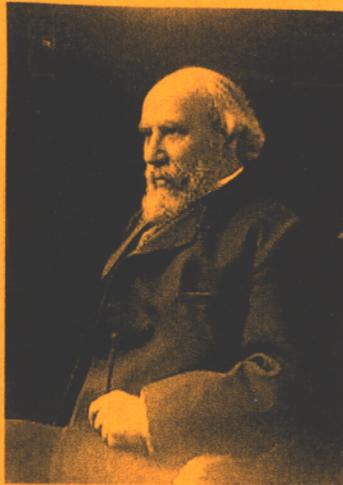


# Panning in Gold Country

By  
James Chinquist



James J. Hill - 1910  
(Minnesota Historical Society  
Collection)

**BNSF**

**REQUIRED COVERSHEET FOR SUBMISSION OF INFORMATION  
FOR A STADIUM PROPOSAL**

Identify the Respondent by providing the names and addresses of each individual and/or entity participating in this submission:

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If the one of the entities listed above is a governmental entity formed under a joint powers agreement or an entity or organization which includes more than one public or private entity, please identify all of the entities or organizations which are members or participants of the Respondent:

This submission includes a proposal for a:

- Baseball Stadium
- Football Stadium
- Combined Facilities

**CERTIFICATION AND WAIVER**

The Respondent acknowledges that the submissions and the information contained therein are not confidential and all of the information contained in the submissions or provided to the stadium screening committee may be given to the public, to members of the Pawlenty Administration and/or to other persons or entities as deemed appropriate by the Screening Committee or the Administration. Respondent affirmatively states that it has the legal right to submit the enclosed information to the Screening Committee without any restriction on the Screening Committee's future disclosure or use of the information. Respondent waives any copyright or any other claim of propriety, right of control, or limitation of use in relation to the information submitted. Respondent further agrees to hold the members of the Screening Committee, the State of Minnesota, its agents and employees, harmless from any and all claims or lawsuits that may arise from the Respondent's activities related to its submission, including any claim for negligence, breach of contract, or any other claims alleging wrongful acts or omissions by Respondent, or the Respondent's independent contractors, agents, employees or officers.

*James F. Chingquist*  
Respondent

By \_\_\_\_\_

Its \_\_\_\_\_

This proposal focuses on the football stadium issue.

It highlights major transportation problems  
in the University of Minnesota's  
football stadium proposal.

It recommends that a better designed  
joint-use stadium  
should be located next to a new  
intermodal station,  
maximizing transit access.

It supports the design of the Minnesota Twins  
baseball only stadium and suggests  
an alternate site if the Minneapolis Warehouse  
site near the Target Center is not accepted.

## **Panning in Gold Country** My Wish on the North Star

The main objective of Governor Pawlenty's Stadium Screening Committee should be to find the best location(s) to solve the stadium issues in the most efficient manner. The focus should be on identifying viable sites. Financing issues and ownership are very complex, and need to be negotiated anyway. The Minnesota Twins definitely need a baseball only facility, and have a great stadium design. That design should be adopted. This proposal suggests the possibility of a different location than the Minneapolis warehouse district site near the Target Center for baseball. This proposal is focused on the football stadium issue. Neither football stadium design by the Minnesota Vikings nor the University of Minnesota should be adopted. The Metrodome has served both teams well, but is lacking revenue sources that each team needs to stay competitive. I propose that one proper facility modeled after Houston's Reliant Stadium could be designed and sited to satisfy both Goldy and Ragnar. This proposal addresses the best location for a new football facility that would be, for all purposes, a return to the University of Minnesota campus. After panning the Twin Cities landscape, I am certain the location of the mother lode sits in the southeast section of Minneapolis right next door to the University of Minnesota.

"Gold Country Stadium" would be the ideal name for a new joint-use football stadium. The football stadium issue will not get settled for either the University of Minnesota or the Minnesota Vikings as long as Goldy and Ragnar remain so entrenched in wanting separate stadiums. Both parties have been too obstinate to arrive at a proper solution. The Pittsburgh Steelers and the University of Pittsburgh both play in Heinz Stadium, and that should be the basis for "Gold Country Stadium" here. Let it be an open-air stadium for both teams until the end of October, and close the roof for the rest of the football season for climate control. That operating plan for a joint-use stadium should be a good compromise.

