

FORT SNELLING, ARTILLERY GUN SHED  
(Fort Snelling, Bldg. No. 202)  
intersection of Bloomington Road  
and Fort Snelling Drive  
Minneapolis Vicinity  
Hennepin County  
Minnesota

HABS No. MN-56-AA

HABS  
MINN  
27-FOSNEL,  
2AA-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287

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Location:

Intersection of Bloomington Road  
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Minneapolis Vicinity  
Hennepin County  
Minnesota

Quad: Saint Paul West, Minnesota

UTM: 15:484860:4970800

Present Owner: United States Government

Significance: From its construction in the 1820s until the Civil War, Fort Snelling served as a military post and the main outpost for transportation, protection, and commerce in the northern United States. The fort's geographic influence gradually declined after the Civil War, but its military importance continued. Fort Snelling became the headquarters for the Department of Dakota in 1881, and trained and housed men who fought in the Spanish-American War. Fort Snelling expanded after the Spanish-American War to serve as a brigade post for domestic and international missions. As part of this 1903 expansion, storage and maintenance facilities were constructed for field artillery, including a stable (Building 202), horseshoeing shop (205), blacksmith shop (206), and gun sheds (207 and 209). Two motor sheds (Buildings T203 and T203A) were erected in 1940 after another stable burned down and artillery was subsequently reassigned elsewhere. These buildings are significant not only because they lie within the Fort Snelling Historic District, but also because of the employment of early standardized plans (in 202, 207 and 209) and rarely used 700-series plans (T203 and T203A).

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1903
2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and subsequent owners: United States Government
4. Builders, contractors, suppliers: Unknown
5. Original plans and construction: "O.Q.M.G. [Office of the Quartermaster General] Plan No. 104-D" is listed in building records; it could not be located for this study.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Information on the original appearance, the date of erection, original plans, replacement of oil lamps, and overall dimensions is from Department of the Army, Quartermaster Corps, "Fort Snelling Bldg. Records ca. 1905-1969," Manuscripts Collection, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota, hereinafter referred to as Q.C. Other information from Administrative Officer Ron Troop of the Bureau of Mines, Department of the Interior,

6. Alterations and additions: The building collapsed during a tornado on 22 August 1914, with damage of \$8007. Oil lamps were replaced by electric lights at an unknown date for approximately \$75. Between 1905 and 1929, part of the building was partitioned off to make an ordnance repair shop. The original vitrified brick floor was replaced with poured concrete at some point. The Bureau of Mines added a double, plasterboard garage door on the southwest side in bays #11 and #12 during the 1970s.

B: Historical Context:

The first buildings and walls of Fort Snelling were constructed at the strategic conjunction of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers by Colonel Josiah Snelling between 1820 and 1824. The fort was the northernmost military post in the United States, and remained the area's main outpost for transportation, protection and commerce for forty years. As the frontier moved westward, Fort Snelling's duties were largely assumed by newer posts, and it was sold in 1858 to be used as a sheep farm. Soon thereafter, it was reactivated for use in the Civil War and the Dakota Conflict of 1862, housing up to 4,000 men at times in the original buildings and in buildings which had recently been constructed to service the new recruits. In 1881, Fort Snelling became the headquarters for the Department of Dakota; new and larger buildings were built for supply, training and administration. In 1898, the fort sent troops for the Spanish-American War and the Battle of Sugar Point at Leech Lake.<sup>2</sup>

The Spanish-American War prompted the War Department to review its policies for stationing troops. Although the war was considered a successful one for the U.S. military as a whole, the Army was crippled at the start of the war by poor planning, little preparation, and antiquated and inefficient methods of supply. War Department Secretary Elihu Root was determined that this would not happen again. Bolstered by the victory in the war, he advocated strengthening the Army to meet the demands of its new overseas concerns, specifically Cuba, the Philippines and Puerto Rico. The previous policy which stationed one or two companies at small frontier forts was clearly outmoded for the country's growing international involvement. Thus began the largest expansion in Army history to that date. By the fall of 1900, Congress had authorized an Army twice the size of its prewar strength; in May, 1902, Root formally proposed new facilities for the Army, achieved not by building new posts, but "[by increasing] the size of the posts in

