increasing Demands for Autos." *Minneapolis Journal*, February 20, 1910.

Plans, Drawings, and Maps

Long and Long, Architects. "Pence Building Corner Hennepin Avenue and Eighth Street, Minneapolis." Architectural plans, November 27, 1908. Available at the Northwest Architectural Archives, Elmer L. Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

———. "Specifications of the Material and Labor Required in the Erection of Fire-proof Store Building Corner Hennepin Avenue South and Eighth Street, General Work. To Be Erected for Mr. H. Pence, Minneapolis, Minn." December 3, 1908. Available at the Northwest Architectural Archives, Elmer L. Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

Long and Long, Architects, and C. F. Haglin, Contractor. "Pence Building." Structural plans, [1908]. Available at the Northwest Architectural Archives, Elmer L. Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

Sanborn Map Company. *Insurance Maps of Minneapolis, Minnesota*. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1912-1930.

———. *Insurance Maps of Minneapolis, Minnesota*. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1912-1951.

Unpublished Sources

Buick Street. Minneapolis: Stephens Buick Company, 1930. Available at the Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul.

Roberts, Norene. "Pence Automobile Company Warehouse." 1992. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. Available at the State Historical Society of North Dakota, North Dakota Heritage Center, Bismark.

Pence Automobile Company Building
Name of Property

Hennepin County MN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one

Minneapolis South, Minn.
1967, Revised 1993

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	15	478250	4980240
2.			
3.			
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 By

name/title	Erin Hanafin Berg and Charlene Roise				
organization	Hess, Roise and Company			date	July 2007
street and number	100 North First Street			telephone	612-338-1987
city or town	Minneapolis	state	MN	zip code	55401

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	Charles R. E. Johnson, Turnstone Group LLC				
street & number	90 South Seventh Street, 43rd Floor			telephone	612-317-2111
city or town	Minneapolis	state	MN	zip code	55402-4108

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine 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 (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to range from approximately 18 to 36 hours depending on several factors including, but not limited to, how much documentation may already exist on the type of property being nominated and whether the property is being nominated as part of a Multiple Property Documentation Form. In most cases, it is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form to meet minimum National Register documentation requirements. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

Verbal Boundary Description

Lot 1, Auditor's Subdivision No. 97, Minneapolis, including adjacent 1 4/10 feet of Eighth Street and Hennepin Avenue now vacated.

Boundary Justification

This boundary contains the property historically associated with the Pence Automobile Company.

Index to Photographs

Photographer: Erin Hanafin Berg
Date: July 2, 2007

Negatives: Hess, Roise and Company, Minneapolis

1. Eighth Street South looking towards Hennepin Avenue, east and north facades of Pence Automobile Company Building in background. View to west.
2. North and west facades. View to southeast.
3. West and south facades. View to northeast.
4. Detail view, first and second stories, Eighth Street (north) facade. View to east.
5. Detail view, second-story terra-cotta ornament, Eighth Street (north) facade. View to south.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Pence Automobile Company Building

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MINNESOTA, Hennepin

DATE RECEIVED: 11/14/07 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 12/04/07
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 12/19/07 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 12/28/07
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 07001314

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL:	N	DATA PROBLEM:	N	LANDSCAPE:	N	LESS THAN 50 YEARS:	N
OTHER:	N	PDIL:	N	PERIOD:	N	PROGRAM UNAPPROVED:	N
REQUEST:	N	SAMPLE:	N	SLR DRAFT:	N	NATIONAL:	N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

✓ ACCEPT ___ RETURN ___ REJECT 12-27-07 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA_____

REVIEWER_____ DISCIPLINE_____

TELEPHONE_____ DATE_____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.


THE CAPITAL

1. Pence Automobile Company Building
800 Hennepin Avenue
Minneapolis, Hennepin County, MN
See index to photographs for caption.
LOOKING WEST ON EIGHTH STREET TOWARDS HENNEPIN AVE AT EAST & NORTH FACADES OF PENCE BUILDING


MOTOR BANK
ENTRANCES
ON 8TH & 9TH
STREETS

2. Pence Automobile Company Building
800 Hennepin Avenue
Minneapolis, Hennepin County, MN
See index to photographs for caption

LOOKING SOUTHEAST AT NORTH
+ WEST FACADES


THE WORLD'S MOST
REFRESHING BEER.
NO
PARKING

3. Pence Automobile Company Building
800 Hennepin Avenue
Minneapolis, Hennepin County, MN
See index to photographs for caption.

LOOKING NORTHEAST AT WEST & SOUTH FACADES



4. Pence Automobile Company Building
800 Hennepin Avenue
Minneapolis, Hennepin County, MN
See index to photographs for caption.