The Minnesota Vikings owner and management team do not reference **gold** as the Vikings second color, which is also a University of Minnesota color. Gold is the color that is shared by both parties. "Gold Country Stadium" could have maroon accent lighting for the University of Minnesota Golden Gophers and purple accent lighting for the Minnesota Vikings, yielding the respective glows for Goldy and Ragnar. The stadium's basic color should be gold, not silver as depicted in the Vikings Stadium plan. The University of Minnesota should not insist on a brick stadium, in memory of the razed Memorial Stadium. Bricks are more costly, and are not conducive to reconstruction.

The University of Minnesota has been concerned about campus life being disrupted by the Minnesota Vikings. The University's proposed on-campus stadium site so close to Williams and Mariucci Arenas would have posed problems for the University whenever the Vikings played there. The space at

that site is too small to meet the needs of the Minnesota Vikings. The University's stadium site proposal is fraught with street transportation problems. Huron Boulevard, which is a direct link with I-94, would be eliminated on the north side of University Avenue. Huron Boulevard, which has been in existence for only about 10 years, currently begins the one-way westbound traffic flow from University Avenue to Fourth Street SE. The University proposal does not mention an adverse transportation impact regarding University Avenue. It would return to two-way traffic next to the University's proposed football stadium. This would be very disruptive to traffic flows. The University's proposal depicts a re-alignment of Oak Street. A graphic in that proposal shows that the University would like to block off Oak Street north of University Avenue on game day. This specific site is not feasible for a football stadium, and would have a disruptive transportation impact.

I propose that there is a better site adjacent to the University's stadium site that is ripe for new landuse. It is a short walk from the University's proposed site, and could bring college football back to the campus. James J. Hill's Great Northern (GN) Railway, which is one of the former railroads that have been merged into the current Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway, was instrumental in building Union Yard over 100 years ago to serve the grain elevators and other businesses that were neighbors to the University's main campus in Minneapolis. It would be the ideal location for both a new football stadium and intermodal station to serve Amtrak and other mass transit systems. The current Amtrak station, located about 2 miles further southeast in the Midway area, is not in an ideal location. Union Yard is better situated geographically for a new passenger terminal, since current rail routes radiate from that location. From a railroad and mass transportation perspective, Union Yard is the core of the Twin Cities area. As a railroad historian, my knowledge of the Twin Cities rail and other land transportation systems is extensive. The Stadium Screening Committee should advise Governor Pawlenty to approach U. S. Representative James Oberstar regarding possible transportation benefits of the Union Yard location. Representative Oberstar, I hope, would champion the redevelopment of that site and get involved. There should not be any money expended to upgrade the current Amtrak station. The timing is right to plan for a new intermodal station at Union Yard to replace the Midway station.

The TerraServer aerial photo (figure 1) dated April 17, 1991 with 4-meter resolution shows Union Yard as it existed at that time. Since then, it has undergone extensive abandonment by BNSF. At the extreme left is the University's proposed football stadium site kitty-corner from Williams Arena. The aerial photo pre-dates the demolition of Memorial Stadium and the construction of both Mariucci Arena and Huron Boulevard. This Union Yard site would have ample room to build a (joint-use) football stadium adjacent to a new intermodal station. This site may even allow enough space to locate a new baseball stadium just east of the football stadium, if the downtown Minneapolis location near the Target Center is not feasible. The landuse conversion of former railroad

properties into sports venues has been very common around the nation. My proposed site would first address a football stadium. A baseball stadium at this site is not necessary, but it could be possible. The University of Minnesota's baseball coach, John Anderson, would like a new facility to replace Siebert Field. Why not a joint-use baseball stadium, also? While the Minnesota Twins are at Spring training in Florida, the Minnesota Gophers baseball team would be able to make good use of it. Just a thought. This sports complex could be modeled after Seattle's sports complex. Seahawks Stadium is adjacent to King Street Station, which serves Amtrak. Beyond Seahawks Stadium is Safeco Field, the home of the Seattle Mariners. Seattle's commuter rail system, the Sounder, also serves both stadiums. Sports and mass transit should serve each other here, as well. Union Yard, with a new intermodal station, could serve Amtrak, commuter rail, LRT or fixed guideway bus. The route of the Minneapolis RiverCity Trolley could even be extended from the Stone Arch Bridge to serve the intermodal station (figure 2). The Union Yard site, which has undergone major abandonment by BNSF, would be a great opportunity to maximize transportation access to any stadium facility there. That would lower the parking requirement needs.