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telephone interview by author, 25 August 1992, Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Fort Snelling Building Records made by the Quartermaster Corps proved to be the primary source of information for this study. An inventory of every building was first made 1 March 1905. The inventories were organized so that each page described a separate building, and listed date of construction, cost of construction, dimensions, utilities, repairs, and cost of repairs. A photo was attached to the corner of each page. In 1938, a new historical record was made, Quartermaster John R. Holt said, because many of the original buildings had been replaced or modernized, and photographs were outdated. (Major John R. Holt, "Memorandum for Historical Record," 1 December 1938, included in Q.C.). This inventory continued the older one, with new photographs attached to the pages. Two copies of each set of records (1905 and 1938) are located in boxes 144.C.15.6 (F) and 144.C.15.7. (B) in the Manuscripts Collection of the Minnesota Historical Society, but they are not identical; in some cases, one copy has a better record of repairs than the other and vice versa. There is also no indication why there are two copies. Unless otherwise noted, the information for this study is from these records and from site visits by Charlene Roise, historian, Hess, Roise and Company, 1 September 1992; and by Deanne L. Zibell, historian, Hess, Roise and Company, 1, 9, and 22 September 1992.

<sup>2</sup>John Grossman and Paul Dybvig, "National Register Nomination for the Fort Snelling Historic District," prepared for the State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society, 28 November 1969, 7:1.

which the Army was quartered."<sup>3</sup> The Quartermaster General (the head of the Army's supply agency) remarked, "It is safe to say that a vastly greater amount of construction work was planned, undertaken, and contracted for during the fiscal year 1902-03 than during any previous year in the history of the Army."<sup>4</sup>

Fort Snelling had already begun to prepare for this expansion. In March 1902, L. N. Pleins had drawn a site plan for the deputy quartermaster at Fort Snelling "Showing the Proposed Scheme of Reconstruction and Enlargement to Accommodate One Regiment of Infantry and Two Batteries of Field Artillery."<sup>5</sup> This scheme utilized land west of the original fort buildings along the "lower road" of the fort. At the present site of buildings 202-209, Pleins indicated that two gun sheds and two stables were planned for use by the field artillery. A combination floor plan and elevation for artillery stables is also extant, and though it has no date, it appears that this may have been a preliminary plan produced by Fort Snelling for Building 209 and original Building 203.<sup>6</sup>

Secretary Root's plan was approved, and as a result, expansion at Fort Snelling was more ambitious than this early map suggested. The large amount of construction taking place at forts around the country at this time apparently prompted the Quartermaster Corps to produce standardized plans. Because of plan numbers on Fort Snelling building records and the repetition of building designs, it appears that some of these plans were used at Fort Snelling. On 25 October 1903, the Saint Paul Pioneer Press reported that construction was almost complete on new artillery quarters, gun sheds, and stables, as well as officers' quarters, a gymnasium, a band barracks, a pump house and water tower, infantry quarters, a warehouse, and quartermasters' buildings. These buildings were to accommodate two batteries of artillery, a full regiment of infantry, and four troops of cavalry. The article goes into detail about the area in this study: "Two large gun sheds [Buildings 202 and 207] are situated a short distance from the barracks. . . . Back of the gun sheds are two stables [Building 209 and original Building 203], which will accommodate more than a hundred horses each. . . . Two large corrals will be laid out about the stables. Between the gun sheds and the stables are two small brick shops for horseshoeing and blacksmith work [Buildings 205 and 206]." Captain R. M. Schofield, in charge of the construction work for the Quartermaster Corps, told the paper that the government had never erected better buildings. All in all, \$1.5 million was spent to renovate and upgrade the fort to a brigade post, that is, to a tactical and administrative post housing two or more regiments.<sup>7</sup>

The area has experienced alteration in the years since the original buildings were constructed. Two more buildings were added to this site between 1903 and 1940, including a guard house placed between the two stables, and a temporary motor shed located between Buildings 207 and 209. Neither of these buildings are extant. Disasters also played a part in altering the buildings in the study area. The parcel was hit by a cyclone the night of 22 August 1914. Most of the buildings suffered some damage, but Building 202 was

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<sup>3</sup>Erna Risch, Quartermaster Support of the Army: A History of the Corps 1775-1939 (Washington, D.C.: Quartermaster Historian's Office, 1962), 580.

<sup>4</sup>Annual Report of the Quartermaster General, 1903, 21, quoted in Risch, 581, n. 95.

<sup>5</sup>L. N. Pleins, Map of Fort Snelling, Minn., for the Chief Quartermaster of the Department of Dakota, 15 March 1902, in the Manuscripts Collection of the Minnesota Historical Society.

<sup>6</sup>"Artillery Stables at Fort Snelling Minn.," n.d., n.p., in the flat files at the Fort Snelling History Center.