LOOKING EAST AT DETAIL VIEW OF 1st & 2nd STORIES ON EIGHTH STREET (NORTH) FACADE



5. Pence Automobile Company Building
800 Hennepin Avenue
Minneapolis, Hennepin County, MN
See index to photographs for caption.

LOOKING SOUTH AT DETAIL VIEW OF 2ND STORY TERRACOTTA ORNAMENT ON EIGHTH STREET (NORTH) FACADE

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

MINNEAPOLIS SOUTH QUADRANGLE
MINNESOTA-HENNEPIN CO.
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

7374 III SW (OSSEO)
7374 II SW (NEW BRIGHTON)
7374 III SE (MINNEAPOLIS NORTH)
(EDEN PRAIRIE) 7373 IV SW
(HOPKINS) 7373 IV NW
(ST PAUL WEST) 7373 I NW
(ST PAUL SW) 7373 I SW

93°22'30" 45°00' 471 000m.E. R. 21 W. 472 20' 474 17'30" 2 190 000 FEET 480 93°15' 45°00'
4982 000m.N.
690 000 FEET
720 000 FEET
44°52'30" 4969 000m.N.
57'30" 55'

6 MI. TO INTERSTATE 94
ROBBINSDALE 2.6 MI.
ANOKA 16 MI.
ROBBINSDALE 2.9 MI.
ST. CLOUD 65 MI.
4.7 MI. TO INTERSTATE 694
ANOKA 17 MI.
BUFFALO 22 MI.
6 MI. TO INTERSTATE 494
SELANO 23 MI.
OAK KNOLL 12 MI.
COLUMBIA HEIGHTS 3.3 MI.
SOUTH ST. PAUL 11 MI.
8 MI. TO INTERSTATE 694
DULUTH 150 MI.
8 MI. TO INTERSTATE 35E
HASTINGS 29 MI.
ST. PAUL (COURTHOUSE) 8 MI.
T. 29 N.
T. 28 N.
T. 118 N.
T. 117 N.
T. 116 N.
HOPKINS 1.4 MI.
EXCELSIOR 10 MI.
4 MI. TO INTERSTATE 494
3.5 MI. TO INTERSTATE 494
1.3 MI. TO U.S. 169
2.4 MI. TO MINN. 55
I.2 MI. TO INTERSTATE 494 & MINN. 5
I MI. TO INTERSTATE 494 & MINN. 5
FARIBAULT 40 MI.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER
Boom Island
Nicollet Island
St Anthony Falls
Lake Calhoun
Lake Harriet
Cedar Lake
Lake of the Isles
Bde Maka Ska
Brownie Lake
Birch Pond
Sweeney Lake
Twin Lake
Wirth Lake
Bassett Creek
Minnehaha Creek
Bass Lake
Powderhorn Lake
Grass Lake
Wood Lake
Richfield Lake
Legion Lake
Diamond Lake
Pearl Lake
Lake Nokomis
Lake Harvey
Mirror Lake
Hawkes Lake
Twin Lakes
Lake Cornelia
Meadowbrook Lake
Minnehaha Park
Glenwood Junction
Golden Valley
ST LOUIS PARK
EDINA
MINNEAPOLIS
RICHFIELD
MINNEAPOLIS—ST PAUL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (WOLD-CHAMBERLAIN FIELD)
SOUTHDALE SHOPPING CENTER
LAKEWOOD CEMETERY
ST. MARYS CEMETERY
Glenwood Hills Hospital
Golden Valley Country Club
Golden Valley Lutheran College
Good Shepherd Sch
Golden Valley High Sch
Natchez Park
Lions Club Park
Oak Grove Sch
Radio Towers (KUXL)
Radio Towers (KSTP)
Scheids Park
Willard Sch
North Commons
North High Sch
Ascension Sch
Hall Sch
Ski Jump
Farwell Park
Lincoln Jr High Sch
Hay Sch
Grant Sch
Lovell Square
Sumner Field
Barnes Park
Harrison Park
Harrison Sch
Shopping Center
Post Office
Library
Courthouse
Armory
County Hospital
Willard Park
Basilica Sch
Metropolitan State Jr College
Loring Park
Eitel Hospital