The TerraServer aerial photo (figure 3) of the Union Yard site at 2-meter resolution draws attention to the two grain elevators on the south side of Union Yard. To my knowledge, neither of these two grain elevators is now served by unit grain trains. Many other elevators in the area have shut down operations. The ConAgra Grain Elevator (figures 4-6), which is closest to Mariucci Arena, looks like it has seen much better days. There does not appear to be much operating activity at that elevator. I can understand the reasoning for the mill district elevators next to the Mississippi River being kept on the National Registry and not torn down. The two elevators I am targeting are far removed from the river. It would seem to me that their removal would make it easier for redevelopment. At least the removal of the ConAgra Grain Elevator facility would give the University a unified connection to the stadium site along Oak Street. Replacement elevator(s) could be relocated to BNSF's Northtown Yard, where unit grain train operations would be feasible. Northtown Yard, which is about 4 miles to the northwest of Union Yard, is known to have excess capacity. This could be a negotiating ploy with BNSF. More business at Northtown Yard should be very attractive to that company. My Union Yard proposal does not require the removal of the two grain elevators, but it would expand the capabilities for redevelopment. "Gold Country Stadium" could have a Golden Gopher museum linking it to the University in one direction, and a Minnesota Vikings museum in the other direction towards Kasota Avenue and Highway 280 to minimize the disruption for the University. Stadium access for each team would be funneled to their respective museums.

The removal of the two grain elevators would need environmental cleanup. The proposed site for the University's stadium, now a parking lot, would also need environmental cleanup. Polluted soil must be excavated, which would be

necessary in either location. This would be helpful for designing a new bowl stadium, such as Michigan Stadium and Lambeau Field. A partially in-ground bowl stadium would cheapen the construction cost, and lower the above ground height for a (retractable) roof. The grain elevators are off-campus. Building a new stadium in that location would allow the sale of beer at concessions, which is a requirement for the Minnesota Vikings. The sale of beer during Golden Gopher games would be up to the University. This site would have less impact on campus life at the University, and would be easily served by Amtrak and mass transit.

The University of Minnesota wants to build a stadium initially with a capacity of 50,000. Why target the bottom of the Big Ten? The mid-point of the Big Ten would be a stadium with a capacity about 70,000. This is also the size of stadium that the Minnesota Vikings want. Build the stadium for the size that the Vikings want, and allow some feature in the design that could close off the highest deck. Possibly retractable curtains or backdrops could be incorporated into the stadium's design giving the University a more comfy feeling at the lower capacity. The stadium should have a retractable roof. The Gophers want an open-air stadium. The Vikings would prefer a climate-controlled stadium. I do not believe that Minnesota Gopher fans want to go back to bench seating, which is part of the University's construction plans to fit a smaller stadium next door to Mariucci and Williams Arenas. Besides, that parking area where the University wants to build a new football stadium is utilized for sporting events in those two facilities, Ridder Arena and the Sports Pavilion. None of these changes would occur in my site proposal. Hopefully Goldie and Ragnar could agree on one designed stadium facility for the two teams to replace the Metrodome.

A new football stadium just off-campus next to Union Yard could utilize the State Fairgrounds for some parking. Sid Hartman, sportswriter for the Minneapolis Star Tribune, was partially right about the State Fairgrounds. The University has a fixed guideway transit link between the two campuses. This link could also serve the new stadium, busing fans over to the stadium. Whether LRT or fixed guideway transit between the Minneapolis and Saint Paul downtowns is adopted as the best transportation alternative, the route could serve a new intermodal station at BNSF's Union Yard, the new football stadium and the State Fairgrounds. From the State Fairgrounds, the route could either continue east to Como Park and follow Como Avenue to Rice Street or turn south to University Avenue. Either way, the route would pass through the State Capitol complex before reaching downtown Saint Paul.

Personally, I have subtitled this proposal "My Wish on the North Star." I hope the Stadium Screening Committee finds my proposal regarding the redevelopment of Union Yard a great solution for the stadium issues.