<sup>7</sup>"Work Progresses at Fort Snelling," Saint Paul Pioneer Press, 25 October 1903, 4.

labelled "Demolished....completely collapsed" and repairs totaled \$8007, nearly 80 percent of the original cost. A minor fire hit the stables (Building 209 and original Building 203) in 1919, causing damage of only \$145.50. But by far the worst tragedy occurred the night of 9 April 1939, when original Building 203 was completely destroyed by fire, "with a loss of 128 horses and all supplies and equipment stored in this building." This prompted the reassignment of the artillery.<sup>8</sup> The stable was replaced with two motor transport sheds, Buildings T203 and T203A. The study area served as the post motor pool just prior to World War II, and was used as the supply and service division area during the war.<sup>9</sup>

In 1946, Fort Snelling was decommissioned, and the property was turned over to the Veterans' Administration. They, in turn, transferred the property to the Air Force in 1949, which used these buildings for storage and office space until 1969, when the structures were turned over to the General Services Administration (Buildings T203A and 209) and to the Bureau of Mines (Buildings 202, T203, 205, 206, and 207). The buildings are now vacant and in poor condition.

Building 202 was originally an artillery gun shed with storage for 17 guns, and became tank storage during World War II. During the 1960s and 1970s, the structure was used to store automobiles, and miscellaneous equipment.<sup>10</sup>

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The building is a simple, one-story, rectangular, gable-roofed box. Its design is utilitarian.
2. Condition of fabric: Good to fair. The paint is chipping, windows are cracked, and many doors are missing.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 34' x 191'4"
2. Foundations: Stone.
3. Walls: Horizontal, milled timber, tongue-and-groove siding.
4. Structural system, framing: Timber balloon frame with king-post roof trusses.

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<sup>8</sup>Q.C., Building 203, 1938; Stephen E. Osman, "Fort Snelling in World War II: A Brief Walking and Driving Tour of the Fort Snelling Complex," published for the Minnesota Historical Society, July 1992, 2.

<sup>9</sup>Osman, 2; and "This is Minnesota's Fort Snelling," map in the Minneapolis Star Journal, 9 March 1941, 4 [special section].

<sup>10</sup> Building use information from Q.C., Building 202; Osman, 2; interview with Claudia Grant, Department of the Air Force, Air Force Reserve Real Estate Office, 8 September 1992, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Walter J. Lander to Jeffrey Hellison, 22 September 1969, TLS, in file "Prop. Mgmt. PRM 8 Space 1966-1972," in Administrative Officer's files at the Bureau of Mines, Department of the Interior, St. Paul, Minnesota; Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Administration, "Amendment to Agreement V5106-662," 8 July 1971, in file listed above.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: None.
6. Chimneys: One small vent pipe is located along the southeast slope; there is also a square brick chimney along the ridge line on the southwest end.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The openings are the major architectural feature of the building. According to the 25 October 1903 edition of the Saint Paul Pioneer Press, Buildings 202 and 207 each "have eighteen separate divisions for storing guns, limbers and caissons. Each division has two rolling steel doors." Many of these original doors still exist, but there has also been a great deal of alteration. On the southeast side, thirteen of the original corrugated, rolling, steel doors are extant; three others have been filled in with plywood, one door was replaced by a recessed wood panel door with an upper row of windows, and another was filled in and replaced with two six-over-six sash windows.<sup>11</sup> On the northwest side, there are 16 numbered garage bays, with 11 of the original corrugated metal rolling doors still extant. Bays #11 and #12 have been replaced with one plasterboard double garage door (probably in the 1970s; see Part I.A.6. above), and there are two wood-panel garage doors, both with windows across an upper panel. The garage bay closest to the west corner is missing its door. On both the northwest and southeast walls, both sides of every garage frame have large, painted, metal bollards to protect the frame from the gun carts and, later, from tanks.

Five pedestrian doors still exist, but only the one closest to the west corner of the building on the northwest side appears to be original. All of the doors are wood and have recessed panels; windows occupy the top panels on these doors. Two doors, one on the northeast end and one on the southeast side, are not original as they did not appear in photographs taken in the 1930s. Two doors on either side of garage bay #2 on the northwest side are not in good shape; the southernmost is boarded up, and the other is missing panels and a window. Another door was removed from the southwest end and was filled in with siding.
  - b. Windows and shutters: Windows are six-over-six double-hung sash with simple rectangular frames. Historical photos indicate that five of these, four on the northeast end and one on the southeast side closest to the east corner, are original. Timber lines on the southwest wall indicate that two other windows were removed and replaced with siding.
8. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: The medium-slope gable roof is covered with slate.
  - b. Cornice, eaves: Rafters and purlins on all sides are partially exposed, covered only by the wood fascia board. The rafters on the northwest and southeast sides end with a reverse-curve. Parts of the original gutters and downspouts still exist.
  - c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: None.