Emerson Sch
Auditorium
Northrop Auditorium
Parade
Walker Art Center
Guthrie Theater
Minneapolis Institute
Sculpture Garden
Cowles Conservatory
Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden
Bryn Mawr Meadows
Bryn Mawr Sch
St Margaret Academy
Water Tank
Kenwood Park
Kenwood Sch
Douglas Sch
Stevens Square
Abbott Hosp
Madison Sch
Washington Sch
St Barnabas Hospital
Swedish Hospital
North Central Bible College
Elliot Park
Asbury Hospital
Kenny Rehabilitation Institute
Adams Sch
Peavey Field
Mt Sinai Hospital
Deaconess Hospital
St Stephens Sch
Washburn Fair Oaks
Humboldt Institute
Minneapolis Jr Academy
Israel Sch
Morrison Park
Clinton Field
Minneapolis School of Art
Jefferson Jr High Sch
Whittier Sch
Whittier Park
Northwestern Hospital
Stewart Field
Calhoun Beach
Calhoun Sch
Bryant Square
Ponter Park
YMCA
Mann Sch
Powderhorn Lake
Holy Name Sch
Institute of the Incarnation
Bryant Jr High Sch
Bancroft Sch
Phelps Field
Martin Luther King Park
Temple Israel Cem
Regina High Sch
Barton Sch
School of Visitation
St Joan of Arc Sch
McRae Park
Field Sch
St Josephs Orphanage
Northrop Sch
Fuller Sch
Washburn High Sch
Lynnhurst Field
Christ the King Sch
Fulton Sch
Roosevelt Jr High Sch
Water Tank
Minnehaha Park
Pearl Lake Park
Mayflower Sch
Annunciation Sch
Mt Olivet Home for the Aged
Post Office
Resurrection Sch
Hale Sch
Lake Nokomis Park
Diamond Lake Park
Todd Park
Armatage Sch
Armatage Park
Chowen Park
Anthony Jr High Sch
Kenny Park
Kenny Sch
Richfield Sch
Oak Hill Cem
Windom Sch
Madison Park
Nicollet Park
Waterworks
Taft Park
Fairview Southdale Hospital
Eraser Sch
Sheridan Sch
Water Tank
Sheridan Park
Shopping Center
Post Office
Academy of the Holy Angels
Monroe Field
Fairwood Park
Jefferson Park
Little Bobs Park
St Peters Sch
Memorial Park
City Hall
Grant Park
Lyndale Field
High Sch
Augsburg Park
Christian Park
Elliot Sch
East Jr High Sch
Lake Harriet Sch
Linden Hills Field
Library
Wayland Park
St Thomas Sch
Beards Plaisance
Southwest High Sch
Pershing Field
Fuller Sch
Water Tank
Lake Harriet Park
Lyndale Park
Loring Park
Kenwood Park
Calhoun Beach
Minnehaha Park
Pearl Lake Park
Todd Park
Diamond Lake Park
Legion Lake
Richfield Lake
Wood Lake
Grass Lake
Powderhorn Lake
Bass Lake
Cedar Lake
Lake of the Isles
Lake Calhoun
Lake Harriet
Brownie Lake
Birch Pond
Twin Lakes
Lake Cornelia
Meadowbrook Lake
Lake Harvey
Mirror Lake
Hawkes Lake
Bassett Creek
Minnehaha Creek
Sweeney Lake
Wirth Lake
Bass Lake
Glenwood Junction
Golden Valley
ST LOUIS PARK
EDINA
MINNEAPOLIS
RICHFIELD
MINNEAPOLIS—ST PAUL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (WOLD-CHAMBERLAIN FIELD)
SOUTHDALE SHOPPING CENTER
LAKEWOOD CEMETERY
ST. MARYS CEMETERY