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<sup>11</sup>Q.C., Building 202, photographs ca. 1929 and ca. 1938.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The building records list the building as between approximately 5400 and 6100 square feet. The existing partitions, two walls on the southwestern end of the building, may have been built for the ordnance shop (see I.A.6 above). These walls make rooms of approximately ten feet and twenty feet wide. Both rooms are accessible from the outside through exterior doors; the rooms also have interior doors which lead to the rest of the building.
2. Stairways: None.
3. Flooring: Poured concrete.
4. Wall and ceiling finishes: Most walls are made of particle board; some have horizontal timber paneling with bladed edges. The southwest end has a dropped ceiling; otherwise the walls and ceiling are unfinished and rafters are visible.
5. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: One wood recessed panel door leads into the end room; only the door frame remains on the other wall.
  - b. Windows: Interior surrounds are simple painted wood boards.
6. Decorative features and trim: None.
7. Hardware: Doorknobs and hinges are metal standard issue. Gears and chains for rolling garage doors are also metal; some are missing or do not work.
8. Mechanical Equipment:
  - a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: A modern furnace on the southwest end of the building furnished heat to the two end rooms through metal vents; some sections are missing.
  - b. Lighting: Single bulb outlets with exposed wiring are stretched along the lengthwise beams.
  - c. Plumbing: None

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The 11.02 acre tract, which includes Building 202 and the rest of the artillery buildings, is part of what is called the "New Post," a term for the area of the post which rapidly expanded after the Spanish-American War. On the north and east, this site is bordered by Fort Snelling Drive, also known as Old Highway 55, and Building 201, now a Bureau of Mines research center. On the southeast, the buildings are bordered by Bloomington Road and the old polo grounds and ballfields. On the southwest are the remains of the Quartermaster grounds, containing buildings that were once shops, stables and the gas station. On the northwest is Federal Drive and the Bishop Whipple Federal Building. A high chain link fence surrounds the northeast, southeast, and southwest edges of the lot. See attached site plan for further information.
2. Historic landscape design: Unknown.

3. Outbuildings: Not applicable.

**PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

A. Original Architectural Drawings in the flat files at the Fort Snelling History Center:

"Plan of Proposed Addition (Capacity 32 Animals) Artillery Stable. Fort Snelling Minn." N.d.

"Artillery Stables at Fort Snelling Minn." N.d., n.p.

B. Early Views:

Pleins, L.N. "Proposed Reconstruction and Enlargement to Accommodate One Regiment of Infantry and 2 Batteries of Field Artillery." Map drawn 15 March 1902. Manuscripts Collection, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota.

Early photographs for each building included in Department of the Army, Quartermaster Corps, "Ft. Snelling Bldg. Records ca. 1905-1969." Manuscripts Collection, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota.

C. Interviews:

Grant, Claudia. Department of the Air Force, Air Force Reserve Real Estate Office. Telephone interview by Deanne L. Zibell, 8 September 1992, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Spearman, Dennis, Chicago Real Estate Office for the General Services Administration. Telephone interview by Deanne L. Zibell, 18 September 1992, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Troop, Ron, Administrative Officer of the Bureau of Mines, Department of the Interior. Telephone interview by Deanne L. Zibell, 25 August 1992, St. Paul, Minnesota.

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Bowie, William Z. and Harold E. Zimmer. "Supplement #1 to Memo of Agreement V1001SR-11." 7 October 1949. In files of the Engineering Service Chief at the Veterans Administration Hospital, Department of Veterans Affairs, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

BRW Inc. "Metropolitan Airports Commission (M.A.C.) Investigation of Cultural Resource Impacts on Runway Concepts A, B, & C." N.d.

Grossman, John, and Paul Dybvig. National Register Nomination for Fort Snelling. Prepared for the State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society. 28 November 1969.

Hackett, John. "Old Fort Snelling: 'Upper Bluff Area'." Minnesota Historical Society. September 1987.

Henry, William R. Jr. and Irene Jackson Henry. "An Overview of Standardized Military Construction 1917-1945." HABS/HAER Inventory, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. N.d.

Holt, Maj. John R. "Memorandum #133, Re: Renumbering of Buildings." 14 November 1938. In "Ft. Snelling Bldg. Records ca. 1905-1969." Manuscripts Collection, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

Kiefer, Charles. HABS Report for the Quarters Buildings, Fort Snelling Historic District. Prepared for the Engineering Service, Veterans Administration Medical Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota, April 1987.

Klippen, Arthur, Veterans' Administration Hospital Director, to W.V. Morris, Management Officer for the Bureau of Mines, 6 July 1971. TLS. File "Prop. Mgmt. PRM 8 Space 1966-1972" in Administrative Officer's Files at the Bureau of Mines, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Lander, Walter J. to Jeffrey Hellison, 22 September 1969. TLS. In file "Prop. Mgmt. PRM 8 Space 1966-1972" in Administrative Officer's files at the Bureau of Mines, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Morris, W.V. to Arthur Klippen, 30 September 1971. TLS. In file "Prop. Mgmt. PRM 8 Space 1966-1972" in Administrative Officer's files at the Bureau of Mines, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Osman, Stephen E. "Fort Snelling in World War II: A Brief Walking and Driving Tour of the Fort Snelling Complex." Published for the Minnesota Historical Society, July 1992.

Price, Maj. R.L. "Memorandum #110, Re: Numbering of Buildings." 12 October 1940. In Department of the Army, Quartermaster Corps. In "Ft. Snelling Bldg. Records ca. 1905-1909." Manuscripts Collection, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

U.S. Department of the Army, Quartermaster Corps. "Ft. Snelling Bldg. Records ca. 1905-1969." Manuscripts Collection, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Administration. "Amendment to Agreement V5106-662." 8 July 1971. In file "Prop. Mgmt. PRM 8 Space 1966-1972" in Administrative Officer's Files at the Bureau of Mines, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

U.S. General Services Administration. "General Building Profiles" for Buildings T203A and 209. 14 February 1989. In the office of the General Services Administration Facilities Director, Bishop Whipple Federal Building, St. Paul, Minnesota.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Fridley, Russell W. "Fort Snelling: From Military Post to Historic Site." Minnesota History 35 (December 1956): 178-192.

Risch, Erna. Quartermaster Support of the Army: A History of the Corps 1775-1939. Washington, D.C.: Quartermaster Historian's Office, 1962.

"This is Minnesota's Fort Snelling." Map in the Minneapolis Star Journal, 9 March 1941, 4 [special section].

"Work Progresses at Fort Snelling." St. Paul Pioneer Press, 25 October 1903, 4.

E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

Annual Report of the Quartermaster General. Washington, D.C.: 1903. This is located at the National Archives, possibly in Record Group No. 94, AGO file 319.12. The report was mentioned in Risch's Quartermaster Support of the Army (see above) and likely includes descriptions of construction at posts in 1903.

Files: The Fort Snelling Building Records for Buildings 202, the original 203, 206, 207, and 209 list "File 291.02 (L.R. #634.1--CR)" as the one which describes damage and repairs from the disasters, such as the tornado and the fires, which affected the site. This file is no longer at the Fort Snelling History Center or at the Minnesota Historical Society.

Plans: The Fort Snelling Building Records indicate that plans from the Office of the Quartermaster General for Buildings 202, 209, T203, and T203A were used. These plans, including #104-D [Building 202 and probably also Building 207], #139-C [Building 209], and #700-372 [Buildings T203 and T203A] are standardized construction plans, and may be located with the rest of the Quartermaster Corps material in Washington, though Risch makes no mention of plans in her extensive bibliography.

Rose, Alice. Military Construction in the United States Under the Direction of the Quartermaster Corps and the Corps of Engineers. Office of History, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Belvoir, Virginia, Box VII-24. This citation was found in the draft form of "The Historical Context of World War II Mobilization Construction" by Diane Shaw Wasch and Perry Bush, n.d., n. 1.

F. Supplemental material:

Site visits by Charlene K. Roise, historian, Hess, Roise and Company, 1 September 1992; and by Deanne L. Zibell, historian, Hess, Roise and Company, 1, 9, and 22 September 1992.

#### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Buildings 202, T203, T203A, 205, 206, 207, and 209 are owned by the U.S. Government and have been used by the General Services Administration (GSA) and the Bureau of Mines, both federal agencies. The government has determined that the property is surplus, and plans to sell it. Since the buildings are part of the Fort Snelling Historic District, which has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the effect of this undertaking was evaluated pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The GSA, in consultation with the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation determined that documentation of the buildings for the Historic American Buildings Survey would serve as mitigation. As a result, the GSA retained Hess Roise and Company, historical consultants based in Minneapolis, to complete this report. Historian Charlene K. Roise served as principal investigator, preparing the written documentation with staff research historian Deanne L. Zibell. Large-format photography was completed by subcontractor Jerry Mathiason, who maintains a studio and lab in Minneapolis. The site plan was drawn by subcontractor MacDonald & Mack Architects, Ltd., also of Minneapolis.