Pence Automobile
Company Building
800 Hennepin Avenue
Minneapolis, Hennepin
County

15:478250:4980240
(NAD 1929)

Produced by the United States Geological Survey

Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA and USCE

Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1947. Field checked 1952. Revised from aerial photographs taken 1966. Field checked 1967. Map edited 1967

Hydrography compiled from information furnished by Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Projection and 10,000-foot grid ticks: Minnesota coordinate system, south zone (Lambert conformal conic)
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 15, shown in blue
1927 North American Datum (NAD 27)

North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed corner ticks
The values of the shift between NAD 27 and NAD 83 for 7.5-minute intersections are given in USGS Bulletin 1875

Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown

MN GN 0°13' 4 MILS 3° 53 MILS
UTM GRID AND 1993 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

SCALE 1:24 000
1 0 1 MILE
1000 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000 7000 FEET
1 .5 0 1 KILOMETER

CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty — Light-duty
Medium-duty — Unimproved dirt
Interstate Route U.S. Route State Route

MINN.
QUADRANGLE LOCATION

Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled in cooperation with State of Minnesota agencies from aerial photographs taken 1991 and other sources. This information not field checked. Map edited 1993

MINNEAPOLIS SOUTH, MINN.
44093-H3-TF-024

1967
REVISED 1993
DMA 7373 IV NE–SERIES V872

INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA—1993

ISSN 0-644-07-0
9 780607 266993

Minneapolis
City of Lakes

Community Planning & Economic Development

Planning Division
350 South 5th Street – Room 210
Minneapolis MN 55415-1385

Office 612 673-2597
Fax 612 673-2728
TTY 612 673-2157

October 12, 2007

Ms. Britta Bloomberg
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Minnesota Historical Society
345 Kellogg Boulevard West
St. Paul, MN 55102-1906

RE: NRHP nomination: Pence Automobile Building, 800 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis

Dear Ms. Bloomberg:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) nomination form for the Pence Automobile Company Building at 800 Hennepin Avenue in Minneapolis. As noted in your letter of August 8, 2007 addressed to Mayor Rybak, these comments are being submitted as an interested party by the Preservation Planning staff on the Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED). Due to the timing considerations, they were not reviewed by the full Heritage Preservation Commission.

The individual nomination of the Pence Automobile Company building is an important contribution to preservation in Minneapolis.

- *Existing Context:* The statement on page 15 of the nomination, "Most of Hennepin Avenue's Automobile Row has been demolished—replaced, ironically, with freeway infrastructure and surface parking lots" leaves readers with the incorrect impression that there is no remaining historic context related to the automobile industry. Omission of the Harmon Place Historic District in the nomination form reinforces this impression. We recommend adding text to the nomination which acknowledges the locally-designated Harmon Place Historic District and the existing historic context.

Ms. Britta Bloomberg
NRHP nomination: Pence Automobile Building, 800 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis
October 12, 2007

- *Consideration of a potential national district:* The Pence Building derives its significance from being a part of the local automobile industry along Hennepin Avenue. Similarly, the significance of the locally-designated Harmon Place Historic District is also based on the local automobile industry in this same area of Minneapolis at the same time in history. The Pence Building is two blocks from this non-contiguous local district and its period of significance is encompassed within the local district's period of significance and the building as mentioned in the local designation study. Architectural styles are also similar—the district being primarily Renaissance Revival and the Pence Building being Classical Revival. The historic significance of the Pence Building under Criteria A would be bolstered by considering the creation of a potential national district because it would be rightfully tied to other nearby properties that were a part of the same "phenomenal local and regional growth of the automobile trade during the early twentieth century" as stated in the nomination form. Coupled with the local district, a national district that included the Pence Building would tell the complete story about the heritage of Minneapolis' auto industry while simultaneously ensuring the economic viability of the property through tax-credits and the protection of the property through eventual inclusion under local preservation policy and regulation.

- *Architecture:* In addition to the original detailed exterior architectural features as described in the nomination, one of the most interesting aspects of this building is its mass and height. The fact that an auto showroom, office, assembly, service and repair building was combined into a single eight story building is notable. The building is a snapshot of an automobile industry in its infancy before the spatial and geographic disaggregation of manufacturing, repair and sales into separate facilities, sites, and cities. To understand this building's architecture is to understand a key component of the functional of early automobile companies in the US, especially in relation to the economics of land assembly and development. This building's uniqueness is highlighted by its rapid obsolescence. There was only a brief period of time when a building like this was useful. Because of its mass coupled with intact architectural features, the building has architectural significance as a property which embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type and period in state and US history. In addition to Criteria A and B, we recommend consideration of Criteria C as a basis for significance.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or require further clarification.

Sincerely,

Jack Byers

Jack Byers
Planning Supervisor

cc: Susan Roth, MnSHPO
Michael Koop, MnSHPO
Charles R.E. Johnson, Turnstone 800 LLC
file

Minnesota Historical Society
State Historic Preservation Office
345 Kellogg Blvd West, St. Paul, Minnesota 55102
651/259-3451

RECEIVED 2280
NOV 14 2007
NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

TO: Janet Matthews, Keeper
National Register of Historic Places

FROM: Susan Roth, National Register Historian

DATE: November 7, 2007

NAME OF PROPERTY: Pence Automobile Company Building

COUNTY AND STATE: Hennepin County, MN

SUBJECT: National Register:

- ☒ Nomination
- ☐ Multiple Property Documentation Form
- ☐ Request for determination of eligibility
- ☐ Request for removal (Reference No.)
- ☐ Nomination resubmission
- ☐ Boundary increase/decrease (Reference No.)
- ☐ Additional documentation (Reference No.)

DOCUMENTATION:

- ☒ Original National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
- ☐ Multiple Property Documentation Form
- ☒ Continuation Sheets
- ☐ Removal Documentation
- ☒ Photographs
- ☐ CD w/ image files
- ☒ Original USGS Map
- ☒ Sketch map(s)
- ☒ Correspondence
  - ☐ Owner Objection

    The enclosed owner objections

    Do ☐ Do not ☐ constitute a majority of property owners

STAFF COMMENTS: