RAPIDS, REINS, RAILS: TRANSPORTATION ON THE MINNEAPOLIS RIVERFRONT

Mississippi River near Stone Arch Bridge, July 1, 1925
Minnesota Historical Society Collections

Prepared for
The Saint Anthony Falls Heritage Board
Minnesota Historical Society
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May 2009
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_Hess, Roise and Company_
PROJECT BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The Minneapolis Riverfront District/St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board chose “Rail and Early Transportation on the Riverfront” as its riverfront focus theme for 2009. The Minnesota Historical Society, with funding from the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board, hired Hess, Roise and Company to conduct research on the history and development of transportation systems on and along the riverfront.

The study is divided into three chapters based on modes of transportation:

The Rapids: Water Transportation by Saint Anthony Falls
The Reins: Animal-Powered Transportation by Saint Anthony Falls
The Rails: Railroads by Saint Anthony Falls

The first two chapters discuss the variety of transportation types, ranging in time from pre-European American settlement to the mid-twentieth century. The chapter dealing with the railroads is divided into three time periods: the early period of railroads, 1850 to 1880; the expansion of the railroads, 1880 to 1930; the decline of the railroads, 1931 to present. The railroad chapter describes the businesses and industries of each time period, as well as the individual railroads, their growth, changes, and consolidations.

The chapters are supplemented by several appendices: a timeline of the railroads; an alphabetical listing of the railroads; an inventory list of rail and other transportation resources, both extant and demolished. The study also includes a bibliography.

Several earlier studies provided the primary documentation for this study, as well as a multitude of published works on Minnesota railroads. Additional information was gathered at the Minnesota Historical Society and State Historic Preservation Office in Saint Paul. Research was also conducted at the Hennepin History Museum; the Minneapolis Collection, Central Library, Hennepin County Library; Wilson Library at the University of Minnesota; and the Minneapolis Inspections Division. Penny Petersen, a researcher at Hess Roise, conducted the research and prepared this report. Marjorie Pearson, Ph. D., vice-president of Hess Roise, was the principal investigator. The four Minneapolis transportation site maps were drawn by Marlena Bromschwig, City of Minneapolis Communications/Graphics.
For the purposes of this study, the Minneapolis riverfront is defined by the following geographic boundaries:

- Plymouth Avenue Bridge on the north;
- The river and University Avenue on the east;
- I-35W Bridge on the south; and
- Washington Avenue North and South on the west (The Heritage Zone Boundary is Second Street). Hennepin Avenue marks the division between Washington Avenue North and South.

Most of the area within this boundary is encompassed by the Saint Anthony Falls Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1971, and also designated by the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission and the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office.
Rapid, Reins, Rails: A Summary Of Riverfront Transportation

For hundreds of years, the Mississippi River, above and below Saint Anthony Falls, has been both a barrier to and route of travel. Before the area was explored and settled by Europeans, the American Indians used canoes to travel on the river and its tributaries and reached the river and bypassed its rapids on foot. Father Louis Hennepin, who saw the falls that he named in honor of Saint Anthony in 1680, provided the earliest written account of Indian canoes, both the lightweight canoes made of cedar and birch bark, capable of carrying 1,000 to 1,500 pounds of cargo, and the heavier pirogues made of hollowed-out logs.

Travel by boat on the river was still the primary mode of travel when Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike visited Saint Anthony Falls in 1805, while on an expedition to explore portions of the newly acquired Louisiana Purchase and obtain land from the Indians for a trading post and fort. It took three days for Pike and his party to portage a fully loaded keelboat around the falls. Pike created a map that showed a portage trail along the east bank of the river stretching from approximately the present-day Southeast Steam Plant to near the southern tip of Nicollet Island. Major Stephen Long, who was looking for a suitable site for a military installation in 1817, and Henry Schoolcraft, who traveled the Great Lakes and Mississippi River in 1820, described their journeys on the river and their efforts to portage around the falls. Unlike Pike, they unloaded their boats, which reduced the portage time to a few hours instead of days.

Fort Snelling and the small related settlement became a node for travel by river and on land. An 1839 map of Fort Snelling and the central riverfront shows several foot paths based on Indian routes on the west side of the river that converged at Saint Anthony Falls. One trail went along what would become the Fort Road or Hiawatha Avenue. Another path ran in a northwesterly direction through the present-day warehouse district. The third pathway ran along present-day Hennepin Avenue, from Lake Calhoun to somewhat downstream of Hennepin Island.

While American Indians continued to use lightweight canoes for river travel, as described by Count Giacomo C. Beltrami in 1823, soldiers, traders, and settlers turned to larger keelboats and steamboats to transport passengers, military supplies, and furs. Keelboats were long and narrow with a shallow draft and developed specifically for navigation on the Ohio and Upper Mississippi rivers. Each had a crew of about ten men and could carry about fifteen tons of cargo. Steamboats began to supplant the keelboats in the 1820s. Both larger and faster, steamboats could carry over 100 tons of cargo. The fur trade flourished in the 1840s and 1850s, as settlements expanded in Saint Paul, Saint Anthony, and Minneapolis. Oxcarts traveled overland routes that brought furs and other goods to the river from Manitoba and the Red River Valley. Each oxcart could carry from 600 to 900 pounds, and the carts traveled in trains of up to 100 carts. The carts could travel only during the months when there was plenty of prairie grass for the oxen to eat. Trains of dog sleds served to bring mail and other supplies from the Red River Valley in the winter time. Horse-drawn coaches and wagons served as a source of short-haul transportation between Saint Paul, Saint Anthony, and Minneapolis.

In 1847, Franklin Steele established the Upper Ferry to cross the river above the falls. William Cheever began running the Lower Ferry between the east bank and Government Landing on the
west bank. Although some accounts written in 1850 describe efforts to get steamboats as far north as Saint Anthony Falls, the river was usually impassable for large boats to reach even the Cheever’s or Government Landings. Most boats docked at Fort Snelling or Saint Paul. Separate steamboats carried river traffic above the falls. In addition, barges of cut logs were the most important commercial traffic on the upper river into the early twentieth century.

The Grand Excursion of 1854 marked a high point of the steamboat era on the Mississippi River. It celebrated the completion of the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad, the first to connect the Atlantic Ocean and the Mississippi River. Railroads both hurt and expanded river traffic, as they brought passengers and goods to the steamboats, which soon began to make shorter trips between the rail heads. The Civil War essentially brought an end to steamboat traffic on the Upper Mississippi.

Minnesota began to press for a railroad between Saint Paul and Saint Anthony while it was still a territory. In 1857, Congress gave the Minnesota Territorial Legislature the authority to grant charters to railroad companies. Construction efforts fell victim to the financial panic that year, and the territory foreclosed on the charters. In 1861, the state gave the rights to the Minnesota and Pacific Railroad to build a line from Saint Paul to Saint Anthony. The following year, the rights were transferred to the Saint Paul and Pacific Railroad Company, and the inaugural train, pulled by the William Crooks locomotive, traveled the ten miles between the two cities on June 28, 1862. Regular service began on July 2, and gradually expanded along the east bank of the river carrying both passengers and freight. It first reached Minneapolis in 1867, crossing the river on a trestle bridge at Nicollet Island.

The first railroad to arrive in the town of Minneapolis was the Minnesota Central, later part of the Chicago, Milwaukee, and Saint Paul Railroad (often called the Milwaukee Road). It built tracks from Mendota to Minneapolis in 1864, and the first train between Minneapolis and Faribault began operation in October 1865.

Both of these early railroads were crucial to the transportation of lumber out of Minneapolis and Saint Anthony and the growth of the wholesaling business in what became the warehouse district.

As the millers of Saint Anthony and Minneapolis began to increase their capacity beyond the local demand for flour, they looked for distant markets. The “foreign” Minnesota Central diverted wheat away from Minneapolis in favor of Milwaukee. In response, the local millers organized the Minneapolis and Saint Louis Railway in 1869, but it took several years to raise enough capital to build the lines that would link the mills to the Great Lakes, southern Minnesota, and Iowa. By 1880, a 210-mile line was completed to Fort Dodge, Iowa.

Some merchants and millers saw the Minneapolis and Saint Louis as another monopoly so organized the Minneapolis Eastern in 1878 to compete. It eventually built about three miles of track through the West Bank milling district.

Meanwhile, transportation of passengers within and between Saint Paul, Saint Anthony, and Minneapolis was fostered by the establishment of a streetcar system in 1873. The first cars were
drawn along rails by horses. The system was electrified in 1889 and was reorganized as the Twin City Rapid Transit Company the following year.

The decade of the 1880s began a period of tremendous growth in Minneapolis. The increase in population accompanied the continuing rise of the wholesale trade and the flour and lumbering industries. These in turn were facilitated by the growth of the railroads, both in extent of trackage and number of railroad companies. All converged in the centrally located node of commerce and industry in the vicinity of Saint Anthony Falls. In 1880, Minnesota had nearly 3,100 miles of track; by 1900, track mileage was 6,794.68. The first Short Line bridge was built over the Mississippi in 1880 by the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul Railroad (Milwaukee Road) which shortened the trip between Saint Paul and Minneapolis. The Saint Paul, Minneapolis, and Manitoba Railway (later the Great Northern) began to construct the Stone Arch Bridge further upstream in 1882. Work on a new Union Depot began in 1884. Meanwhile the Northern Pacific Railway celebrated the completion of its northern transcontinental route on September 3, 1883, in Saint Paul and Minneapolis. The railroad constructed its own bridge, a double-track steel truss, south of the University of Minnesota campus, in 1887.

The Minneapolis and Saint Louis and the Minneapolis Eastern still served the milling industry. Several other railroads were established to compete for freight traffic, including grain and lumber: the Omaha in 1880; the Minneapolis Western in 1884; the Burlington in 1886; the Soo Line in 1889; and the Chicago Great Western in 1892. All had their own tracks and freight handling facilities along and near the riverfront. A major rail corridor with freight yards and depots developed along the Third Avenue North. The Milwaukee Road completed a new passenger depot at Washington Avenue and Third Avenue South in 1898. The Great Northern replaced the Union Station by a new Great Northern station on the upriver side of Hennepin Avenue in 1912. Both railroads also sought to attract long-distance passengers with trains that had their own names and offered special accommodations.

By the end of World War I, lumbering and flour milling had begun to decline, and the railroads eventually followed. The creation of the nine-foot channel and the lock and dam system brought improvements to river traffic that made barge shipments more economical. Improvements in roads and highways made it more feasible to ship goods by truck. The Great Depression hastened the decline of the railroads, and Minneapolis was no longer the center of the flour milling industry. The wholesale industry was also declining.

By 1960, Minneapolis flour production had fallen to 5,471,456 barrels from a high of over 21 million barrels in 1915, and in 1965, General Mills ceased operation at the Washburn A Mill. Mill foundations and railroad facilities were being removed, a process which continued for the next thirty years. Various plans were put forward to redevelop the riverfront, while retaining and reusing some of the historic buildings and structures.

Today, only a few vestiges of the multifaceted riverfront transportation systems remain. Some, like the Milwaukee Road Depot, the Stone Arch Bridge, and the still-active railroad bridge over Nicollet Island, are quite noticeable. Others, like a handful of converted warehouses and freight houses, are less conspicuous. More recently discovered are the remnants of the railroad trestle at Mill Ruins Park.
Saint Anthony Falls remains a powerful presence on the river, although the Falls largely powers hydroelectric facilities. Travel on the river above the Falls and downstream to Lock and Dam No. 1 is now largely recreational, whether by modern canoes, kayaks, or excursion boats. Animal-powered transportation is mostly a nostalgic memory. Vast stretches of railroad property have been reclaimed for other uses, most notably riverfront parkland and the extension of West River Parkway as far north as Plymouth Avenue. Other railroad sites, long occupied by parking lots, have become sites for new development, including residential and commercial buildings both north and south of Hennepin Avenue and Gold Medal Park, south of the Guthrie Theater. Yet throughout the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Zone, the impact that transportation has had on the growth of the riverfront and then the overall city continues to be evident and an important part of the historical story.

Among the best places to gain an overview of the river, the Falls, and related transportation sites are the bridges that span the river at Hennepin Avenue, Third Avenue–Central Avenue, and Tenth Avenue. With the exception of the new I-35W bridge, all provide access to pedestrians and bicyclists. Those crossing the Stone Arch Bridge can also share this experience.
THE RAPIDS: WATER TRANSPORTATION BY SAINT ANTHONY FALLS

For hundreds of years, the Mississippi River, above and below Saint Anthony Falls, has been both a barrier to and route of travel. River travel has been most commonly associated with American Indians and early explorers and settlers. Nonetheless, a wide variety of watercraft have remained in use on the Mississippi River during the entire period of this study.

Before the area was explored and settled by Europeans, the American Indians used canoes to travel on the river and its tributaries and reached the river and bypassed its rapids on foot. Father Louis Hennepin, who saw the falls that he named in honor of St. Anthony in 1680, explained in his account of his adventures in America that canoes were about the only practical way to travel in North America: “I found my self oblig’d to travel after this manner [by canoes], for there were no passable Roads in this Country; it being impossible to travel over-land in these new Colonies, because of the infinite number of Trees and Woods that beset them on sides, which must needs be cut down or burn’d before any passable Way be made.”

Hennepin provided the earliest written account of Indian canoes: “These canou’s are round underneath, . . . and pointed at the two Ends, not unlike the Venetian Gondals: To make the canoes, the Indians stripped the bark of birch trees and then stretched it over a framework of cedar ribs. The canoes had no rudder and were propelled by small oars. He observed that skilled paddlers could turn them with “incredible swiftness” and “those who are accustomed to manage them, can make ‘em sail at a wonderful rate, even in calm Weather.” Then, when the wind was favorable, the canoes were outfitted with birch bark sails. Skilled canoe paddlers could travel thirty to thirty-five leagues (the equivalent of ninety to one-hundred five miles) per day and more if the wind were with them. Canoes could carry about 1,000 pounds of cargo, although some could hold as much as 1,500 pounds. Hennepin also described the slower and heavier Pyrogue or pirogue made of logs hollowed out with fire. Many years later, Samuel Pond observed that the Dakota were skilled in making dugout boats, noting “There can be no better canoes than those made by the Dakotas, from trunks of trees, with no tools but an ax and a little clumsy adze” Scholar Rhoda Gilman opined that the Dakota probably learned the art of making birch bark canoes from the Objibwe.

As explorers and settlers moved west, they developed other kinds of boats, but the American Indians continued to use canoes that seem little changed into the nineteenth century as described in 1823 by Count Giacomo G. Beltrami, an Italian nobleman who was touring the upper Mississippi by steamboat. Beltrami described both dugout and birch-bark canoes. A group of Sauks were traveling in a boat that “is the hollowed trunk of a tree, and the oars resemble those of our ancestors,—such as artists put into the hands of painted or sculptured deities of the rivers. The ease with which they managed these liburnicae [type of light war ship] is astonishing; and

1 Father Louis Hennepin, A Discovery of a Vast Country in America (repr., Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Company, 1903), 34-35.
considering how narrow they are, how unsteady in the water, and how heavily they are laden, it is surprising that they so seldom upset.” In another instance, Beltrami described what he called Cypowais [Chippewa or Ojibwe] who arrived in an “extraordinary flotilla [which] was the most novel spectacle that could be conceived. Never did I see the Mississippi present so busy a scene. Their canoes are of a very elegant form; they are so light and slender, that one wonders how they can carry five or six people, their dogs, their tents, and all their moveables. I have seen them lifted on shore with one hand. Rods of light wood, not above half as thick as my finger, form all the timbering of them, and the outside is covered with the very thin bark of a tree.” He compared the covering to paper and noted he could write upon it without any trouble. No nails or other metal fasteners were used. The bark was sewn together with threads of other bark and then the joints were covered with some kind of resin, the recipe of which was a closely guarded secret.³

Travel by boat on the river was still the primary mode of travel when Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike visited St. Anthony Falls in 1805, while on an expedition to explore portions of the newly acquired Louisiana Purchase and obtain land from the Indians for a trading post and fort. Pike’s party traveled by keelboat and had to negotiate the treacherous rapids as well as the portage around the falls: “September 26 [1805]. Embarked at the usual hour, and after much labor and fatigue in getting through the rapids, arrived at the foot of the falls about three or four o’clock; unloaded my boat, and had the principal part of the cargo carried over the portage. With the other boat however full loaded, they [the crew] were not able to get over the last shoot, and encamped about six hundred yards below.” Two days later, Pike’s crew was still trying to get the last boat over the portage. Just as they reached the highest point of the overland passage, “the props gave way,” and the boat slid back down the hill. It took all of the following day to complete this portage.⁴

Other reporters, such as Henry Schoolcraft describe making this trip in a matter of hours, so we must conclude that it was Pike’s decision to keep the boat fully packed that made this portage so costly in time and effort.⁵

Major Stephen Long, who was sent by the United States government to find a suitable site for a military installation, arrived at the falls on July 16, 1817. Like Pike more than a decade earlier, Long had to contend with the rapids: “The rapids below the Falls of St. Anthony commence about two miles above the confluence of the Mississippi and St. Peter’s [Minnesota River], and are so strong that we could hardly ascend them by rowing, poleing [sic] and sailing, with a strong wind, all at the same time. About four miles up the rapids we could make no headway by all these means.”⁶

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⁵ Henry R. Schoolcraft, Narrative Journal of Travels Through the Northwestern Regions of the United States Extending Through the Great Chain of Lakes to the Sources of the Mississippi River in the Year 1820 (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1953), 191-193. Schoolcraft stated his party began the portage at 8:30 AM and finished at 1:30 PM.
Zebulon Pike created a map that shows a portage trail along the east bank of the river stretching from approximately the present-day Southeast Steam Plant to near the southern tip of Nicollet Island. The trail went along the riverbank. Today, this trail is memorialized by a plaque placed in 1933 by the Minnesota Society Daughters of the American Colonists, which states: “From time immemorial, Indians, traders and explorers have used the Mississippi River as a highway of travel unloading their canoes at the bend just below here. They plodded up the portage trail, across what is now the University campus and along the bluffs to a point about a half mile above the Falls of St. Anthony.” The plaque suggests the location of the portage started at Cheever’s Landing or present-day East River Flats, but contemporary descriptions and drawings place the start closer to the falls.

Zebulon M. Pike’s map of the portage around the falls

*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*
Ojibwe Portaging around Saint Anthony Falls as drawn by George Catlin, 1835
Minnesota Historical Society Collections

Old Portage Trail marker, which cites route used to portage Saint Anthony Falls, ca. 1935
John Runk, photographer—Minnesota Historical Society Collections

The Rapids
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Both Pike and Long used keelboats to travel on the Mississippi River. Mildred Hartsough noted that keelboats were widely used on the Ohio River and the Upper Mississippi. The name “came from the fact it was built upon a keel, with side planks and ribs. It might be as large as 40-80 feet long and 8-10 feet wide. The crew was usually about ten men and the load upstream was about 3,000 pounds per man. The draft of a keelboat was only 20 to 30 inches, good for navigation in shallow water. The keelboat was narrowed at both ends. Usually the keelboats were poled; that is, men pushed a pole into the river bottom and then walked from front to back to propel the boat. Sometimes a keelboat would also have a mast and sail—Pike used one at Rock Island Rapids. Speed was 8-12 miles per day. Larger keelboats, some 100 feet long and 20 feet wide could carry 60-100 tons of freight and were known as barges. During the [eighteen] twenties and thirties, keelboats made periodical trips up the river to Fort Crawford and Fort Snelling.” Freight hauling was “a profitable if hazardous business,” the cost $6-7 per hundred-weight, New Orleans to St. Louis. Storms, bandits, Indian attacks, snags in the river, and the threat of sinking were always present for the keelboat operators.\footnote{Mildred L. Hartsough, \textit{From Canoe to Steel Barge on the Upper Mississippi} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1934), 29-33.}

Keelboats were followed by steamboats. Hartsough explained how steamboats evolved for western rivers, as opposed to eastern lakes or the Hudson River. Instead of trying “to fit the river to the boats, [Henry M.] Shreve conceived the revolutionary notion of building a boat to fit the river, that is, one especially designed to meet the problems of the Ohio and Mississippi channels.” Steamboats before Shreve’s innovations were more like ocean-going ships and their draft was too great for the western rivers. Shreve modeled his hulls on keelboats which worked better in shallow water and could more easily avoid snags and rocks. Shreve’s boats tended to sit on the water instead of sinking into it. Shreve moved the operating machinery to the first deck and added a second deck to the boat, which eventually served as a model for all Mississippi steamboats. Shreve also developed the first snagboats, vessels designed to remove dead trees that lurked below the waterline and could punch a hole in the hull of any boat that ran into them. From 1817, onward, the number of keelboats on the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers declined, while steamboats multiplied. Steamboats reduced the cost of transporting people and goods on the Mississippi by one-third.\footnote{Ibid., 45-49. Shrevesport, Louisiana was named after Henry Shreve.}

Although passengers were carried on steamboats, it was the fur trade that drove the early steamboat traffic on the upper Mississippi. Historian William J. Petersen noted that Saint Louis was the center of this trade, receiving furs from both the upper Mississippi and Missouri rivers: “Few places exhibited a greater activity than the region about the Falls of St. Anthony.” Supplies, equipment, and trading goods for fur traders traveled upstream while furs and hides traveled downstream after being portaged around the Falls and rapids below them. Fort Snelling Indian Agent Lawrence Taliaferro reported in 1826 that there were seven licensed trading posts nearby and another ten were located within Taliaferro’s jurisdiction. Fort Snelling usually served as the warehouse for these posts until the furs were shipped downstream. Mendota was an important fur trading center during this period. However, the trading posts were gradually abandoned as furbearing animals grew scarcer and the number of white settlers increased. Saint Paul and Prairie du Chien were left as the chief fur centers on the upper Mississippi. Even so, the
Upper Mississippi during the 1820s accounted for only nine percent of the river traffic; the majority of traffic was in the Ohio basin and the Lower Mississippi.9

Historian John Anfinson explained the vast superiority of steamboats over keelboats in terms of speed and ability to carry cargo. When the Virginia, the first steamboat to travel to Fort Snelling arrived in 1823, it took twenty days to make the 700-mile journey from Saint Louis and carried supplies for the fort as well as some passengers. One reason the journey took as long as it did was the fact that it could not travel at night and it had to stop periodically, so the crew could cut more wood along the shore for fuel. The Virginia was 120 feet long with a 22-foot beam, and just over 100 tons. By contrast, keel boats, often only made eight to fifteen miles per day, meaning a similar keelboat journey would take twice the time. Keelboats could carry about fifteen tons of cargo.10

Hartsough reported that the population above Saint Louis was so scattered until about 1840 that “the only boats coming up to the head of navigation at the Falls of St. Anthony were chartered either by the government, to transport military supplies, or by the American Fur Company, to handle its goods. But by shortly after 1840 there were upwards of forty arrivals at St. Paul every season.”11

Saint Paul had a natural harbor, and in the words of Hartsough had “an unrivalled command of the transportation routes to the north and west, to the east and south. It is not surprising that in 1849 the American Fur Company recognized this advantage by transferring its headquarters from Mendota to St. Paul, which was thenceforth the chief commercial outpost for Minnesota.”12

Many years after the fact, Harriet Godfrey described how her father, Ard Godfrey, who had arrived in Saint Anthony in 1847, moved his family from Maine to Minnesota in the late 1840s. “My father brought the family by rail as far as Buffalo, which was the terminus of the eastern roads at that time. Then they came by way of the Great Lakes to Milwaukee, where they were detained for some time by the serious illness of one of the children. From Milwaukee, they went to Beloit, Wis., where a sister of my father was living.” By this time, winter was closing in and Ard left his family in Beloit and returned to Saint Anthony alone. In April 1849, Ard’s brother-in-law shepherded Godfrey’s wife and children from Beloit to Galena, Ill., via stagecoach over roads so rough that many passengers “preferred to get out and walk as [it] was less dangerous and uncomfortable than riding.” From Galena, the group took a steamboat to Saint Paul and from there a coach to Saint Anthony. A few weeks after their arrival, Harriet was born in the Godfrey house then located on Main Street S.E. Harriet also told the story of how her mother’s piano was delivered to Saint Anthony a few years later. Relying on a letter from the Boston uncle who had procured the piano, Godfrey wrote, “The old Chickering piano, at present in the Godfrey House Museum, was purchased and shipped from Boston, probably in 1851, reaching Galena safely.”

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10 John O. Anfinson, The River We have Wrought: A History of the Upper Mississippi (Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 3; Hartsough, From Canoe to Steel Barge, 50-53.
11 Hartsough, From Canoe to Steel Barge, 53-54.
The next spring, the piano traveled upstream to Saint Paul via steamboat and then to Saint Anthony by ox or horsecart.\(^{13}\)

According to Atwater, “prior to 1847, the only means of crossing the river was by fording on the ledge at the head of the Falls.” He described an old Indian woman who “kept a canoe for ferrying foot passengers, crossing [the river] opposite to Boom Island.” That year, Franklin Steele established the Upper Ferry operating above the falls, near the point where the Hennepin Avenue Suspension Bridge would later be built. Meanwhile, that same year, William Cheever began running the Lower Ferry between the east and west banks near the present-day University of Minnesota. Cheever’s operation was based on the east bank (present-day East River Flats) and connected with the Government Landing on the west side which had been established to allow Fort Snelling soldiers to take shallow draft boats upstream to the government mill at the falls.\(^{14}\)

In 1850, there were reports of boats making their way upstream to present-day Minneapolis. In April, the captain of the steamer *Anthony Wayne*, was induced (by a payment of $200) to take his boat upstream from Fort Snelling to Saint Anthony Falls. Governor Alexander Ramsey and others were on board and “the whole town, men, women, children, lined the shore as the boat approached, and welcomed this first arrival, with shouts and waving handkerchiefs.” The *Minnesota Pioneer* reported that the *Lamartine* went up the Mississippi to above Cheever’s Landing within a half mile of the falls, calling it the first large boat to accomplish this feat. The story noted that a small boat had landed at Cheever’s many years ago when the river was high. In July 1850, Rufus P. Upton reported that the steamboat, *Dr. Franklin*, came upstream to “where the Tenth Avenue Iron Bridge now is, and turned in the swift current and went back to St. Paul.” A couple of other steamers made it that far that same summer, but “after 1850 a long time elapsed before we saw another steamboat at Minneapolis.”\(^{15}\)

Meanwhile, there was river traffic above Saint Anthony Falls as early as 1847, when entrepreneur Franklin Steele sent logging crews out to cut timber in the pine forests north of the falls. The logs were regularly floated down river until they reached Boom Island, where they were sorted. John Anfinson noted that “timber products became the upper river’s most important commerce. . . . The Mississippi itself drained the north-central heart of Minnesota, carrying logs and lumber to Minneapolis.” The practice of sending logs downstream continued for another seventy years. Many years after the fact, Caleb Dorr, who had participated in the first log drive down the Mississippi River from the Swan River, a tributary of the Mississippi in northeast Minnesota, to Saint Anthony Falls, said he expected to witness the last log drive to Minneapolis the following summer (1918). Unlike other vessels which hauled freight up and down the river,

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\(^{14}\) Isaac Atwater, ed., *History of Minneapolis, Minnesota* (New York: Munsell and Company, 1893), 31; 350. The Lower Ferry traveled between the foot of present-day Essex Street S.E, on the east riverbank to the foot of Third Street South on the west bank. It was established by William Cheever in 1847 and taken over by Edward Murphy in 1853 (Scott Anfinson, “Archaeology of the Central Minneapolis Riverfront, Part 1: Historical Overview and Archaeological Potentials,” *Minnesota Archaeologist* 48 (1989): 82).

this cheap mode of transportation did not require any offloading of freight upon arrival, and avoided the problem of deadheading, that is, making the return trip without another load of freight.\textsuperscript{16}

In 1850, the \textit{Minnesota Pioneer} commented that people in Saint Anthony were building two steamers to travel the Mississippi above the falls, one that would travel between Saint Anthony and Sauk Rapids and another that would go above Sauk Rapids to Pokagomon Falls, if possible. In June, John Rollins began operating the steamer, \textit{Governor Ramsey}, which was built in Saint Anthony. According to an 1881 account, on the inaugural run, “she ran up to Banfield Island, about eight miles, then returned, and freighted for Sauk Rapids. Just at dark, she left the landing for her first trip.” The steamer then traveled upstream for about a mile and tied up for the night, leaving the next morning and reaching Sauk Rapids the next day. The return trip, about 68 miles, was made in seven hours. Later, the \textit{Enterprise} was added to the line. The first issue of the \textit{Saint Anthony Express} noted that the \textit{Governor Ramsey} regularly made two trips between Sauk Rapids and Saint Anthony every week. A second steamer was \textit{Enterprise}, built at Saint Anthony by Z. E. B. Nash; July 2, 1857, was date of her first trip to Sauk Rapids. In an 1857 B. F. Upton photo of First Universalist Church, the \textit{Governor Ramsey} can be seen docked at the Upper Levee which was near Dorman’s brick bank building “where the river bends” near present-day Fourth Avenue N.E. and Marshall.\textsuperscript{17}

\begin{center}
\textbf{First Universalist Church with the Upper Levee in the background, 1857}

\textit{Benjamin F. Upton, photographer—Minnesota Historical Society Collections}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{16} Lucile M. Kane, \textit{The Falls of St. Anthony: The Waterfall that Built Minneapolis} (repr., Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1987); Anfinson, \textit{The River We Have We Wrought}, 6-7; “Caleb Dorr, 93, Tells of City’s Early Days,” \textit{Minneapolis Journal}, July 8, 1917.

In 1854, the Grand Excursion celebrated the completion of the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad, the first to link the Atlantic Ocean and the Mississippi River. As part of this event, several steamboats carried celebrants upstream from Rock Island to Saint Paul. James Fairchild Babcock, a correspondent for the New Haven (Conn.) Palladium chronicled the trip. At Rock Island Babcock got his first glimpse of the Mississippi and the seven boats—War Eagle, Galena, Lady Franklin, Sparhawk, Golden Era, Black Hawk, and Jenny Lind—that would take the party to Saint Paul. “A Mississippi steamboat is a queer looking affair to a green Yankee,” he wrote. “The hull is little less than a sharp pointed scow, while the upper works, two or three stories high, look in some respects like an Indian Pagoda.”18

The seven steamers arrived in Saint Paul on June 8, and its citizens quickly organized all manner of carriages and wagons to convey the visitors on a sightseeing trip to Saint Anthony Falls and other points of interest. Although a reporter from the New York Evening Post noted that sometimes boats could go upstream as far as Saint Anthony, Saint Paul was the true head of navigation and there was never a thought of taking the visitors and steamboats on the dangerous journey upstream.19

Instead, all manner of animal-driven vehicles were pressed into service. A Saint Anthony reporter provided the details.

No sooner had the boats landed than every vehicle of every kind, description, shape or age, that could be propelled by horse power, was at once seized by the impatient crowd, anxious to visit the great points of interest and attraction, the Falls, Minnehaha and the Fort. The morning was delightful—the air cool and bracing, the roads in fine condition, and free from dust. Such a turnout we never before saw in Minnesota. More than one hundred teams must have left St. Paul on Thursday morning for the Falls, averaging ten persons to a team. The splendid coaches were all loaded to their utmost capacity, carrying 15 to 25 each.20

In 1855, Atwater reported that citizens of Minneapolis and Saint Anthony organized a stock company with $30,000 capital and built a boat called Falls City which operated regularly between Rock Island and Saint Anthony. Atwater states that the impetus for this project was the fact that people “wanted the steamboats of the lower river to come directly to their own landing instead of stopping at St. Paul and Mendota.” Probably, the Falls City did not come directly into the heart of Saint Anthony, but stopped at Cheever’s Landing, although Atwater did not offer a detailed description of what he meant by “their own landing.” The Falls City was 155 feet long, had a 27-foot beam, and weighted 183 tons. However, the steamer was short-lived as it was sunk by ice in Lake Pepin in April 1857.21

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Many years later, Rufus P. Upton recalled that he “persuaded a steamboat upstream... In the spring of 1855 I purchased in Pittsburg 100 tons of iron, steel, nails, etc., and ordered the stock to Minneapolis. The bill of lading was ‘to St. Paul or St. Anthony’ and the rate of freight was 90 cents to St. Paul and $1 to St. Anthony. Knowing that without help the goods would not get above St. Paul, I drove down there to meet them.” Once the boat arrived, Upton offered the captain $100 as a “persuader” to continue upstream to Saint Anthony, despite the rocks and rapids, but the captain declined and deferred to the pilot. Upton then made the offer to the pilot who accepted, but by then it was too late to start. The pilot agreed to complete the run on the next morning, but when that time arrived, Upton found that Saint Paul men, who wanted the job of carting Upton’s goods, got the pilot drunk and incapacitated. Upton offered the second pilot the $100 and he brought the boat to Cheever’s Landing. That incident induced others to try the same thing. Upton put together a subscription fund of $5,000 to run boats to Saint Anthony. Upton attempted to bring another boat, the Hindoo, to Saint Anthony, “but by this time the summer was well advanced and the river was very low. On the rocks and rapids below Cheever’s Landing the boat stuck,” and the crew were compelled to turn around and unload at Meeker’s Landing, just above the eastern end of the Short Line Bridge [near the present-day Prospect Park neighborhood]. Upton, along with his brother Moses, opened a hardware store on Main Street S.E. that same year and the supplies mentioned above were doubtless for this store. Now known as the Upton Block, it houses the Aster Cafe.22

In 1855, two more steamers, the North Star and the H. M. Rice, were added to the trade between Saint Anthony and Sauk Rapids. Later, the Enterprise was added to the line.23

Rufus Upton reported the Minneapolis Board of Trade took over improving the river for navigation in 1856, and by 1857 had succeeded in removing all rocks and “buoyed out a channel 70 feet wide. . . . We also put a capstan on the lower end of the levee, and with a three-inch cable, more than half a mile long, helped the weak boats over the rapids with a span of horses.” Several houses were built at Cheever’s Landing (present-day East River Flats). But then the Financial Panic of 1857, “‘knocked on the head’ so many Western interests. We scarcely recovered from this period of hard times when the War of Rebellion came and for some time interfered with all our enterprises. Not long after its close the railroads came and well nigh put the steamboats out of business.”24

A typical journey for 1857 might be that of Emily O. Goodridge Grey and her young son, William, and two other family members who traveled from York, Pennsylvania, to join her husband Ralph Grey in Saint Anthony. In a later memoir, she recalled that the train was delayed by high water on the road and in Boscobel, Wisconsin, it finally came to a halt due to floods. After a delay of several days, the train finally was able to make it to Prairie du Chien, where the party boarded a riverboat to Saint Paul. Upon landing in Saint Paul, they took a Concord

22 Holcombe, Compendium, 150-152; What cost $100 in 1855 would cost $2,199.98 in 2007 (http://www.westegg.com/inflation/infl.cgi).
23 Atwater, History of Minneapolis, 778; Warner and Foote, History of Hennepin County, 178-179.
24 Holcombe, Compendium, 152.
stagecoach to Saint Anthony, traveling the Territorial Road. This road more or less followed the same route as present-day University Avenue.25

Near the close of 1857, a high-water year, the Evening News reported that there had been fifty-two steamboat arrivals in Saint Anthony from downstream that season that had brought in a total of 5,183 tons of freight. Four boats had brought in 250 tons each, but others had carried between 100 and 200 tons. It also noted that three above-the-falls steamboats, the Enterprise, H. M. Rice, and North Star were making regular runs to Saint Cloud.26

The late 1850s saw the peak of steamboats arriving at Saint Paul. During the 1840s, less than 100 steamboats per year arrived in Saint Paul. For example, 1844 saw forty-one boats and two years later, only twenty-four steamboats arrived there. By contrast, more than a thousand boats arrived yearly in 1857 and 1858. The following year, only 802 steamboats came to Saint Paul and the next two years saw further declines. By 1862, 846 steamboats had landed in Saint Paul. Anfinson notes that “railroads reaching the river’s east bank in the 1850s both hurt and promoted river traffic. Railroads fed passengers and goods to steamboats. After arriving at a railhead, many immigrants and goods transferred to steamboats for destinations up or downstream. Railroads, however, began segmenting the river trade. Boats that had once traveled the whole upper river made shorter trips between rail heads.”27

According to Hartsough: “Before the end of the period, steamboats were in use not only for the trade below St. Paul, but were running on the Minnesota, on the Mississippi above the falls,—this traffic began in 1850,—and, after about 1860, even on the Red River, where traffic extended south as far as Breckenridge and Moorhead. The inauguration of steamboat transportation on the Red River shortened the trips of the Red River [ox] carts, which henceforth were used only to connect the Red and the Mississippi River boats.”28

In 1861, forty-five steamboats arrive at the Minneapolis landing (former Government Landing). Collectively, they carried in 150 tons of goods, such as flour, wheat, and pork, but only ten tons of goods were shipped out of Minneapolis.29

During the early years of the Civil War, the steamboat traffic above the falls ceased and was diverted elsewhere. Atwater reported that “the end of this lively commercial enterprise was quite as interesting as its inception. When the war of the Rebellion was in progress there was a need of many light draft steamboats of moderate size for the navigation of the bayous and small streams

25 "The Black Community in Territorial St. Anthony: A Memoir by Emily O. Goodridge Grey,” ed. Patricia C. Harpole, Minnesota History 49 (Summer 1984): 45-48. Although Emily’s account states she traveled to Saint Anthony in the spring of 1857, she does not appear in the 1857 territorial census, which supposedly contained the name of every resident as of September 21, 1857. Arrival in the fall of 1857 would fit with the date (September 10, 1857) that Ralph purchased their homestead on Fourth Street S.E., as well as explain why only Ralph was counted in the 1857 census. Probably, Ralph did not purchase a homestead until he was certain that his family would join him that year. The fact that Grey party landed at Saint Paul also argues for a fall arrival when the river would be too low for a Saint Anthony or Minneapolis landing.
26 "Steamboats at the Falls," Evening News (Saint Anthony Falls), November 25, 1857.
27 Anfinson, The River We have Wrought, 4-5.
28 Hartsough, “Transportation as a Factor,” 222.
29 Atwater, History of Minneapolis, 332. No figures were available for Cheever’s Landing.
of the South. The upper Mississippi boats were just the thing for this purpose. They were purchased by the government, transferred around the falls on rollers, and taken South never to return or to be replaced in kind.” One source stated that in 1862, James McMullen was hired to remove the Enterprise from the upper landing. It was placed back in the river at Cheever’s Landing. Another source placed the removal of the Enterprise in 1863, when it was sold to Captains W. F. and P. S. Davidson who hauled her around Saint Anthony Falls. The Davidsons used the steamer as a freight boat, running between Saint Paul and LaCrosse. The Enterprise sank in 1866, but it was raised and then sold to an owner in the south.30

![Steamer Enterprise making portage, on Main Street being moved around Saint Anthony Falls, ca. 1863](Minnesota Historical Society Collections)

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After the Civil War, the occasional steamboat made its way upstream to Minneapolis. Bromley noted that in the summer of 1870, the Minneapolis landed at the lower levee (Government Landing) on the west side near the Krauzlein and Mueller’s Brewery (later known as Mueller and Henrich’s) at the foot of Fourth Street South. However, Minneapolis had no real claim to being the head of navigation until 1907 when Lock and Dam No. 2, also known as Meeker’s Lock and Dam, was put into service. Lock and Dam No. 2 extended navigation about four miles upstream, and for a short time, some river-going boats made their way into Minneapolis. However, this lock and dam was short-lived as the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers destroyed it in 1909 when a decision was made to revamp Lock and Dam No. 1 (near the Ford Parkway Bridge) to make it a facility to generate hydroelectric power.³¹

In 1917, Minneapolis truly did become the head of navigation. On July 3, the *Dandelion* left the port of Saint Paul, carrying federal, state, and local officials on its maiden voyage upstream to the municipal dock near Washington Avenue. In mid-July, the tugboat *Minneapolis* traveled from Moline, Illinois, to Minneapolis, pushing three barges loaded with 1,400 plows shipped by the Deere and Webber Company, and weighing a total of 724,311 pounds, as well as a coal barge which was attached to the side of the tug. The coal was used to fuel the tugboat. This was called the largest shipment of plows ever made. The *Minneapolis Journal* reported that had the plows been transported by train, it would have required thirty large freight cars to carry them. The trip upriver took six days, while the return was made in about half that time. An official of Deere Webber commented that the cost of transporting these goods was about the same as by rail as there was no cargo to defray the cost on the return trip. Once the shipment of plows reached the dock, they were transported by truck to the warehouse. A. R. Ebi of Deere and Company noted that government officials had urged all shippers to shift their business to water transportation and avoid rail transportation when possible, as trains were needed to haul materials for the war effort. Once the Saint Anthony Lower and Upper Lock and Dam was completed in 1963, the head of navigation was moved even further upstream in Minneapolis.32

Steamboat *Minneapolis* and barges loaded with John Deere plows at the Minneapolis barge terminal, July 17, 1917
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

Steamboat *James W. Good* and the Minneapolis Municipal River Terminal, ca. 1940
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*
Coal barges at Municipal River Terminal and Northern Pacific Bridge over the Mississippi, ca. 1940

*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*
Map drawn by Marlena Bromschwig, City of Minneapolis Communications/Graphics

The Reins
Hess, Roise and Company—Page 24
The Reins: Animal-Powered Transportation by Saint Anthony Falls

Until the arrival of steam trains, animal, and human power provided much of the transportation on the Minneapolis central riverfront. American Indians had well-established paths that led to the river, which were also used by the early explorers and settlers. Travel on foot was supplemented by horse-drawn coaches and wagons for short-haul transportation. The use of horse-driven wagons continued well into the twentieth century. Oxcart trains and dogsled trains provided long-distance transportation before the rise of the railroads.

An 1839 map of Fort Snelling and the central riverfront shows several foot paths based on American Indian routes on the west side of the Mississippi River that converged at Saint Anthony Falls. One trail went along what would later become Fort Road or Hiawatha Avenue. Another path ran in a northwesterly direction through the present-day warehouse district. The third pathway appears to run along present-day Hennepin Avenue, from Lake Calhoun to somewhat downstream of Hennepin Island. Lumberman Caleb Dorr, who arrived in Saint Anthony in 1847, recalled walking along those paths: “The west side of the river was Indian reservation then. I used to wander over there Sundays. We got across on a ferry from Nicollet Island, and there was a narrow Indian trail out through what is now Loring Park to Lake Calhoun and Lake Harriet.”

Samuel Pond’s hand drawn map showing paths connecting Saint Anthony Falls, Fort Snelling, and Lake Calhoun, 1834
Taken from *Half Century of Minneapolis*
Lawrence Taliaferro’s hand drawn map showing Fort Snelling, the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers, several Minneapolis lakes, 1835
Minnesota Historical Society Collections
Lieutenant J. L. Thompson’s map of the Military Reserve including Fort Snelling, showing the paths connecting Saint Anthony Falls, Fort Snelling, Lake Calhoun, and Lake Harriet, 1839

*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*
Oxcarts that carried goods to and from the Red River Valley were in use from about 1817 to 1870. They were closely associated with a group of people and a culture centered in that area. In 1817, Thomas Douglas, Fifth Earl of Selkirk, observed: “The great facilities which nature offers, for a commercial intercourse between the country which I propose to establish, & the American settlements in the Missouri and Illinois Territories; from whence our people might draw their supplies of many articles, by way of the Mississippi, & River St. Peters [Minnesota River], with greater facility than from Canada or from Europe... this traffic, tho’ it might be of small account at first, would increase with the progress of our Settlements, creating a growing demand for many articles of American produce.”

Although the Selkirk Settlement would fail by the mid-1820s, Thomas Douglas was correct in foreseeing that trade would be established between this area of Canada (present-day Manitoba) and what would come to be known as Saint Paul and Minneapolis. Oxcarts first appeared about 1800 in French Canada, to convey various goods, and in the words of North West Company trader Alexander Henry, each cart was “worth four horses to us, as it would require five horses to carry as much on their backs as one [ox] will drag in each of those large carts.” The carts were made almost entirely out of wood pieces joined by leather. The earliest carts, about four feet high, had solid wheels made of sawn tree trunks. Over the years, lighter wheels with spokes were developed, but the basic design never changed. They were modified over the years by the Red River people—the metis—who used them for carrying hides and dried meat from their annual buffalo hunts. They then sold the hides to supply the northern fur-trading outposts. Gilman described the metis as “the restless offspring of more than a century of Indian–white contact in the fur trade of the Red River country [that] formed a population separate from both European settlers and Native Americans... By the 1820s it was not uncommon to see large trains of more than 100 carts returning across the plains piled high with hides and dried meat.”

According to Gilman, “The polyglot community fathered by Selkirk and the Canadian fur trade near the confluence of the Red and Assinibone Rivers determined the character of the Red River trails.” No one group originated the trade with Saint Paul and Saint Anthony–Minneapolis. Individual need and the demand for goods, going in both directions, drove the trade. Bromley reported that trip between Pembina, N.D., just south of the Canadian border, and Saint Anthony, about 448 miles by oxcart, would take between thirty and forty days as the carts could travel about fifteen miles per day. The carts could travel only during the months when there would be plenty of prairie grass for the oxen to eat. Their human drivers usually subsisted on pemmican or fresh game.

After 1844, the center of the fur trade moved from Traverse des Sioux and Big Stone along the Minnesota River in western Minnesota to Mendota and later to Saint Paul, Saint Anthony, and Minneapolis. Meanwhile in 1844, Bromley reported that there were six Red River oxcarts in

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service between Pembina and Mendota. By 1851, there were 102 carts on the same route and “six or seven years later,” there were between 500 and 600. Bromley stated the trade was worth $1,400 in 1846; in 1850 it was valued at $15,000; in 1855, $40,000; in 1860, $186,000; and in 1863 it was $250,000. Each cart was capable of carrying from 600 to 900 pounds. The noise of a train of carts could often be heard from several miles away. Bromley concluded, “It was against the principles of the proprietors to grease the axels.” However, there was a good reason for the lack of lubrication as grease would attract dust, which eventually would gum up and freeze the axles. Mrs. T. B. (Harriet) Walker recalled an incident where a Sunday sermon was disrupted by a train of approaching oxcarts. “The minister had just given out the text when the squeaking of the Red River carts was faintly heard. He hastily said, ‘To be discoursed on next Sunday,’ for nothing but this noise could be heard when they were passing.”[37]

John Stevens described an oxcart train that arrived at Fort Snelling on its way to Saint Paul in July 1849: “This train brought in an immense quantity of furs, pemmican, dried buffalo-tongue, and all the products of the great northwest. . . . Buffalo robes, martin fisher, otter, muskrat, fox, badger, wolf, wild-cat, lynx, beaver, and all other kinds of fur incident to a high northern latitude, was brought from the extreme north to exchange for merchandise or cash. Whole cart-loads of the handiwork of squaws were in the train. There were moccasins, gloves and mittens worked in every conceivable manner. Beads, porcupine-quills, and bird feathers, were worked into them. These rare articles proved that the native women of the extreme north possessed artistic taste. It plainly indicated that they had instructors superior to the savages.” Putting aside Stevens’ obvious bias, perhaps the handiwork items demonstrated a high degree of refinement, or perhaps their makers were conscientiously crafting their items with the markets at Saint Anthony and Saint Paul in mind. The description is also a clue that the Red River oxcart trade involved much more than furs and hides. Stevens also noted, “The arrival of these Red-river carts, so called, added much to the life and trade of territory.”[38]

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38 John H. Stevens, *Personal Recollections of Minnesota and Its People and Early History of Minneapolis* (Minneapolis: Tribune Job Printers, 1890), 35.
Preparing a Red River cart train at Pembina for trip to Saint Anthony Falls, 1856

Minnesota Historical Society Collections

Red River oxcarts on Main Street S.E., 1854
Minnesota Historical Society Collections
Red River cart train, ca. 1860
*Whitney's Gallery, photographer—Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

Red River fur traders camp near University Avenue in Saint Paul, 1860
*William Henry Illingworth, photographer—Minnesota Historical Society Collections*
Although there are no physical indicators of oxcarts on the Minneapolis riverfront, Gilman traced the oxcart paths as they entered the city: In 1851 the road went from Itasca to the Rum River; all three of the crossings of the Rum River were located within the present-day city of Anoka. From Anoka the carts followed the present-day Anoka County Road 1 (also known as East River Road). After passing Coon Creek in Coon Rapids, the procession would arrive at Rice Creek and Fridley. From Fridley the carts would pass over an open plain to the town of Saint Anthony (present-day Minneapolis), keeping close to present-day Marshall Street N.E.; near present-day Lowry, the trail bent to the east but returned to the Marshall Street route just as it connected with Main Street S.E. A deep ravine between present-day Thirteenth and Fourteenth Avenues S.E. forced the carts to present-day University Avenue S.E., but then the oxcart trail meandered southeast, through the present-day east campus of the University of Minnesota and Prospect Park, coming to the present-day junction of I-94 and State Highway 280, near the Minneapolis city limits.\(^{39}\)

The wife of lumber mill owner James McMullen, who came to Saint Anthony in 1849, recalled, “Whenever the Red River carts came by, I used to tie the dog to the door latch. I did not want any calls from such rough looking men as they were. Those carts would go squawking by all day. Later they used to camp where the Winslow house [the site of the present-day Lourdes Square condominiums] was built. There would be large numbers there, a regular village.” Fear of the unknown worked both ways; “One ‘wild Indian horse’ was so unused to the sight of domestic pigs and sheep that it nearly carried its rider into the Mississippi.”\(^{40}\)

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Although most of the animal power during this period was supplied by horses or oxen, dog-powered vehicles occasionally made an appearance in Saint Anthony and Minneapolis. John Stevens somewhat humorously recalled “Esquimaux Dispatches by Dog-train.” In March 1850, “a dog train arrived from the Red River of the north, containing the news of moment from the Arctic Ocean.” The dogsled drivers were unlikely to have been “Esquimaux” or Inuits, but more likely métis who drove the oxcarts during the summer.  

Isaac Atwater, who ran the first newspaper in Saint Anthony, recalled the isolation of the town, especially during the winter; “there were no telegraphs—mails for half the year only once a week.” In the winter of 1851, the editor of St. Anthony Express bemoaned, “No mail from America in ten days,” but shortly thereafter a dog train from Pembina arrived with mail. The following winter, the newspaper recorded the arrival of a sledge pulled by eight dogs that traveled 600 miles from Pembina in sixteen days. “These dog trains arriving every winter sometimes in large numbers, form a curious feature in the mode of locomotion in this Territory. These dogs are a very hardy race, easily kept, of great distance, and will travel from 40 to 70 miles a day without fatigue.” The writer concluded by hoping that a railroad would stretch from Pembina to Saint Anthony within the next dozen years. 

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41 Stevens, *Personal Recollections*, 74-75.
The later railroads would follow the old oxcart trails in a general fashion. Gilman observed these trails were not really fixed and varied from season to season. She concluded: “Although the trade that had grown up in the years between 1820 and 1870 was a major factor in the planning and building of the railroads through the area, the steel rails followed in few places the old cart routes.” Even the approximate routes were lost over the years. When “surveyors with their notebooks, chains, and transits moved into the Red River Valley before the last dust from the oxcarts had settled... some of them recorded meticulously where the trails crossed section and township lines; [while] others ignored the meandering tracks.”

Steamboats, and to a greater extent railroads, spelled the end of the oxcart traffic by the early 1870s. Rhoda Gilman remarked that in the winter of 1870-1871, the firm of Hill and Griggs (James J. Hill and Alex Griggs) built a steamboat, the Selkirk, for service on the Red River, and it made its first trip in April 1871. “Their timing was precise, for in that year steel rails crossed the Red River and freight rolled along them to the steamboat landings. With no more fanfare than the whistle of the first locomotive, a way of life for the metis and a chapter of history ended. When the cart trains vanished, so, in large measure, did the Red River trails.”

Horses played a prominent role in transportation on the Minneapolis riverfront from the very beginning of Minneapolis and Saint Anthony. They carried individual passengers in coaches and carriages as well as pulling wagons and later streetcars. By 1850, a regularly scheduled line of wagons ran daily between Saint Paul and Saint Anthony. Goods or passengers that debarked in Saint Paul were carried to Minneapolis or Saint Anthony via these wagons. Hotels, such as the Tremont House in Saint Anthony and the Cataract House in Minneapolis, offered travelers food, lodging, and stagecoach service to many locations. In the early 1850s, Permelia Atwater recalled once the river froze up, there were no fresh supplies from the outside until late February “when a venturesome trader drove up from La Crosse with a sledge load of fresh pork, sausage, and venison,” which was probably pulled by a horse.

Stagecoach at Douglas House, Alexandria, 1876
Newton J. Trenham, photographer—Minnesota Historical Society Collections

43 Gilman, Red River Trails, v.
44 Gilman, Red River Trails, 26.
45 Mildred Hartsough, “Transportation as a Factor in the Development of the Twin Cities,” Minnesota History (September 1926), 222; Atwater, History of Minneapolis, 66.
From the left: Winslow House, Upton Block, and Tremont/Jarrett House, 1858
Benjamin Franklin Upton, photographer—Minnesota Historical Society Collections

Cataract House, later Sixth Avenue Hotel, Washington and Sixth Avenue, Minneapolis, ca. 1900
Minnesota Historical Society Collections
Menu from the Tremont House, formerly located on Main Street and Second Avenue S.E.

*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*
HOURS OF MEALS.

Breakfast, 7 to 10 o'clock,
Dinner, 1 to 3
Tea, 6 to 9

Sunday, Breakfast, 7½ to 10 o'clock.
Dinner, 1½ to 3.
Tea, 6 to 9.

NOTICE.

Gentlemen having extra meals will please report the same at the office.
Children occupying seats at the first table, will be charged full price.
All meals, fruits or luncheons sent to rooms, will be charged extra.

The Proprietors of the House respectfully announces to his Guests that
he will not be responsible for money, or any valuable effects, unless they
are deposited in the office of the Hotel.

Stages leave this House daily for all parts of the State.
Horses and carriages furnished on application at the office.

DISTANCES.

FROM ST. ANTHONY TO

St. Paul, 5
Stillwater, 9
Hudson, 11
Taylor's Falls, 21
Superior City, 31
Hastings, 42
Red Wing, 52
Winona, 62
La Crosse, 72
Prairie du Chien, 82
Dubuque, 92
Galena, 102
Chicago via Galena, 112

FROM ST. ANTHONY TO

Minnehaha Falls, 4
Lakes Harriet and Calhoun, 27
Lake Minnetonka, Wayzata, 27
Fort Snelling, 147
Shakopee, 41
Belle Plaine, 73
St. Peter, 178
Mankato, 217
Fort Ridgely, 311
Upper Mississippi River, 389
Anoka, 400
Monticello, 580
Clearwater, 1700
St. Cloud, 5200
Sauk Rapids, 458
Little Falls, 500
Fort Ripley, 600
Crow Wing, 645
Alexander, 804
Breckenridge, 2000

News print.
An 1858 menu from the Cataract House, formerly located on Washington Avenue and Sixth Street South
Minnesota Historical Society Collections
Colonial Warehouse Company (wagon truck and horses), Third Avenue North, Minneapolis, 1926
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*
Map drawn by Marlena Bromschwig, City of Minneapolis Communications/Graphics
THE RAILS: RAILROADS BY SAINT ANTHONY FALLS

The development of railroads along Saint Anthony Falls and the central riverfront can be divided into three periods: an early period between 1850 and 1880 that coincides with the early settlement and initial growth of the towns of Saint Anthony and Minneapolis; a period of expansion between 1880 and 1930 that coincides with the growth of the city, its industries, businesses, and population; and a period of decline between 1930 and the present as the role of the railroads was superseded by motor vehicles and river barges.

Saint Anthony Falls was the locus of industrial development and shipping for lumber, flour milling, warehousing, and wholesaling. The Falls were the impetus for the plethora of railroad lines that reflected various interests and alliances. The names changed over time as railroad lines were purchased by other lines and consolidated. Eventually as the railroads declined, tracks, depots, and other rail facilities were removed. Much of what are now parkways, open space, and new construction, was once occupied by rails, depots, and freight houses.

The Early Period of Railroads—1850 to 1880

Minnesota anticipated railroads long before they became a reality. In 1850, the Minnesota Pioneer, the territory’s first newspaper, predicted that the territory would have a population of 30,000 people in a few months and urged building a railroad from Saint Paul to Saint Anthony Falls: “From Saint Paul to Saint Anthony is not over 8 miles. The whole distance can be graded for $2,000 per mile. We can build, at least this section of the Mississippi, Lake Superior and Hudson Bay railroad in and of ourselves.” In reality, rail travel between the two communities was twelve years in the future, and the connection to Lake Superior would not be made for many more years. Ten years later, Saint Paul, Saint Anthony, and Minneapolis, the three towns that would most benefit from the proposed rail line had a combined population of slightly more than 16,000.46

When the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad reached the Mississippi River in 1854, thus connecting the Atlantic with the Mississippi by rail, Saint Paul, Saint Anthony, Minneapolis, and other communities along the Upper Mississippi celebrated with an event known as the Grand Excursion. The excitement generated by the celebration served to raise even more public support for building railroads. Early in 1857, Congress gave authority to the Minnesota Territorial Legislature, under the Minnesota Enabling Act, to convey federal land as right-of-way for railroads. The legislature chartered four “land grant” companies, among them the Minnesota and Pacific Railroad, charged with building from Stillwater via Saint Paul and Saint Anthony toward the Pacific coast; and the Minneapolis and Cedar Valley Railroad, which was supposed to build from Minneapolis to the Iowa border. By May 23, 1857, there were twenty-seven charters and

46 “A Railroad to St. Anthony,” Minnesota Pioneer (Saint Paul), April 3, 1850. The Federal Census of 1850 counted 6,077 persons living in Minnesota Territory; that same year Saint Anthony Falls had a population of 538, while Saint Paul’s was at 1,112. Two thousand dollars in 1850 is about the same as $49,277 in 2007 dollars. The Inflation Calculator Web site, (http://www.westegg.com/inflation/).
many of them spelled out routes, incorporators’ names, and deadlines for construction. In the words of Richard Prosser: “It was perhaps a normal consequence that the Congressional conveyances and the early charters caused great speculation and railroad ‘fever.’ Gigantic investments were sunk in lands and townsites before so much as a shovelful of Minnesota sod was turned.” The financial Panic of 1857 struck the country in late August and the railroad companies were not able to raise the necessary capital to carry out their plans. When the time limits for construction were not met, Minnesota Territory foreclosed and became the owner of the railroad properties.47

Once Minnesota became a state in 1858, the push to build railroads continued. The state constitution was amended to allow Minnesota to issue Minnesota State Railroad Bonds, as a “loan of public credit,” not to exceed five million dollars, although the framers of the constitution had specifically prohibited extending the credit of the state to any individual or corporation. Some interpreted the wording, according to historian William Folwell, “to suggest that there was such a thing as lending ‘credit’ without incurring liability for ultimate payment and thus making a debt.” The question was placed before voters and passed by a large margin. After the plan produced many miles of grading, but not even one mile of viable track, much less a railroad, there were according to Folwell, “later insinuations, even open assertions, that the legislative bodies had been corrupted. The proof thereof is yet to be revealed. It was not necessary to bribe a body of men so willing to believe in a plausible scheme for which their constituents were clamoring.” By 1860, the legislature expunged the five million dollar loan article from the constitution, and directed the governor to foreclose on all the mortgages for the four railroad companies. Despite all the efforts, there had yet to be a single mile of rail track laid down in the state.48

By this time, even outsiders were hoping for railroads to be built in Minnesota. A New York Times article stated: “The railroad enterprises projected and in course of construction in these ‘far off regions’ [Iowa and Minnesota] are another feature worthy of mention for the benefits they will bestow on New York in opening new avenues for commerce.” One railroad being built along the Cedar Valley in Iowa was projected to form connections between Dubuque, Sioux City, Minneapolis, and Saint Paul, and when completed, “we shall have an unbroken chain of railroad from New York via Chicago to St. Paul, Minnesota.”49

In general, the early railroad period in Minnesota was characterized by fits and starts. Progress in the laying out and grading of a road would be interrupted by financial panics, such as those of 1857 and 1873, the Civil War, or settlements too sparse to support a railroad line. Once the process of building got underway, there were decisions to be made on where the tracks and other railroad facilities should be located to minimize disruption to thoroughfares, yet provide easy access to railroad customers. Richard Prosser noted that although the concept of the monopoly-holding railroads having some reciprocal obligation to the public was not yet well formed, “by 1870 a considerable clamor arose in Minnesota for railroad regulation, partly a result of Granger

movement success in other states.” The first attempts at railroad regulation were undertaken in 1871 with the establishment of the state Office of the Railroad Commissioner that had the power to investigate railroads. That same year the Minnesota legislature passed the Jones Railroad Bill, which established a classification for freight, fixed maximum charges, and stipulated that five cents per mile was the maximum rate that could be charged to passengers. The state Railroad Law of 1874, which attempted to impose equal access and rates to all industries near railroad lines, granted the commissioner powers of enforcement, and considered violations of policy an offense against the state, rather than forcing individuals to seek remedies on their own. As Prosser observed, “the Railroad Law of 1874 would probably have been more effective if enacted during prosperity.” Within a year the law was repealed and replaced by the Morse Bill, which some considered “to be wholly inadequate, and a virtual reversion to the ‘law of the jungle’ which had prevailed prior to 1871.”

The First Railroad: the Saint Paul and Pacific

The Minnesota and Pacific Railroad was chartered in 1857. In March of 1861, the state gave the rights to the Minnesota and Pacific to build a line from Saint Paul to Saint Anthony, which was to be completed by January 1, 1862. At that time, Saint Anthony, located on the east side of Saint Anthony Falls, and Minneapolis, across the river, were two separate towns. In 1872, the two merged to become the city of Minneapolis. During the summer of 1861, the Minnesota and Pacific managed to build about fourteen hundred feet of track in Saint Paul and acquire rolling stock. On September 10, 1861, the steamboat Alhambra brought the locomotive called the William Crooks (named for the chief engineer of the railroad), three platform cars, and a passenger coach to the Saint Paul harbor. The William Crooks was a wood-burning, twenty-five ton capacity locomotive. The first rails, of standard gauge, were made of iron and weighed forty-five pounds to the yard. The Minnesota and Pacific did not complete the line within the deadline and in March 1862, its rights were transferred to a new corporation, the Saint Paul and Pacific Railroad Company. By June 1862, the state’s first railroad was nearing completion.

On June 28, 1862, the Minnesota State News noted: “The railroad is completed to Tuttle’s Brook in the rear of Fourth Street [apparently in the present-day rail corridor near Fifth and Oak Streets S.E.].” It went on to report that it was the intention of the railroad to run three trains per day and provide a line of horse-drawn “omnibuses” at the end of each route that will bring passengers to any point in Minneapolis, Saint Anthony, or Saint Paul. “The fare including omnibus ride will probably not be over sixty cents”; apparently this would be a round trip between the two cities.

50 Prosser, Rails to the North Star, 22-24.
51 Prosser, Rails to the North Star, 8; Bromley, Minneapolis Portrait of the Past, “Advent of the Iron Horse”; William Crooks, “The First Railroad in Minnesota,” Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1905), 448. Prosser maintains that two locomotives, the William Crooks and Edmund Rice (in October) arrived in Saint Paul by barge from La Crosse, Wisconsin. Prosser reports that only a couple of common carrier, narrow-gauge railways were ever built in Minnesota, and these were completed in the late 1870s (21).
52 “The Railroad,” Minnesota State News (Minneapolis), June 28, 1862; Don L. Hofsommer, Minneapolis and the Age of Railways (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 174. The 1862 fare would be the equivalent of $12.32 in 2007 dollars. The Inflation Calculator Web site, (http://www.westegg.com/inflation/). Hofsommer (177) also states the Saint Paul and Pacific charged 2.5 cents per mile for passengers in 1862 or $10.27 in 2007 dollars for a round trip between the two cities.
On June 28, a train pulled by the William Crooks made the inaugural trip between Saint Paul and Saint Anthony. The gala affair included such dignitaries as Governor Sibley, Lt. Governor Ignatius Donnelly, the mayors of Saint Paul and Saint Anthony, and aldermen, and the journey took about one hour. The train was filled with excursionists, who enjoyed “a short stroll through the suburbs of the Falls city,” and then returned to Saint Paul.53

On July 2, the railroad began regular train service between the two cities. The track was extended to Main Street later that summer, and a small depot, on Main Street S.E. near present-day East Hennepin Avenue was built. One newspaper suggested that there was a fair amount of passenger traffic from the beginning, noting the railroad had changed the arrival and departure times and added another train. “The completion of the railroad from St. Paul to this place, has given new life to travel. Vast numbers of strangers have visited here since this event, and they always speak in the most glowing terms of our wonderful manufacturing power.”54

The location of the railroad tracks and depot on Main Street S.E. is not known exactly, but there are some photographic clues. The tracks and probably the freight house can be seen in an 1863 photograph. The tracks run on the river side of Main Street and a freight house can be seen in the distance well beyond the Morrison-Martin Block. The freight house and depot, which is a little further upstream and placed somewhat closer to the river, can be seen in two photographs dating from about 1865. Both pictures were taken from Winslow House, and Nicollet Island is seen directly across from the depot. The first suspension bridge and the town of Minneapolis can be seen in the background. Judging by the 1867 Ruger Map of Saint Anthony and Minneapolis, the Saint Paul and Pacific railroad tracks ran somewhere near Thirteenth Avenue S.E. (formerly known as B Street) from somewhere near Fifth Street S.E. and then turned right onto Main Street S.E. An 1862 newspaper reported the depot was in place by August: “The laying of the railroad track from St. Anthony to Anoka commences within days. It seems that it is not even yet fully decided whether the St. Anthony depot is to remain where it is or whether it shall be carried up with the track on 4th St., in the rear of the Winslow House. And it is even yet possible that the track will be laid up Main Street.” As built, the track to Anoka did not follow Main Street or Fourth Street S.E., but rather it went through the present-day Southeast Como neighborhood, crossing present-day East Hennepin Avenue at approximately Eighth Avenue S.E. and entering present-day Northeast Minneapolis. From there the railroad traveled in a northwesterly direction, generally following the Mississippi River.55


View from Winslow House looking over the Saint Paul and Pacific Depot on Main Street with Minneapolis in the distance, 1865

Benjamin Franklin Upton, photographer—Minnesota Historical Society Collections
Soon, the William Crooks was making the twenty-mile round trip between Saint Paul and Saint Anthony in less than two hours, carrying on average, ninety passengers a day, running three times a day. At first it just transported people and mail, but the following year it secured an express freight business to haul produce from Anoka farmers. Employment in the nearby pineries grew as demand for lumber products increased. That same year, the Saint Paul and Pacific had added nine miles of tracks almost reaching Fridley. Early in 1864, the Saint Paul and Pacific reached Anoka. To celebrate this event, the railroad ran a special train, with four passenger cars that traveled from Saint Paul to Anoka (about thirty miles) in ninety minutes. During the celebratory lunch at Anoka, many speeches were made, among them one by a Mr. Stowell, who “felt grateful for railroad communication—that they were now at the head of navigation. . . . [Anoka’s citizens] appreciated the railroad, after a few years of business by the sand-hilly roads, which had made of business there slow and dull work. The change was pleasant,—from five hours’ tedious riding to half an hour by the cars to get to the mercantile emporium.” The early Saint Anthony–Minneapolis city directories list the American Express Company, then a freight-forwarding company, as operating at the Main Street depot, suggesting that the Saint Paul and Pacific Railroad delivered enough freight to make it attractive to a freight handler.

While a celebration of the Anoka connection may have required four passenger cars, writer Frank O’Brien offered a view of what an ordinary traveler might experience on the early railroads. Jud Rice and Dan Barstow, early conductors on the Saint Paul and Pacific, were often “obliged to make their infrequent trips without a single passenger. It was considered a very fair load when ten or a dozen would take their lives in their hands by venturing from home and engaging passage on a train that speeded along the ‘T’ rails at a ten-mile gait.” But there were other dangers as well, sometimes from the passengers. O’Brien recalled that about twenty “Red Shirters,” or lumberjacks, boarded Barstow’s train at Saint Anthony with their final destination at Anoka where they would ride a wagon to Crow Wing lumber camps. “Before starting, they had partaken freely of that which cheers and also inebriates, for all pioneer towns were wont to boast that they handled the ‘real stuff,’ and guaranteed to knock the staunchest wielder of the axe ‘silly’—or otherwise—in short order.” By the time the train reached Fridley, “every one in the crowd was hilariously drunk—one particularly so, and he took full charge of the train (two cars), pulling the bell-cord as a signal to stop, then commanding the engineer to ‘pound the daylight out of her!’ Dan, knowing full well that he and the brakeman were powerless in the hands of the ‘Red Shirters,’ submitted gracefully, but under silent protest.” Another railroad worker, John Dudley Condit, recalled similar events. “There were many loggers, sailors and raftsmen always on the go. They were good, hearty, wholesouled men as a class, but very rough at times, particularly if they had been drinking, and it required patience and tact to handle them.” He continued: “It seemed sometimes as though the rougher element prevailed.”


Another account offered a different picture of a trip between Minneapolis and Saint Paul on the Saint Paul and Pacific. Writing in 1870, Bill Brackett reported: “In no place in the State can so well-dressed, respectable and polite passengers be found on railway trains as on these locals. Just as the suburban trains of the great cities are freighted with the cream of city and country, so these trains are freighted with the cream of Minnesota.” However, Brackett did show some concern about the railroad crossing at Nicollet Island: “In crossing the long bridges which span the Mississippi there is a sensation of fear—not exactly, but a sensation that says ‘it will be a good thing to get off these bridges on[to] solid earth’.”

In July 1866 the Saint Paul and Pacific depot on Main Street S.E. was moved to a new location. A newspaper observed that the trains “will run on their new tracks back of St. Anthony, stopping at the new depot which has just been erected. This will not be quite so convenient for the traveling public, but will be a good thing for the city of St. Anthony. Farmers can then drive their teams upon the principal and business street [Main Street] of the city without fear of their horses being frightened and a runaway and smash-up as the general result.” The new depot, located on present-day Second Avenue N.E. (formerly Oak Street), between Fourth and Fifth Streets N.E., became known as the East Minneapolis Depot after Saint Anthony and Minneapolis merged in 1872.

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59 “Local News,” Minneapolis Chronicle, July 21, 1866; Minneapolis and Saint Anthony City Directory for 1871-1872, 199; Map of Minneapolis, Minnesota ([n.p.] 1885), 5.
On May 1, 1867, the first train owned by the Saint Paul and Pacific Railway Company arrived in Minneapolis from Saint Anthony, pulled by the William Crooks, crossing the Mississippi River at the bridge on Nicollet Island. The 1,000-foot railroad bridge, built at a cost of $90,000, was described as “a splendid trestle work. Known as the Howe Truss, it has four spans on the westerly side of the river and three on the easterly channel.” The Saint Paul and Pacific Depot, Minneapolis’ second railroad depot (the first being the Minnesota Central’s at Second Street South), was built at Washington and Fourth Avenue North. Over time an entire rail corridor with several freight houses and depots would be built at or near Fourth Avenue North. By August, Saint Paul and Pacific trains provided twice daily service to Wayzata and Lake Minnetonka. A much later study noted the importance of this new connection: “For the first time, the near North Side had the transportation potential to become the city’s warehouse district.” The Minneapolis Tribune exclaimed that “Minneapolis is the acknowledged railroad center of the Upper Mississippi Valley and of the state,” and asserted several reasons; among them were: the branch of the Saint Paul and Pacific Railroad was completed to Sauk Rapids and was steadily working its way northward; the Minnesota Central would connect the city with Chicago; and there were plans for a Minneapolis to Saint Louis railroad.⁶⁰

Looking upriver, the First Universalist Church of Saint Anthony is in the left foreground while the Saint Paul and Pacific RR Bridge to Nicollet Island can be seen at upper left, ca. 1867

*Benjamin Franklin Upton, photographer—Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

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A portion of an 1867 map showing the East Side Depot and the Saint Paul and Pacific Bridge over Niccollet Island

Minneapolis and Saint Anthony, Minnesota, drawn by A. Ruger
Pacific Grain Elevator at Saint Paul and Pacific Railway Station on Washington Avenue and Third Avenue North, 1874

*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*
In 1869, the Saint Paul and Pacific had laid track as far as Willmar, midway between Saint Paul and Breckenridge. “The road thus opened Kandiyohi County, which one source labeled the ‘greatest wheat field in the world.’” Two years later, the railroad stretched to Breckenridge and was already reaching into North Dakota. From April 1870 to June 1871, the Saint Paul and Pacific carried out 5,555,080 pounds of general merchandise from Minneapolis, 12,160 pounds of coal, 127,451 pounds of agricultural implements, 740,600 pounds of staves and heading (for barrels), and 861,200 pounds of bricks. The railroad brought in 4,608,970 pounds of wheat, 511,260 pounds of other grains, 4,159,450 pounds of coal, 1,330,500 pounds of staves and heading, 77,000 pounds of cotton, and 3,927,360 pounds of general merchandise. In 1872, 8,998,000 feet of Minneapolis lumber was shipped out on the Saint Paul and Pacific; two years later more than 14 million feet of lumber was carried away by this railroad.  

By the early 1870s, the Saint Paul and Pacific reported its passenger trains ran at a rate of fifteen to thirty miles per hour; the average fare was five cents per mile for first class and the Main Line (Saint Anthony to Breckenridge) carried 115,810 passengers per year. Their freight trains traveled between ten to twenty miles per hour. By 1871, 6,847 tons of freight were forwarded from the Saint Anthony railroad station, while 1,468 tons of freight were received there. The revenue from this station was $11,944.58. Meanwhile, across the river, the Minneapolis station forwarded 15,675 tons of freight and received 19,092 tons. This station earned $79,055.81 that year. The freight at Saint Anthony station was mainly wheat (5,700 bushels), other grains, and lumber (373,000 feet). While the Minneapolis station handled more than thirty-five times as much wheat (202,875 bushels) and more the nine times as much lumber (3,554,000 feet), it also transported 2,183 barrels of flour in contrast to Saint Anthony’s four, and handled 5,483 tons of miscellaneous merchandise. 

Since the mid-1870s, Donald A. Smith, Norman W. Kittson, James J. Hill, and George S. Smith had been working to acquire the Saint Paul and Pacific line. By 1879, the Saint Paul and Pacific Railroad was in bankruptcy, and that same year the Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway Company was formed by Smith et al. The Manitoba Road, as it was commonly known, acquired the bankrupt line as well as the Red River and Manitoba, and Red River Valley Railroad Companies, which meant the Manitoba Road had tracks and facilities going from the Red River Valley to Minneapolis and Saint Paul. 

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62 Railroad Commissioner Report for the Year Ending August 31, 1871, 23; 16 (appendix); Railroad Commissioner Report for the Year Ending August 31, 1872, 152-153.
63 Hidy, Great Northern Railway, 28-34; Prosser, Rails to the North Star, 156, 161-162.
Saint Paul and Pacific Railroad employees, ca. 1873
Redington & Shaffer, photographer—Minnesota Historical Society Collections

Interior of passenger coach on Saint Paul and Pacific Railroad, ca. 1875
Minnesota Historical Society Collections

The Rails
Hess, Roise and Company—Page 54
Minnesota Central, later the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul Railroad (CM and StP), also called The Milwaukee Road

The first railroad line to arrive in what was then the town of Minneapolis was the Minnesota Central Railway, which would later be known as the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul Railroad, or the Milwaukee Road. During the Civil War, railroad building in Minnesota was slowed, but did not come to a complete halt. In 1864, the Minnesota Central Railway purchased the Minneapolis and Cedar Valley Railroad, one of the four original land grant railroads in the state, that was supposed to build from Minneapolis south to the Iowa border. By 1864, the Minnesota Central built out toward Faribault. The railroad soon put down tracks from Mendota to Minneapolis and the first train from Minneapolis to Faribault started operating in October 1865. About the same time, the Minnesota Central and another railroad built a line between Mendota and Saint Paul, which in turn “created a southern outlet for both Minneapolis and St. Paul—one that grew greatly in importance as the road pressed south through Owatonna and Austin.” Within a few years, the Minnesota Central would connect with another line, the McGregor Western Railway that was building north from Iowa. “This made it possible to travel all the way from Minneapolis to Chicago and Milwaukee over lines of the Minnesota Central, McGregor Western, and Milwaukee & Prairie du Chien via Austin, Prairie du Chien and Madison. The separate corporations were consolidated under the Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway Company, and by 1869 a through overnight passenger train, the Eastern Express, was advertising sleeping cars to Chicago.”

Although the exact date of the first train from Minneapolis to Faribault is not clear—one source claims October 18, 1865, another September 25, 1865—an advertisement in the Pioneer Press shows the Minnesota Central offered regular trains to Faribault beginning on October 23, 1865. Two years later, the same paper carried advertisements of the Milwaukee and Saint Paul Railway for trains from Minneapolis and Saint Paul to Chicago. Many years later, a group of former employees of Minnesota Central offered a description of what early train travel was like. In 1865, the Minneapolis–Faribault route was served by a wood-burning locomotive with hand brakes and link and pin couplings. The first trains from Minneapolis to Chicago, “consist[ed] of two box-car type coaches and small locomotive with a balloon smokestack.” The fare for the 420-mile journey was $23 and the trip took twenty-five hours to complete, meaning the train traveled at an average rate of something over sixteen miles per hour. Another railroad man, A. H. Bode, formerly a freight and ticket agent for Minnesota Central, recalled that during severe winters, “trains were often stalled in snowdrifts, so that train crews had to levy [take on] farmers’ rail fences to keep up steam in the wood burning engines of the day,” and that “he was kept busy all summer paying for the fence rails.” Another veteran of the early trains, John Dudley Condit, who worked for the Omaha line, reminisced that the old link and pin couplings had to be manually adjusted and caused injury or death to many railroad workers. He also recalled during the early 1870s, that coaches had only one stove for heat, and passengers would be “wrapped up

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64 Prosser, Rails to the North Star, 3, 4, 9; 12, Hofsommer, Minneapolis and the Age of Rails, 11. Apparently, the term “Milwaukee Road” was used as a nickname for the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul Railroad going back to at least the 1880s. For example, a newspaper account described a crime victim as a “brakeman on the Milwaukee Road” (“They Cut his Fingers Off,” Minneapolis Tribune, August 8, 1883).
like mummies to keep from freezing to death.” Sometimes snow would drift in through the window sashes and pile up on the sill and seats. “The cars were lighted with four chandeliers on each of which were two candles for a total of eight candles. Passenger coaches had no washstands and only one toilet.” Freight trains presented the most danger to their crews: “The cars would get covered with sleet, ice, and snow, and it was really a perilous job to jump from one car to another to set the brakes.” By 1871, the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul Railway Company reported that the speed for express passenger and mail trains was twenty-five miles per hour, while freight trains traveled at twelve miles per hour. The fares for passengers were five cents per mile.65

Advertisements:

Laying rails, ca 1865
*Benjamin Franklin Upton, photographer—Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

Advertisement from *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, November 24, 1867

*The Rails*
*Hess, Roise and Company—Page 57*
In addition to passengers, the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul transported lumber out of Minneapolis. Agnes Larson noted that this railroad was the chief carrier of lumber from Minneapolis during the 1870s. Its route through the southern part of the state traversed a productive wheat-growing region where new settlers were concentrating on a largely treeless prairie. Many of the logs that were turned into lumber in Minneapolis sawmills were used to transform the prairies into settlements. “In 1874 that branch of the Milwaukee Road carried 25,414,000 feet of lumber from Minneapolis, the next year 49,481,000 feet, and in 1876, 54,272,000 feet. These new settlers required vast quantities of lumber for building houses, farms, and towns, and the railroad brought it to them”

Even before the Minnesota Central Railway reached Minneapolis, plans were being made for the depot and shops. Minneapolis historian Atwater recalled this connection to eastern markets and goods was important and “to secure the location of its machine shops, a subscription was made by a number of leading citizens, amounting to about $9,000, with which the five blocks adjacent to the Falls of St. Anthony were purchased and water power to operate the shops.” Atwater did not elaborate any further as to the identity of these citizens, but it is possible to provide a little more context for this episode. It should be noted that Minneapolis was in competition with Saint Paul to be the location of the terminus and shops and this was the spur for offering cheap land and waterpower to the railroad. Attorney F. R. E. Cornell seems to be among Atwater’s group of “leading citizens” who put this deal together. Cornell, a native of New York, settled in Minneapolis in 1854 and soon became the law partner of Judge Vanderburgh. He served in the legislature in 1861, 1862, and 1865, was the state attorney general from 1868 to 1874, and on the Minnesota Supreme Court from 1874 until his death in 1881. As of 1856, Cornell controlled four of the five blocks and a portion of the fifth that became the site of the depot and shops. Cornell probably acquired the land in connection with business interests in the vicinity of Sixth Avenue South and Washington Avenue.

Atwater recalled that in the mid-1850s, two groups, vied to determine where the business center of Minneapolis would be located: “The residents of ‘lower town’ felt that the Falls ought to be the center of town, and disputed the supremacy of ‘Bridge Street.’[Hennepin Avenue]. They procured the location of the United States Land office, Washington and Seventh Avenues, the Post Office—Dr. Ames being Postmaster—the Bushnell House—the principal hotel, a story and a-half brick [and] still standing on lower Fourth Street—and finally by the tender of two lots for a site, the Court House.” The advocates of “upper Town” retaliated, with the aid of a bonus raised by H. T. Welles with Nicollet House. “The partisans of lower town, not to be outdone, organized a company, among the stockholders of which were F. R. E. Cornell, Geo. E. Huy, R. P. Russell, Edward Murphy, Charles Clark and Dr. Ames, and built the ‘Cataract House,’ which is still standing at the corner of Washington and Sixth Avenue.” Atwater also notes that although the business district started at Bridge Square, a “new centre soon was established at the intersection of Washington Avenue and Helen Street [Second Avenue South].” Atwater noted

that about 1857 the corner of Second and Washington Avenue South had a number of buildings and businesses including Woodman’s Block, Spear and Davidson hardware, bankers Groh and Phinney, and land agents Bell and Wilson. “Lower down Washington Avenue was a frame two story dwelling owned by J. H. Spear. . . . No other structures were met until the corner of Washington Avenue and Ames Street [Eighth Avenue] where was another business nucleus. Here was the United States Land Office, M. L. Olds, register, and R. P. Russell, receiver; near by, the Post Office, Dr. A. E. Ames, postmaster, and William B. Cornell, attendant—the law office of Cornell and Vanderburgh.” 68

Apparently, no source apart from Atwater ever mentions the $9,000 subscription, but one newspaper of the time, the State Atlas, which was a fierce partisan of Minneapolis interests, and followed the Minnesota Central story closely, might offer some hints. Early in 1863, the paper published a lengthy editorial exhorting Minneapolis mercantile interests to have broad view and look to the future; although the railroad issue was not mentioned specifically, there were certain hints. “The future prosperity of our town depends in great measure on the spirit of enterprise by our business men. They must not remain content with merely a close attention to the sale of their merchandise,—but should lend their influence, as well as a moiety of their gains in the opening and construction of such goods as are necessary to facilitate the transit of produce.” This might be the point at which the “leading citizens” went into action to acquire the land where the railroad complex was later located. By summer, the paper noted that that chief engineer D. C. Shepard of the Minneapolis, Faribault, and Cedar Valley Railroad “has fitted up a fine suit [suite] of rooms in the brick block on the corner of Washington Avenue and Helen Street [present-day Second Avenue], for the accommodation of the different offices of the Company.” A while later the paper stated, “it is almost certain that the Depot will be located on the flat between Helen and Ames [present-day Eighth Avenue South] Streets, and between Washington Avenue and First Street. No better location could be selected to our business centres, or safety to the traveling public.” By October the Atlas implied that the Minneapolis business community was actively working toward getting the railroad into the city: “How comparatively unavailable and unproductive our vast water power remains for the want of Railroad transportation and communications, is very well understood by the intelligent business men of our community.” However, some property owners outside the city were holding up the railroad by demanding high prices for the property the railroad needed to acquire; “there are strong reasons for believing that they are, in some instances at least standing in the way of their own, as well as the public welfare, by the course they are pursuing towards that Company.” It also noted that at a recent stockholders meeting held in Minneapolis R. J. Baldwin, a cashier at the Minneapolis State Bank was elected a director of the Minnesota Central, and that F. R. E. Cornell had become the railroad’s attorney. 69

The campaign to get Minneapolis to provide a site for the railroad had succeeded by the end 1863. In January 1864, Dorilus Morrison sold a lot at the corner of Second Street and Fourth Avenue South to the Minnesota Central for one dollar. Other property holders, such as John H. and Mary Ann Spear; George and Susan Chowen; Isaac and Sarah Newton; Marcus L. and Kate

68 Atwater, History of Minneapolis, 38-42.
Olds; William and Judith Dickie; Henry T. Welles; and Joseph and Nancy Dean soon followed Morrison’s example, although the purchase prices were in the range of several hundred dollars, but still well below market value. A later account published by the Minnesota Central described the depot site as “fourteen acres in extent, lying but one block distant from the lumber and flour manufactories, have been donated to the company, by the public spirited citizens of that town; their present value at prices for which sales are being daily made is no less than $20,000. Possibly, the $9,000 mentioned by Atwater was used to purchase some of these holdings.  

In May of 1864, the Atlas announced “It will be gratifying to the citizens of Hennepin County to hear that the long mooted question as regards the permanent location of the Railroad shops is at last fully settled in favor of our city.” This statement was followed by a long description of the structures that would be built on the depot site. “The passenger depot will be located on Washington Avenue immediately below the line of Oregon Street [present-day Third Avenue South]. It will be a large and splendid building, of sufficient capacity to receive a good long passenger train.” The freight facility would front on Second Street. Construction on the foundations for the shops, located near Second Street and present-day Sixth Avenue South had already been started. One of the car shops was to be fifty feet wide and 268 feet long. The article noted how the waterpower would be supplied to the shops, but did not say if the mill company had donated it. “The immense shafting necessarily required to drive the machinery, will be propelled by waterpower. To do this the [Minneapolis Mill] Company have made an arrangement with Messrs. Eastman, Gibson & Co., whereby they can put a wheel in their ‘tunnel arrangement’—the power thus gained is equivalent to one hundred horse power—amply sufficient for all necessary purposes.”

Throughout the summer of 1864, the Atlas reported on the progress of the railroad shops. The stone was taken from the “upper quarries” and the depot buildings would soon be started. The reporter could not resist taunting the rival city: “It is rather a remarkable fact that our St. Paul dailies seem to be entirely ignorant of the fact that the above named shops are really and finally located at Minneapolis.” The Atlas described the shops as “gigantic affairs” made of stone. “Many of the stones used are eight feet long, two wide, and eighteen inches thick.” Again, the paper noted that the Saint Paul press ignored these improvements. Once the site was completed, the Minnesota Central entered the city on a path parallel to the old Fort Road, now known as Hiawatha Avenue. The 1867 Ruger map of Minneapolis shows a train traveling along this route and heading for the depot complex along Washington Avenue South. In time, this would become a major rail corridor.

A history of Hennepin County, published a few years after the depot was in place described the effect of the Minnesota Central, by then the Milwaukee and Saint Paul Railroad, “a new impulse

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70 Hennepin County Deeds Books Y, page 6, recorded January 28, 1864; Book Y, page 102, recorded March 7, 1864; Book Z, page 137, recorded March 30, 1864; Book Y, page 203, recorded May 11, 1864; Book Y, page 204, recorded May 11, 1864; Book Y, page 402, recorded July 19, 1864; Deeds Book 8, page 239, recorded July 26, 1864; Deeds book Z, page 472, recorded July 29, 1864; First Annual Report of the President and Directors of the Minnesota Central Railway Company (Minneapolis: Atlas Printing Company, 1866), 6. A few remaining parcels in the five-block site were not transferred to the railroad until 1866, such as Lot 2 in Block 41 (Deeds Book 10, page 504, recorded May 18, 1866).

71 “Local Record—Minnesota Central Railroad Matters,” State Atlas (Minneapolis), May 11, 1864.

72 “Progressing,” State Atlas (Minneapolis), June 29, 1864.
was given to the business of the cities at the Falls and the country in general, as direct
communication was opened up with the east, with only forty miles of river travel, to connect the
railroads of this State and Wisconsin.” By 1867 or 1868 (not clear from the text) 32,100 barrels
of flour, 3,724,900 feet of lumber, 2,208,000 shingles, and 208,000 laths were shipped from the
Minneapolis depot. The incoming freight amounted to 5,098 tons, while outgoing freight was
9,015 tons “with an aggregate of cash receipts of $4,360, 35.” This would be about $65,037,739
in 2007 dollars. 73

The first depot for what became the Milwaukee Road was located at 411-417 Second Street
South. It ranged from one to two stories in height, with a footprint measuring 155 by 40 feet.
There was a one-story carpenter shop that was razed in 1881. When a new depot was built by the
Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul Railroad, the old one was converted to a freight depot. The
railroad also built shops at 601-605 Second Street South, and a roundhouse at 711 Second Street.
Writing in 1989, Scott Anfinson speculated that foundations of these buildings might still exist
under the parking lots that occupied the site. Since that time, several new buildings have been
erected, such as the MacPhail Center for Music (501 Second Street South) and the Residence Inn
at the Depot (425 Second Street South), lessening the likelihood of any remaining archaeologica
evidence.74

In 1877, the railroad completed a new depot fronting 320 Washington Avenue South, a block
west of the old depot. Designed by Long and Haglin, this depot was an elaborate Italianate-style
brick building two stories high with a tower that rose to three stories. The frontage on
Washington Avenue was 125 feet wide and 39 feet deep. It was built of Milwaukee brick “with
stone trimmings, surmounted with a French roof with iron crestings that show off well.” Men
and women could wait separately, in “large, airy waiting rooms,” measuring 35 by 60 feet, with
seventeen-foot ceilings. The second floor contained railroad offices that extended into the tower.
The depot was flanked by two baggage structures, and a turntable was located at Third and
Washington. In 1879 an in-bound freight house was added along Second Street South and two
years later, an out-bound freight house was added between the 1879 building and the depot. An
1898 account observed that “the Milwaukee Road did well for Minneapolis in that station. There
are not many cities of 35,000 population today which are honored by the construction of $15,000
railway stations.”75

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73 W. H. Mitchell and J. H. Stevens, Geographical and Statistical History of the County of Hennepin (Minneapolis: Russell and Belfoy, Printers, 1868), 53.
74 Scott F. Anfinson, “Archaeology of the Central Riverfront,” The Minnesota Archaeologist (48), 89.
Old Milwaukee Depot, Third and Washington, 1878

Arthur B. Rugg, photographer—Minnesota Historical Society Collections

Milwaukee Depot turntable, ca. 1880

Minnesota Historical Society Collections
Minneapolis and Saint Louis Railway

As the Saint Anthony Falls millers increased their capacity beyond the local demand for flour, they were forced to find distant markets for their products, and they started to pay attention to transportation rates. Unsurprisingly, railroads based at the Lake Michigan ports of Milwaukee and Chicago favored their communities. When faced with tactics by the Minnesota Central to divert wheat away from Minneapolis and to Milwaukee, the Minneapolis millers finally realized that they were at the end of a branch operated by a “foreign” carrier, the Minnesota Central. Motivated to build their own railroad, H. T. Welles, William D. Washburn, John S. Pillsbury, and others came together by 1869 to form what would soon be known as the Minneapolis and Saint Louis Railway. This railroad would serve the west bank milling district and be linked with Duluth, as well as with Saint Louis, or at least, that was the plan. After interest had been raised in starting a Minneapolis railroad, its founders sought a charter and came upon the Minnesota Western Railroad, one of the many pioneer railroads that were incorporated during the 1850s, but never built. The Minnesota Western had rights to build from the Saint Croix River to Saint Paul, then to Saint Anthony Falls and thence by a branch to the Red River and the Saint Louis River. Soon Washburn and Welles became major stockholders in the Minnesota Western, and installed a new board of directors. By May 26, 1870, the railroad’s name had been changed to the Minneapolis and Saint Louis Railway Company. The charter was changed to allow the railroad to build a line south to Albert Lea. H. T. Welles became the railroad’s first president.76

Despite the great wealth and access to capital that the founders of the Minneapolis and Saint Louis Railroad possessed, they could not raise the necessary funds for this venture on their own. They were forced to ask the cities of Saint Anthony and Minneapolis for help in pitching the proposition as a chance for a locally owned railroad. While public sympathy for subsidizing railroads had declined from 1857, when voters were willing to alter the constitution in favor of the questionable “Five Million Loan” amendment, “nevertheless, special legislation did authorize communities to bond themselves in support of rail projects.” Newspapers in both Saint Anthony and Minneapolis strongly supported the proposal for city-issued bonds in support of the railroad. The Minneapolis Tribune ran several long articles giving reasons why voters should be in favor of this idea. Among them were: Minnesota farmers should be able to send their wheat to Minneapolis to be made into flour and then shipped to Lake Superior and sent to eastern markets or to Saint Louis, all of which would bypass the Chicago market; Minneapolis needed coal and “the Fort Dodge [Iowa] coal fields are the nearest to us”; Minneapolis required iron products, which could easily be obtained with rail connections to the Lake Superior area; Minneapolis produced large amounts of lumber and that product should have a widespread market; the city needed a good supply of meat and a new rail connection to Iowa would offer competitively-priced pork products; and finally “We want MONEY, BUSINESS, ACTIVITY IN TRAVEL AND TRAFFIC as our city has not known for many days. To that end, we want more population, more raw material[s] on which to employ them, such as coal, iron, wheat, cotton, leather, wool. Copper, and iron ores, and all else which can be worked upon to advantage by that splendid

76 Hofsommer, Age of Railways, 23-27; Frank P. Donovan, Jr., Mileposts on the Prairie: The Story of the Minneapolis and St. Louis Railway (New York: Simmons-Boardman Publishing Company, 1950), 15-18, 21. Franklin Steele was among the original thirteen incorporators of the Minnesota Western.

The Rails
Hess, Roise and Company—Page 63
water power now too largely running to waste.” The $250,000 bond issue passed in Minneapolis, but the voters of Saint Anthony rejected the $50,000 issue for their city.\textsuperscript{77}

Still, the railroad did not have enough money to build the northern portion of its route to Lake Superior. In response, the board of the Minneapolis and Saint Louis sold 2,000 special shares to W. D. Washburn and H. T. Welles and authorized the men to form a new company, the Minneapolis and Duluth Railroad. It would build the fourteen-mile stretch of road from Minneapolis to White Bear Lake, connecting it to the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad, thus giving Minneapolis access to Great Lakes shipping. Although the Minneapolis and Duluth Railroad Company was a separate entity, almost everyone treated this line as part of the Minneapolis and Saint Louis Railway. The railroad obtained permission from the Saint Paul and Pacific to use the bridge that crossed the river at Nicollet Island and to use about two miles of the tracks that ran through what is now Northeast Minneapolis.\textsuperscript{78}

The railroad began working on both the southern and northern routes by 1871. A contract was drawn on May 10, leasing rights to construct and operate a line parallel to the Saint Paul and Pacific from near that company’s Minneapolis station (Holden Street) to its Cedar Lake Station. From there, the line continued to the village of Hopkins and from there into the Minnesota River valley.\textsuperscript{79}

By midsummer, the first tracks of the Minneapolis and Duluth Railroad were completed from Minneapolis to White Bear Lake. On July 22, 1871, the railroad celebrated this achievement with a gala attended by 500 people who boarded an eight-car special train, accompanied by Turner’s Brass Band, and set off for White Bear. Starting from a point near the Hennepin Avenue suspension bridge, “the first object of interest, after leaving Minneapolis, was the halt at the St. Anthony depot of the Minneapolis and Duluth Railroad, which letters [were] a foot deep on the end of a cream-colored building, on the side of the track in the outskirts of St. Anthony.” Although the reporter detailed all the speeches and activities of the day, he said little about the train itself, other than to claim the road was “built of the best material, and only needs ballasting and operating to make it one of the best in the state,” and that the grades were not steep. A somewhat later description of travel on the Minneapolis and Duluth line was offered by “a lady” who related her experiences while traveling across the northwest via railroads. “From Minneapolis to White Bear everything seemed shackly and out-of-repair, and all our startings and stoppings sent a shock through the entire train; indeed, sometimes throwing the passengers from the seats.” However, once she was on the main line run by the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad, all went smoothly.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{77} Hofsommer, Age of Railways, 34; “Our Great Railroad Enterprise—The Vote on Monday,” Minneapolis Tribune, February 20, 1870.

\textsuperscript{78} Don L. Hofsommer, The Tootin’ Louie (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 9; Donovan, Mileposts, 26.

\textsuperscript{79} Hofsommer, Tootin’ Louie, 10.

\textsuperscript{80} Donovan, Mileposts, 24; “Our New Outlet,” Minneapolis Tribune, July 23, 1871; “The New Northwest,” Minneapolis Tribune, September 24, 1873. The Minneapolis and Duluth station mentioned in the 1871 Tribune article was located at the railroad corridor at what would be present-day Second Avenue N.E. and Tenth Street N.E., according to the Minneapolis-St. Anthony City Directory, 1872.
Meanwhile, work on a roundhouse, depot and freight house, located on Second Street between Fourth and Fifth Avenues South, was nearing completion by late summer. The Tribune detailed the progress of the railroad, reporting that “eight car-loads of through freight, consisting of flour, shingles, bran and iron were shipped from this city yesterday, while the same number, laden with salt co[utl] signed to Stevens, Morse & Newell, and Kelly, Reid & Wagner were received.” It humorously noted the temporary quarters in early August: “Newton, the new and good looking agent presides with grace and dignity in his box car office.” A short time later, the paper reported on the nearly finished depot: “It is a very neat building nearly similar in architectural design to the Milwaukee depot but smaller. The inside is being neatly painted and grained in imitation of black walnut and oak.” The article also noted the roundhouse would be done in a few weeks while workers were still excavating for the turntable. The depot was razed in 1878 when a new one was built at Fourth and Washington Avenue North. The Anfinson study gave the location of the former depot as 402 Second Street South, and theorized that some of its foundations might remain under the parking lot that still occupies the site.

By November 25, the Minneapolis and Saint Louis rail line was completed to Sioux City Junction (later known as Merriam). In the words of Isaac Atwater, the first aim for this line was to “affect a direct connection with Lake Superior . . . the next object was to reach the wheat growing districts of Southern Minnesota and Northern Iowa, and thus furnish wheat for the large milling interest which was growing up at Minneapolis, as well as an outlet for the large lumber product.” However, construction of the rest of the southern line to Albert Lea continued at a much slower pace, due to developments beyond the railroad’s control, namely difficult terrain and a national credit crisis. The line to Albert Lea was completed in 1877. Agnes Larson reported that in 1876, the railroad carried 27 million feet of lumber south, 23 million feet of which came from Minneapolis mills; in 1878, the railroad shipped more than 48 million feet of Minneapolis-milled lumber on its southern route.

When the Minneapolis and Saint Louis was incorporated, its new board of directors included three Philadelphia bankers, William Moorhead, S. M. Felton, and Frank H. Clark. The bankers were closely associated with Jay Cooke, who in turn had raised money to build the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad and the Northern Pacific; which was planning to build the second transcontinental railroad in the United States. From the beginning, the Minneapolis and Saint Louis Railway and the Minneapolis and Duluth were tied to interests outside the city of Minneapolis. In 1871, the Minneapolis and Saint Louis was leased to the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad in exchange for help in building to Carver and to the state line and apparently, there were even plans to eventually transfer the entire operation to the Lake Superior/Northern Pacific concern. However, by 1873, Cooke’s empire was starting to unravel; he had not been able to colonize the northwest as quickly as he had promised, and Duluth had not grown as fast as he hoped. When Jay Cooke’s bank declared bankruptcy in September, the Northern Pacific in turn defaulted on its payments on the Minneapolis and Duluth and Minneapolis and Saint Louis Railway bonds. In short order, the Minneapolis and Duluth became

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81 Hofsommer, *Tootin’ Louie*, 10; “Business Over the Duluth Road,” Minneapolis Tribune, August 9, 1871; “The St. Louis Road,” Minneapolis Tribune, August 27, 1871; Anfinson, “Archaeology of the Central Riverfront,” 60. Both Stevens, Morse, and Newell, and Kelly, Reid, and Wagner were wholesale grocery firms.

part of the Minneapolis and Saint Louis; and the Minneapolis and Saint Louis was no longer leased to Lake Superior line. The national financial crisis that followed the Cooke bankruptcy was known as the Panic of 1873 and its effects would last for several years. The Northern Pacific transcontinental route would not be completed until 1883, under the leadership of Henry Villard; railroad building in Minnesota almost halted during the mid-1870s. From 1874 to 1875, only ten miles of track were built in the state, the following year only twenty-nine miles were added. By contrast, from 1870 to 1871, 407 miles of track had been built, bringing the total to 1,500 miles. From 1878 to 1879, railroads would lay another 392 miles of tracks in the state, bringing the total to 2,941.  

In 1875, Carver-area farmers used the Minneapolis and Saint Louis to ship 187,406 bushels of wheat to Minneapolis for the 1875 and 1876 seasons. Carver also shipped carloads of locally made brick to Minneapolis and St. Paul, supplying a burgeoning building trade. In 1877, the Minneapolis and Saint Louis reached Albert Lea, and was described by William Washburn as “the happiest day of my life.” Once the line to Albert Lea was complete, the railroad lost no time; “[the] M&StL dispatched daily ‘flour express’ trains from the milling district . . . [and] moved more than half of the Minneapolis flour production” for the year. Meanwhile “many new country elevators built along the Albert Lea extension soon disgorged thousands of bushels of wheat, billed to hungry mills at the falls, and as on-line communities grew so did their need for lumber and other building materials as well as the full range of mercantile goods, supplied by Minneapolis industrialists and wholesalers.”

The railroads not only built connections between Minneapolis and outstate communities, but they also changed the landscape of the city as tracks started to appear along the riverfront and hotels began to advertise their proximity to depots. The Minneapolis and Saint Louis even impinged upon Bridge Square, then the heart of the city’s commercial district, running its tracks in front of the Hennepin Avenue approach to the suspension bridge, in order to access the Second Street depot. Hennepin County served several injunctions on the railroad to prohibit this traffic, citing the danger posed to citizens and draft animals by running the noisy, fast trains across the thoroughfare. Once it was clear that the tracks running along Second Street were going to remain in place, a compromise was reached by August 1871. The trains to White Bear Lake soon began using the Saint Paul and Pacific depot on North Washington Avenue; while the other Minneapolis and Saint Louis trains were required to limit their speed to four miles per hour in the vicinity of the bridge and to stop before crossing the Hennepin Avenue intersection. Additionally, warning signals were erected at the intersection, which as the Tribune noted, “protect the unwary traveler from being ‘chawd up’ by the trains . . . [even though] they are neither handsome, or ornamental, nor valuable.” Even before the Minneapolis and Saint Louis railroad was in existence, some in the city were aware of the changes that would be wrought by the railroad. Someone calling himself “Minneapolis” warned that the city should not allow the railroads to build just anywhere, as we know “what real disability locomotives in the streets are to the business portions of any city.” The protest committee was correct to be concerned, “considering how hard it is to break up any such arrangement by great corporations, after it is

84 Hofsommer, Tootin’ Louie, 15-17; Hidy, The Great Northern Railway, 318; Hofsommer, Minneapolis in the Age of Railways, 53.
once thoroughly established.” Still, “Minneapolis” understood the importance of the railroads. He continued, “we must have some mode of connecting the railroads across the city, without removing freight business to the suburbs or injuring property the most valuable, let such roads seek, what peculiarly in our case, are localities least injuriously affected, viz: the riverbank.” When the second Hennepin Avenue suspension bridge was built in 1876, it was of sufficient height to allow trains to pass underneath it and run along what is now West River Parkway. Railroad tracks and yards would remain a prominent feature of the central riverfront well into the twentieth century.85

Once the Minneapolis and Saint Louis was freed of its ties to Jay Cooke’s empire, William Washburn replaced H. T. Welles as president of the railroad, a post he retained until 1882. During his tenure, the railroad accomplished several things. In 1874, the railroad introduced Sunday excursions to White Bear Lake. Before that time, the White Bear trains had only run on weekdays. Some condemned the excursions as a violation of the Sabbath, while others commended the railroad “for giving the working man an enjoyable outing. While the battle raged, the road went on carrying as high as six hundred people on a single train up to the lake and back.” By midsummer of 1880, the Minneapolis and Saint Louis had completed its 210-mile line to Fort Dodge, Iowa. Donald Hofsommer noted: “Coal, of which Minnesota had none, was found near Fort Dodge . . . What Iowa had, Minnesota needed. Conversely, much of Iowa was without timber . . . and the state’s merchants complained they were dependent on goods supplied from Chicago and, to a lesser extent, from St. Louis. Minnesota—particularly Minneapolis—could meet Iowa’s needs.” The railroad would carry wheat and coal north, while lumber, flour and merchandise would go to Iowa. During Washburn’s presidency, the railroad finally connected to Saint Louis with the help of “the ‘Blair’ road and the St. Louis, Keokuk & Northwestern to St. Louis.”86

By 1878, the Minneapolis and Saint Louis built a depot at North Third Street and Fourth Avenue. The 1885-1889 Sanborn Insurance Map (page 41A-B, Block 58) shows the Minneapolis and Saint Louis freight house and passenger depot on the railroad corridor between Third and Fifth Avenues North and Third and Fourth Streets North. Building records show a wood depot was built on Block 58 at 300-306 Third Avenue North in 1885 and a brick office the following year. The Minneapolis and Saint Louis continued to build on this site for many years, as well as large holdings at 610-618 Third Avenue North. In the fall of 1878, the Minneapolis and Saint Louis began building an elevated track along South First Street between Sixth and Eighth Avenues and a wheelhouse at 722 First Street South to allow the flour mills direct access to the railroad. The railcars were pulled by a cable as the trestle was not strong enough to bear the weight of a locomotive. A newspaper article noted: “The mill men have no fears that horses will be scared, since it is proposed to operate the cars by a continuous chain and not be an ordinary engine.” Some farmers, it seems, were still bringing wagon loads of wheat to the mills and thus the concern for the well-being of horses. The trestle was rebuilt of iron in 1885 and then torn down in 1936. The wheelhouse was removed in 1960.87

85 “The Railroad Connection Across the City,” Minneapolis Tribune, August 5, 1869; Donovan, Mileposts, 23-26; “The City,” Minneapolis Tribune, August 18, 1871.
86 Donovan, Mileposts, 46, 56, 49; Hofsommer, Tootin’ Louie, 18-20.
87 Minneapolis Building Permits, B3585, May 6, 1885; A285, October 20, 1886; “Railroad Ruminations,” Minneapolis Tribune, October 28, 1878; Anfinson, “Archaeology of the Central Riverfront,” 67.
Minneapolis Eastern Railway

Although the Minneapolis and Saint Louis Railway was supposed to benefit Minneapolis millers, some of them saw this as just another monopoly that would exploit them. Others worried that the railroad’s relatively small size meant both the supply of wheat and the distribution of the finished product would be restricted. Joel Bassett, among others, did not like the Washburns and their considerable influence in the Minneapolis flour industry. Bassett and others discovered an old charter that granted the Minneapolis Eastern Railroad the authority to build a line between Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Bassett filed articles of incorporation for the Minneapolis Eastern on June 17, 1878, with the stated object of building and operating a railroad from Minneapolis and Saint Paul “with branches to connect all railroads present and future, and branches to all mills and factories.” While the Minneapolis Eastern never achieved anything that ambitious, it did manage to build about three miles of track through the West Bank milling district, breaking the Minneapolis and Saint Louis monopoly of the west side. The Washburn faction fought back through newspaper articles. It also organized a railroad conference at the Nicollet Hotel that included representatives of the Minneapolis and Saint Louis, the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul, and the Chicago, Saint Paul and Minneapolis roads. The general manager of the Minneapolis and Saint Louis, Charles Hatch, explained his firm had no objection to the Minneapolis Eastern except where the new railroad sought to appropriate the right-of-way owned by his railroad, specifically the 25-foot opening under the suspension bridge that allowed two tracks. Hatch also pointed out that the city of Minneapolis had given $250,000 of aid to the Minneapolis and Saint Louis and should not endanger that investment. The gathering at the Nicollet Hotel came up with the idea of pooling all the railroad property and trackage to be organized under a stock company that would benefit all the millers and the entire city. The Tribune interviewed C. C. Washburn, asking him if such a pool would be a good idea, and he replied by comparing the pool to a serpent that would strangle the city’s future, and that other railroads would constrict the city’s growth. By contrast, “the M&StL railway was built in the interest of Minneapolis, and is owned and operated in that interest.” Joel Bassett replied with a long letter that was published in the Tribune. He first noted that C. C. Washburn owned the largest mill in the city and his brother W. D. controlled the Minneapolis and Saint Louis Railway, “the road was built right at the doors of Gov. Washburn’s mills, and with the exception of three other mills, it afforded the other mills no more facilities than any other road that comes into the city.” Bassett continued that the Minneapolis and Saint Louis road had been asked many times to extend its road to other mills, but failed to do so.88

By the fall, the Minneapolis Eastern announced that it was owned equally by two other rival lines: the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul, and the Chicago, Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha. About the same time, the railroad also won the right to build and lease tracks along the river bank and provide railroad access for mills. One newspaper article detailed all the properties

that would be affected and the amount of money the Minneapolis Eastern would pay to compensate the owners. A newspaper commented: “The mills at the falls do not promise to be long without all the railroad facilities they desire.” The building contracts were awarded and the total cost of building the railroad was estimated at $125,000.89

Two structures associated with the Minneapolis Eastern Railway survive today. One is the remnant of railroad trestle that runs along the river from approximately Sixth to Eighth Avenues South. First built in 1879, and rebuilt in 1890, this trestle allowed the row of mills closest to the river rail access. It was later covered up, but rediscovered during the creation of Mill Ruins Park. The other structure, the large brick Minneapolis Eastern Railway Engine House (renovated as the First Street Station Restaurant, now the office of Riley and Hayes) at 333 South First Street, was built by the railroad in 1914 to consolidate operations on the site of its former office building.90

Northern Pacific Railway

The Northern Pacific Railway was chartered by Congress in 1864 as the first northern transcontinental railroad in the United States. As envisioned, the Northern Pacific would run from Lake Superior to Puget Sound. Backers of the Northern Pacific asked for twice the amount of land grants held by the Union and Central Pacific railroads, or 74 million acres, but relied upon private subscribers for the capital needed for the mammoth undertaking. Minneapolis had high, if unrealistic, hopes for the Northern Pacific. The first issue of the *Minneapolis Tribune* remarked: “The great Northern Pacific Railroad, which will find its terminus at Puget’s Sound—the best harbor on the whole Pacific coast and through the great chain of lakes [terminating] at Portland, Maine, must pass the heart of this state, and at this very point—the Falls of St. Anthony—will be the most important depot between the two oceans. We need not in this connection spend time to demonstrate this proposition though it is as easily demonstrated as the plainest mathematical problem.” The reporter went on to cite the many advantages offered by the state including rich soil, bracing climate, navigable streams, waterpower and hardy population. In the summer of 1869, George Brackett was hired by the Northern Pacific “to accompany a party of directors and others in a reconnoissance of the route of the road across the then uninhabitable plains.” Brackett’s job was to provide supplies and transportation, while Pierre Bottineau served as the guide. The party traveled as far as Fort Stevenson, North Dakota, on the Missouri River before returning to the city. Still, it would be many years before Northern Pacific trains actually arrived in Minneapolis.91

89 Railroad Ruminations,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, October 28, 1878.
Staff who ran Northern Pacific line from Lake Superior to Brainerd, 1867

*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

Return of the Northern Pacific Railway Expedition, on Washington Avenue between Nicollet and First Avenue South, August 5, 1869

*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*
Progress on the Northern Pacific was very slow until its backers managed to interest the banking house of Jay Cooke in the venture. By 1872, the railroad had completed lines in Minnesota from Duluth into present-day North Dakota, established headquarters and shops at Brainerd, and started laying tracks in present-day Washington State. The Northern Pacific connected with the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad (also controlled by Jay Cooke) at Thomsons Junction, west of Duluth. However, “for thousands of miles west of Duluth, there was no town or village worthy of the name on or near the railroad.” Aside from gold camps in the Rocky Mountains, few towns in Montana and around the Puget Sound, “the largest communities 2,000 miles from St. Paul at the western end of the railroad, it was largely up to the Northern Pacific to create its own markets.” Unfortunately, the costs of building a transcontinental railroad were much greater than anyone had anticipated and when Cooke’s bank failed, work on the Northern Pacific all but halted as the financial Panic of 1873 caused a depression that lasted in the United States for several years. By 1874, Northern Pacific, which formerly had regular runs to Fargo and beyond, cut back and sent trains only to Fargo during the winter months because there was so little demand and settlement west of the Red River.92

The fortunes of the Northern Pacific gradually improved by 1875 when the railroad was reorganized and Benjamin Cheney, a director of the Northern Pacific, purchased a large tract of land in the Red River Valley. This became the Cass-Cheney Farm, the first of the Bonanza Farms that demonstrated the potential for wheat growing in the Red River Valley. Bonanza Farms were large-scale operations that were owned by companies and run by professional managers and dependent on migrant laborers at harvest time. The success of this farm attracted many settlers to the area, who often purchased land in the area from the railroads as well as creating a market for the freight carried by the railroads. Turning the sod-covered prairies into farms also had an effect on the state’s agriculture. Writer Dave Kenney noted that for early settlers who were usually engaged in subsistence agriculture, corn was the most popular crop in the state because it fed both livestock and people. However, as writer William Cronon noted corn usually brought low prices as most people preferred to consume it after it was converted to alcohol or meat. Wheat began to displace corn by 1860 because it grew well in the rich prairie soil. Once farmers had better access to markets as railroads proliferated, Minnesota’s annual wheat production jumped from fourteen hundred bushels in 1850 to thirty-four million bushels in 1880.93

By the late 1870s, the Northern Pacific’s headquarters had been moved from Brainerd to Saint Paul, and the railroad “gained access to the Twin Cities by the back door, so to speak, with trackage rights from the west, Sauk Rapids to Minneapolis, over Manitoba, on November 8, 1878.” The management of the Northern Pacific “was fully alert to the liability of Duluth as NP’s eastern terminus and to the growing prominence of St. Paul and Minneapolis.” By 1879,
the Northern Pacific reported moving 145,268 tons of freight, including grain, flour, livestock, metals, minerals, brick, and coal within the state of Minnesota.94

**The Early Streetcar System**

The first attempt at establishing a streetcar system in the city occurred in 1873 when the Minneapolis Street Railway Company laid tracks along on South Second Street from Hennepin to nearly Cedar Avenue. But this venture failed almost before it began in the ensuing financial Panic of 1873, and the unused tracks were removed.

By 1875, Col. William S. King, one of the incorporators of the Minneapolis Street Railway Company, teamed up with Thomas Lowry to build a new street railway. This time track was laid on Washington Avenue North from near the passenger depot belonging to the Saint Paul, Minneapolis, and Manitoba located at Fourth Avenue North, continuing to Hennepin Avenue, across the Hennepin Avenue Suspension Bridge and turning onto Fourth Street S.E., then to the University of Minnesota at Thirteenth Avenue S.E. The first, horse-drawn car ran the entire length of the line on September 2. Later that same year, the line was extended along Washington Avenue South to Nineteenth Avenue South.95

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95 Atwater, *History of Minneapolis*, 337-338.
The Expansion of the Railroads—1880 to 1930

The years of railroad development in Minneapolis beginning in 1880 were characterized by expansion, then consolidation of railroad lines, large-scale building projects starting with the Stone Arch Bridge and the Union Depot and later the Milwaukee Depot and Great Northern Station, as well as the beginning of decline. There were improvements in speed as iron rails were replaced with stronger steel rails. In the 1870s, trains rarely ran at more than twenty miles per hour, but by the mid-1880s, that speed had doubled on the main lines. By 1880, Minnesota had nearly 3,100 miles of track; and by 1900 that number stood at 6,794.68 miles. By 1929, the state had 9,399.22 miles of track, the most it would ever achieve.

Even though trains had run between Saint Paul and Minneapolis earlier, regular commuter service began in the 1880s; the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul offered local commuter trains on its Short Line between Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Prosser noted: “Later, the Minneapolis and St. Louis established commuter runs between downtown Minneapolis and Waconia, serving Kenwood, St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Deephaven, Excelsior, and Victoria.” The 1880s saw an era of elegant resorts at Lake Minnetonka, and railroads regularly carried passengers from as far away as Florida to the lake. Three railroads serving Minneapolis erected large hotels at Minnetonka; the Hotel Lafayette was owned by the Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba, the Hotel Lake Park by the Minneapolis and Saint Louis, and the Hotel Saint Louis by the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul line. Over time, the Panic of 1893 and competition from other resorts put these hotels out of business.

The 1880s also saw increased railroad regulation. By 1885 the state Railroad Commission was expanded into the Railroad and Warehouse Commission. In 1887 the Interstate Commerce Act created the federal Interstate Commerce Commission; and that same year, Minnesota enacted similar legislation. Under the legislation, railroads were established public highways, required to provide equal service and terms to all. Railroads were required to cooperate, rebates were forbidden, “the ‘long haul short haul clause’ was invoked, specifying that charges on like traffic moving a shorter distance over a line could never exceed charges for a longer distance on the same line”; and rates had to be published. By early years of the twentieth century, even more railroad legislation was imposed. The Railroad and Warehouse Commission set rules on working hours for engineers and fireman working within the state, oversaw acquisitions and consolidations, required safety devices at urban grade crossings, and set the maximum passenger rate at three cents per mile, or the equivalent of seventy-four cents in 2007 dollars.

Two Minneapolis industries closely allied to the railroads, lumber and flour milling, as well as the wholesaling industry, reached their peak during this period.

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97 Prossser, Rails to the North Star, 31-32, 41-42.
Lumber, the first major industry of Minneapolis, began with a single sawmill built on the east side of Saint Anthony Falls in 1848. Its “Golden Age” occurred during the period of 1890 to 1905, when in the words of E. L. Carpenter, “Minneapolis easily was the leading lumber market in the world.” In 1899, Minneapolis mills cut 594,373,000 feet of lumber, the most ever. Prior to 1890, the majority of white pine lumber was shipped to areas west of the Mississippi River, but after that year demand moved to eastern markets that had been formerly supplied by the now-exhausted Michigan forests. ⁹⁸

Well before 1890, the railroads expanded the Minneapolis lumber trade. According to Agnes Larson,

> The growing demand was becoming too much for the Minneapolis mills to handle. The year 1882—a banner year in which 186,739,000 feet of lumber were shipped out from Minneapolis—found that city unable to produce sufficiently to meet the needs of the hinterland, for she herself was consuming nearly 200,000,000 feet. Minneapolis sawmills put forth a supreme effort and cut 314,363,000 feet in one year—a record cut for Minneapolis sawmills at that time. . . . But even this was not enough. From this time on, lumber had to be shipped into Minneapolis in increasing amounts and another record was made when in one year 49,680,000 feet came there from other places. Minneapolis came more and more to be looked upon as a distributing center and long after the whir of sawmills had ceased in Minneapolis, that city served as a distributing center for lumber. The railroads made Minneapolis a great terminal point, giving it an advantage possessed by no other city handling lumber in the West, except Chicago. In 1880, 20,400,000 feet of lumber were shipped into Minneapolis, and 117,510,000 feet were received there in 1890. Railroads entering Minneapolis by way of the white pine forests were fortunate, for those forests gave them important additional tonnage. ⁹⁹

However once the vast Minnesota forests were depleted, lumber production in the city fell off dramatically, and the railroads had less freight to ship out. The Shevlin-Carpenter mill in Minneapolis closed in 1907; the C. A. Smith Lumber Company mill shut down in 1912, Bovey-De Laittre, founded in 1869, closed its doors in 1915. The last Minneapolis sawmill, owned by Frederick Weyerhaeuser, was shut down in 1919. ¹⁰⁰

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Graph showing growth and decline of lumber and flour manufacturing in Minneapolis from 1860 to 1936
Taken from *Social Saga of Two Cities*
Minneapolis was the world’s largest producer of flour from 1880 to 1930. The popularity of Minneapolis flour grew quickly, and it found eager buyers in the United States as well as in Europe. In 1879, Minneapolis shipped out 1,551,789 barrels of flour, with about 28 percent of that amount exported to Europe. In 1880, 2,051,840 barrels of flour were shipped out of the city with more than 37 percent exported abroad. By 1881, the percentage of flour exported abroad remained about the same, but the number of barrels of flour shipped from the city, 3,242,976, saw a rise of more than 63 percent over the previous year. By the 1910s, the Minneapolis millers were regularly shipping out 15 to 21 million barrels of flour annually and most of this was transported, at least at some point, by railroads. Once the flour milling industry declined, railroads suffered losses as well.\textsuperscript{101}

A 1933 study on the decline of flour milling in the Northwest during the early twentieth century attributed the losses to a variety of causes. Poorer quality spring wheat and lower yields; a decline in home bread-baking and a general decrease in the consumption of wheat flour; a shift to less-than-carload shipments of flour as a result of jobbers interposing themselves between millers and retailers and small bakers; and changes in freight rates all took their toll. The study observed that “something happened between 1905 and 1930 that changed the conditions of competition between these two [Buffalo and Minneapolis] milling centers. . . and the modification of the freight-rate structure was of unquestioned importance in this change.”\textsuperscript{102}

For many years, Minneapolis millers shipped flour by rail to the Great Lakes where it was loaded onto boats and moved to Buffalo, thus taking advantage of the cheaper water transportation. Buffalo, at the western terminus of Lake Erie on the Great Lakes, became the distribution center for eastern markets. However, the practice was never completely satisfactory as the flour would often arrive in poor condition and water-borne shipments were slowed due to delays at terminals. Also the Great Lakes were frozen during the winter months, while freight trains were generally not impeded by the weather. Buffalo, by contrast to Minneapolis, was in the direct line of rail haul for all the western and southwestern wheat on its way to eastern markets, whereas Minneapolis presented something of a detour for wheat grown in the southwest. Between 1918 and 1924, freight rates increased generally, but in 1922, northern transcontinental railroads offered a lower rate for shipments from western Montana to the West Coast. “This worked a considerable hardship on Minneapolis millers, for it resulted in the diversion of most of the choice wheat in central and western Montana for eastbound to westbound shipment. . . [and gave] the coast mills an advantage in enabling them to secure an excellent quality of flour that they could not otherwise have obtained, especially in competition with Minneapolis mills, for intermountain trade.” These rates were finally cancelled in 1932, but by then Buffalo had surpassed Minneapolis in flour milling.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{101} Annual Report of the Minneapolis Board of Trade, 1880 (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Tribune, 1881), 58-59; Annual Report of the Minneapolis Board of Trade, 1881 (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Tribune, 1882), 57; Annual Report of the Chamber of Commerce of Minneapolis, 1940 (Minneapolis: Chamber of Commerce, 1940), 19.
\textsuperscript{102} Victor G. Pickett and Roland S. Vaile, The Decline of Northwestern Flour Milling (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1933), 6-8, 46.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., 46-47, 53.
There were other freight rate changes as well. Scholars Victor Pickett and Roland Vaile explained: “In the early days of milling, when railroads were new and were doing everything possible to encourage industrial enterprises on their lines, transit privileges were liberally extended, with the result that they often permitted out-of-line hauls without penalty, even though they almost doubled the resulting mileage or actually did double it.” The practice of allowing shippers multiple stops to partially unload cars for flour blending or storage was costly to the railroads, but greatly aided the growth of the flour industry in Minneapolis; “the first considerably curtailment of transit privileges in Minneapolis was when the railroads withdrew the privilege of free transit on flour storage in Buffalo in 1901.” In 1920, the Interstate Commerce Commission “approved changes in rates, taking away practically all milling-in-transit privileges from Minneapolis and at the same time leaving those privileges in country points and to other competing centers, such as Milwaukee, Chicago, and Kansas City.”

Warehousing came to upper (north of Hennepin) First Street and the surrounding area in the early 1880s as manufacturers of agricultural equipment realized that “Minneapolis offered the best rail connections to the new western farm land, and national manufacturers of farm machinery began seeking space in the city.” For example, in 1882, Monitor Plow Company began building a regional distribution system and decided that “the most logical site for a regional branch house was Minneapolis, already the railroad hub of the area.” Monitor Plow soon joined with two other companies to form the Moline, Milburn and Stoddard Company that would be eventually known as Minneapolis–Moline. “The key to warehouse location was trackage facilities. As the available track sites along Third and Fourth Avenues North were quickly depleted, the Omaha Line in the early 1880s began laying spur tracks along North First Street beyond Third Avenue North. Upper North First Street was now destined to be part of ‘Implement Row.’”

The Minneapolis jobbing business grew quickly, although the 1876 report of the Minneapolis Board of Trade complained: “The pioneers in the wholesale business labored under great disadvantages, chief among which was the lack of a full line of wholesale houses, that would enable the country merchant to purchase his entire stock in the city.” The result was that buyers might be forced to make their purchases in other cities where they could get everything at once and have it all shipped out in one operation. The Board of Trade expected this problem would soon be remedied and Minneapolis would have even more business from the west and north. In 1876, the jobbing business was worth $5,373,651 to Minneapolis. That year, 25,312 carlots of freight (all types including grain and lumber) came into the city and 31,275 left. Groceries (“staple and fancy”) constituted almost half of the sales; other major items included produce sold on commission, boots, shoes, saddles, and other leather goods; hardware, Queensware (a type of crockery), and notions; drugs and oils; and agricultural implements. The report made clear the relationship between Minneapolis and the outstate regions, noting that farmers and country merchants annually received eight to ten million dollars from Minneapolis manufacturers for such things as wheat, flax seed, beef, and pork. And in return the farmer and merchants would

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buy their lumber and other goods “from the same markets that pays them the money for their produce, whenever they can do so on good terms and as cheaply as in other cities.”

The Board of Trade report for 1878 observed how quickly the wholesale business in Minneapolis had grown; in 1868, there were only two jobbers within the city and both them dealt in groceries with combined annual sales of about $100,000. In 1878, Minneapolis jobbers did $10,406,250 worth of business. As in previous years, groceries were the leading item with more than $3.5 million in sales; dry goods such as clothing and carpets were next at more than $2 million; followed by $1.3 million of produce. Queensware, drugs, hardware, stoves, liquors, boots, shoes, leather items, and farm implements accounted for the rest of the sales. The writer made it very clear that past and future growth of this trade was tied to the railroads, “the entire country to the mountains, and to the Manitoba line, and beyond, can best be supplied with goods from this point.” Minneapolis jobbers sent their salesmen all over the country and railroads would bring ever more settlers to the north and the west. “To-day there is a larger north western territory, better developed, with better railroad facilities, and tributary to this city, than there was twenty years ago tributary to Chicago or St. Louis.”

By 1880, Minneapolis had a population of 46,877, making it the thirty-eighth largest city in the United States, the first time Minneapolis had broken into the “100 Largest Urban Places” category. That same year, the wholesale trade in Minneapolis, not counting flour or lumber, had an annual worth of $24,299,200. As before, groceries constituted the largest sector of this market, but sales of agricultural implements had increased to second place, instead of being tied for fourth place (with leather goods) as it was in 1878. The Board of Trade report observed that if the products of flour, saw, oil and woolen factories, which were sold on a wholesale level, were counted, the total would be in excess of $50 million annually. The report also noted the amount of wheat coming into the city by both rail and animal-driven wagons; 10,264,100 bushels arrived by railroad car, while 650,000 was hauled in by teams. That year, 56,823 car lots of freight came into the city, while 58,439 were shipped out, about double the amount of four years earlier.

By 1888, the wholesale merchandise trade in Minneapolis was worth $45,056,000. Groceries accounted for more than eight million dollars; farm implements were next at $6 million; the category of meats, hides, wood, coal, and wool was third at more than $4 million; fruits, produce, fish, and oysters was fourth at $5 million; while lumber products and dry goods tied for fifth place at $4 million each. That same year, wholesalers also sold $2.6 million worth of hardware; more than $2 million of cigars and liquor; $2 million of boots, shoes, and belting; $1.4 million of drugs, glass, and paints; $1.1 million of building materials other than lumber; as well as such items as mill supplies, crockery, jewelry, furniture, leather goods, paper, and seeds. The board of trade noted that jobbing in wheat was the principal wholesale business in the city with a value of

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106 Annual Report of the Board of Trade of Minneapolis, 1876 (Minneapolis: Tribune Job Rooms, 1877), 55-56, 37. The 1878 report broke the car lots of freight down further, 5,946 of those received were merchandise, and 4,096 car lots of merchandise was shipped out of the city (42-43).
107 Annual Report of the Board of Trade of Minneapolis, 1878 (Minneapolis: Tribune Job Rooms, 1879), 62-63.
108 United States Census Bureau website (http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab11.txt); Annual Report of the Board of Trade of Minneapolis, 1880, 48-49; 42-43. In 1870, Saint Anthony and Minneapolis had not yet merged and their populations were 5,014 and 13,073 respectively.
$44 million; the wholesale flour business was worth $36 million and jobbing in grains excluding flour and wheat was valued at $30 million in 1888. The report confidently speculated that Minneapolis would soon surpass the rival Chicago, because Chicago was “too far East to retain [commercial] supremacy in the West.” By contrast, Minneapolis was perfectly situated in terms of navigable waterways and topography suitable for railroad building to the west. “Hence Minneapolis is the fixed commercial center of this section, and in wealth and productiveness, its contiguous country has been satisfactorily demonstrated to be superior to any other portion, not only of the West, but the United States. Where, then, is a more favorable location for the center of wealth and power of the country than here?”

By 1900, the population of Minneapolis had reached 202,718, making it the nineteenth largest city in the country. That same year, railroads brought 234,983 car lots into the city and shipped out 238,467. The incoming trains brought in all manner of freight: wheat, corn, oats, flaxseed, hay, fuel oil, merchandise, agricultural implements, coal, bricks, lime, marble, hides, fur, household goods, pig iron, butter, meat, fruit, and livestock. That year 83,312,320 bushels of wheat came into the city and 14,954,806 barrels of flour were shipped out from the city. A total of 585,661,821 pounds of merchandise came into Minneapolis, while 588,624,059 pounds were carried away.

By 1903, the Minneapolis Journal placed the worth of the wholesale trade at more than $200,000,000. The same article traced the beginnings of the wholesale trade in Minneapolis and some of its pioneers, such as John S. Pillsbury who started as a retailer of hardware from a small store on Main Street S.E. in 1855 and from there moved into wholesale hardware. After becoming involved in the flour and lumber business, Pillsbury sold his hardware concern which eventually became known as Janney, Semple, Hill and Company, “the largest wholesale hardware house west of Chicago.” George R. Newell entered the wholesale grocery trade in 1867 and founded a firm that would become George R. Newell and Company and later Super Valu. The Langdon Building at 300 First Avenue North housed the Newell Company for many years. Green and DeLaittre Company, one of the largest grocery jobbers, could also trace its origins to the early days of the city. Its building still stands at 500 North Third Street.

A 1916 report stated that 381,200 car lots of freight came into the city in 1915, while 371,192 car lots were shipped out. This report also included a record of the amount of flour produced by Minneapolis millers and the percentage that was exported out of the country for a twenty-year period beginning in 1895. In the best year, 1900, slightly over 31 percent of Minneapolis flour was exported abroad, but that percentage had steadily declined until in 1915 it was 8.06 percent of the total. None could compare with the year 1880, when more than 37 percent of the flour milled was sent abroad.

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109 Minneapolis Illustrated (Chicago: Minneapolis Board of Trade, 1889), 19.
111 “Wholesale Trade,” Minneapolis Journal, November 26, 1903; Rolf T. Anderson, “Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District,” National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, June 1987, section 7, pages 5, 51-52. The Green and DeLaittre Building is one of the earliest examples of C. A. P. Turner’s flat slab reinforced concrete and mushroom capital design that he developed specifically for more efficient warehouses.
112 Minneapolis Civic and Commerce Association [Minneapolis: n.p., 1916], 136.
In a report prepared for the Federal Farm Loan Board, the Minneapolis Civic and Commerce Association claimed that railroad “transportation lines of the Northwest [are] centered in [the] Twin Cities,” and that Minneapolis not only had more milling capacity than Duluth, Kansas City, Saint Louis, or Omaha, but more grain elevators as well, enough storage for fifty million bushels and twenty-six mills. The report called Minneapolis the Northwest’s farm implement center, noting that “Minneapolis through natural selection has become the center through which the farmer has preferred to purchase a line of goods,” and published a map illustrating the 3,557 accounts in five states held by one Minneapolis implement dealer to show the distribution of goods from city warehouses. By this time Minneapolis was also a leading wholesaler of automobiles and auto parts, heavy hardware, coal, paint, fruit, and groceries. A 1921 addendum to the report, noted that the 1920 census placed the city’s population at 380,582, or an increase of more than 26 percent over 1910. It noted that Minneapolis was served by twenty-nine railroad lines, was the leading flour and linseed product producer in the world, as well as being the largest manufacturer and distribution center in the United States for tractors and other agricultural implements, a business worth $155,000,000 per year. The city had 1,200 wholesalers and 1,600 manufacturers.113

Map showing the distribution of 3,557 accounts carried by a single Minneapolis implement firm, with each dot representing an account
Taken from Minneapolis: “The Market of the Northwest”

113 Minneapolis: “The Market of the Northwest” [Minneapolis: n.p., 1916?] 75; 64, 92, 94-99, 102, 104-105, addendum pasted into front cover.
By 1922, Minneapolis distributed over one billion dollars worth of products. Minneapolis historian Marion Shutter counted 300 businesses engaged in the jobbing trade and these sold a vast array of items such as art goods, boots and shoes, burial caskets, dishes, tobacco, electrical goods, flour and feed, fruits, clothing, coal, hardware, stoves, underwear, elevator and mill machinery, lumber, meat, varnish, sporting goods, and typewriters. Shutter singled out the firm of Butler Brothers, a mail-order wholesaler established in Boston in 1877. Over the years, Butler Brothers opened distributing branches in New York, Chicago, Saint Louis, Dallas, and Minneapolis. The nine-story Butler Brothers Building at 518 North First Avenue was built in 1906 to house the general merchandise of more than forty thousand items sold in its 500-page catalog.¹¹⁴

The first decades of the twentieth century saw the full flowering of the railroads in Minnesota as evidenced by the completion of the Great Northern Station in 1914. The volume of passengers almost tripled from 5,122,005 in 1900 to 14,266,516 in 1910, reaching its peak in 1920 with more than 18 million. Freight volume on railroads also increased. In 1895, railroads carried 18,530,130 tons, but by 1910 that number had more than quadrupled at 85,823,147 tons. The amount of railroad track within the state jumped from 6,794.68 miles in 1900 to 9,002.27 miles by 1914. The increase of 2,208 miles of track was more than existed in 1877 (then at 2,198.5 miles), fifteen years after the first railroad made its way to Saint Anthony. The year 1916 saw the largest number of barrels of flour shipped out of Minneapolis—21,300,994. Despite all these impressive achievements, changes were taking place that would in time cause the decline of railroads, among them the increasing availability of automobiles for passenger travel and trucks for hauling freight. Minneapolis would be especially hit hard by changes in freight rate structures as well as declining quality of the spring wheat that was grown in the west and north.¹¹⁵

The Minneapolis City Directory for 1879-1880 shows the city was served by seven main railroads, most with their own depots and freight houses in the city and six lesser lines with ticket offices, such as Grand Trunk Railway, a Canadian railroad, that allowed passengers to make connections in other cities. Aside from the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul Railroad complex, established at Third and Washington Avenues South in 1865, most of the depots and freight houses clustered around the rail corridor that developed near Fourth and Washington Avenues North, where the Saint Paul and Pacific (by 1880, it was known as the Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba) had crossed into Minneapolis in 1867. In 1880, the Chicago, Saint Paul and Minneapolis and Omaha shared a depot with the Saint Paul and Pacific at Fourth and Washington Avenues North; the Saint Paul and Duluth and Northern Pacific were located there as well. The Minneapolis and Saint Louis Railway had its depot nearby at the corner of North Third Street and North Fourth Avenue. The Minneapolis Eastern, strictly a freight-hauling operation with limited trackage, was located on First Street, between South Third and Fourth

¹¹⁴ Marion D. Shutter, History of Minneapolis: Gateway to the Northwest (Chicago, Minneapolis: S. J. Clarke Company, 1923), I: 323; Anderson, “Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District,” section 7, page 8. The Butler Building was designed by Harry Wild Jones.

¹¹⁵ Prosser, Rails to the North Star, 42, 55; Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce Report for 1940, 19. The same report for 1915 claims 19,063,500 barrels of flour were shipped from Minneapolis.
Avenues. A few years later, another publication counted “nineteen distinct railways” that “concentrate their trains and traffic at Minneapolis”; sixteen entered the city on their own rails.\textsuperscript{116}  

\begin{quote}
Map showing many of the depots and freight houses near the riverfront
Taken from 1895 Rand, McNally and Company’s Map of the Main Portion of Minneapolis, Minneapolis Public Library
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{116} Minneapolis City Directory for 1879-1880, 400-401; Hand-book of Minneapolis: prepared for the thirty-second annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, held in Minneapolis, Minn., August 15-22, 1883 (Minneapolis: n.p., 1883), 75. The publication listed only eighteen lines, apparently omitting the Minneapolis Eastern. They were: the Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Main Line and four subsidiaries, Saint Paul Short Line, Saint Cloud and Fargo Line, Breckenridge Line, and Lake Minnetonka Line; the Chicago, Milwaukee, and Saint Paul Main Line, plus Fort Snelling Line, Saint Paul Short Line, Iowa and Minnesota Division, Hastings and Dakota Division; the Minneapolis and Saint Louis Main Line, plus Minnetonka Line, and Stillwater Line; Chicago, Rock Island Main Line (over the Minneapolis and Saint Louis rails); Chicago, Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha line; Chicago and Northwestern (over Omaha rails); Northern Pacific; and the Minneapolis, Lyndale and Minnetonka Railroad. Rail lines such as the Central Iowa, Ottumwa Route, Saint Paul and Sioux City, and the Saint Louis, Kansas, and Northwestern had ticket offices in the Nicollet House Hotel.
Industrial Map of the Twin Cities, ca. 1920

City of Minneapolis
Aerial view of the warehouse district and riverfront near Hennepin Avenue bridge, ca. 1921
Paul W. Hamilton, photographer—Minnesota Historical Society Collections

Aerial view of milling district and Saint. Anthony Falls, ca. 1930
Minnesota Historical Society Collections
The Railroads

Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway—Manitoba Road—Great Northern

Organized in 1879, the Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway was a consolidation of several older railroads including the Saint Paul and Pacific Railroad. All the tracks and other property of the Saint Paul and Pacific became part of the newly organized railroad, which was often called the Manitoba Road. The new name more accurately reflected the railroad’s north-south orientation. From the Minneapolis point of view, the greatest accomplishment of the Manitoba line during this period was the construction of the Stone Arch Bridge and a union depot. In 1869, the Tribune published a long letter to the editor that proposed, among other things, a union depot in the area of Kansas Street (present-day North Second Avenue) near where the Saint Paul and Pacific crossed the river. After ten years of discussion Saint Paul had managed to get its seven railroads to agree on a union station in 1879, which was completed in 1881. Meanwhile in Minneapolis, although the Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway station was used and leased to other railroads, it was inadequate. Several of the Minneapolis railroads wanted a jointly-owned station, but representatives of the Manitoba “opposed any collective venture, citing the difficulties and delays they had experienced over the St. Paul Depot project, admitting privately that they wanted the StPM&M to continue to own its Minneapolis facilities and the revenue there from.” Finally, an agreement was reached in the summer of 1880; as other railroads withdrew their objections and the Manitoba Road agreed to share the new passenger station and other facilities, such as the Stone Arch Bridge.

Construction on the 2,100-foot Stone Arch Bridge began in January 1882 and was completed in 1883. On November 22, 1883, the first engine, carrying Manitoba Road officials, crossed the bridge. Work on the new Union Depot, located on the river bank, on the downstream side of Hennepin Avenue, began in July 1884. Its dimensions were generous: a 30 by 260-foot baggage room; a 120 by 300-foot train shed; a 65 by 300-foot, three-story, brick and stone station and waiting room. When it opened in April 1885, the Tribune carried a long article stating, “the true significance of this new station lies in the fact that the Manitoba railway has by its construction recognized Minneapolis as a city of the first class and entitled to every privilege accorded to a metropolitan business center. . . [while the Stone Arch Bridge] will produce an impression upon every stranger that comes this way that cannot be other than favorable, and one that will make him unconsciously an advocate of Minneapolis.” In addition to the practical business of transporting people in and out of the city, the bridge was an advertisement for the city and soon became one of its best-known symbols. The site of the original Union Depot now incorporates parts of West River Parkway, the west approach to the Hennepin Avenue Bridge, and the U.S. Post Office.

117 “The Railroad Connection Across the City,” Minneapolis Tribune, August 5, 1869 (letter to editor signed by “Minneapolis”); Hidy, Great Northern, 36, 45-46; “The Great Bridge,” Minneapolis Tribune, November 24, 1883; Minneapolis Building Permits A21, July 8, 1884; A22, July 8, 1884; and A27, August 4, 1884; “The Union Station,” Minneapolis Tribune, April 26, 1885; Anfinson, “Archaeology of the Central Riverfront,” 49-50. James Brodie, Great Northern Railway architect and engineer, was listed as the designer of the depot. The citizens of Minneapolis presented James J. Hill a large silver tray, executed by Tiffany and Company, on September 10, 1884, to commemorate the completion of the Stone Arch Bridge. The engraved surface depicts the bridge, the Hennepin
Designed by James Brodie, the architect for the Manitoba Road, the initial cost of the Union Depot was $111,000. As described by the Tribune, the station nestled along the riverfront and resembled the letter H, “the two brick wings being connected by the arched roof of the train shed, under which a bridge spans the intervening space, affording an overhead passage from the waiting-rooms and ticket office to baggage department and emigrant waiting rooms.” The station had a 65-foot frontage on Hennepin Avenue, 296 feet on High Street, and a clock that rose to a height of 135 feet, and completed by a clock made by the Ansonia Clock Company. The exterior was “very plain” and faced with Anderson pressed brick. First class travelers would leave the train, and go to the lower waiting room where “an excellent lunch counter, barbershop, and water closet” could be found. “Going from the lower waiting room to the street level, two handsome stairways twenty feet in width lead up and into the grand waiting room, the largest west of the Mississippi.” Measuring 60 by 120 feet with a forty-foot ceiling, the room was “paneled in finely carved oak, with a superimposed dado of exquisite tile work and cream tinted rough finish walls.” On the north wall was “a magnificent open fireplace of gigantic proportions, constructed of pressed brick and terra cotta.” To the rear of the waiting room, “and overlooking the river and falls is the dining-hall, 40x80 feet in extent, finished in the same general style as the waiting rooms.”

![Stone Arch Bridge, 1884](image)

_Aven Avenue Bridge, and the Union Depot, still under construction. The tray is now part of the collection of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts._

118 Minneapolis Building Permits A21 and A22, July 8, 1884; A27, August 4, 1884; “The Union Station.”
East Side Station adjacent to the Stone Arch Bridge
Taken from *1885 Map of Minneapolis*, Minnesota Digital Library

East Side Depot in Northeast Minneapolis, which was replaced by the station adjacent to the Stone Arch Bridge
Taken from *1885 Map of Minneapolis*, Minnesota Digital Library
“Through the Park Region to the New Northwest,” advertisement, 1884

Minnesota Historical Society Collections

Second Suspension Bridge and Union Depot, Minneapolis, ca. 1885

F. M. Laraway, photographer—Minnesota Historical Society Collections

The Rails
Hess, Roise and Company—Page 88
Union Depot and the second Suspension Bridge at Bridge Square, ca. 1888
W. H. Jacoby, photographer—Minnesota Historical Society Collections

Union Depot, at Hennepin and High Street, 1890
Minnesota Historical Society Collections
In 1883, in conjunction with the Stone Arch Bridge project, the Manitoba Road built the East Side Depot. A one-story, brick building with a ticket office and separate waiting rooms for men and women was built between Sixth and Seventh Avenues S.E., near the Stone Arch Bridge. Once this depot was put in use, the other East Minneapolis Depot on Second Street N.E. was abandoned. Once again, Main Street S.E. had a depot, as it had in the mid-1860s.\(^\text{119}\)

The tracks along Main Street S.E., which were first laid in the 1860s by the Saint Paul and Pacific Railroad, seem to have been removed by the time the 1885 Map of Minneapolis was published, as they are not depicted. By 1892, the rails are shown as extending all the way to present-day East Hennepin Avenue and have spur lines into the Pillsbury Mill complex. These tracks are labeled “Great Northern.” As shown in 1903 and 1914 Minneapolis atlases, these tracks remain in the same position, but are shown as property of the Minneapolis Eastern Railway.\(^\text{120}\)

At the close of 1883, the Manitoba line had built 937 miles of new track that stretched from the Twin Cities to the Red River Valley and Canada. The total trackage owned by the Manitoba was 1,314 miles. During the 1880s, the Manitoba line continued to expand by building into Montana. In 1889, the Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway was reorganized as the Great Northern Railway Company. That same year, the Great Northern carried 40,101 carloads of freight into Minneapolis, the largest amount of any single carrier. It shipped out 17,656 car loads of freight from the city. By 1893, the Great Northern had built all the way to Seattle, making it the first transcontinental railroad headquartered in Saint Paul. That same year, the Great Northern began direct transcontinental passenger service, with a westbound train leaving the Saint Paul station for a seventy-two hour run to Seattle. By 1905, a transcontinental train called the *Oriental Limited* was in operation. Great Northern transcontinental trains offered the traveler comfort in the form of observation cars that included a library, daily newspapers, a barbershop, and smoking room.\(^\text{121}\)

In 1900, the Great Northern was first in the amount of lumber hauled into the city, more than 21 million feet; coal, 75,722 tons; flaxseed, 1,671,860 bushels; and stone and marble, 15,090,000 pounds, more than half the total amount coming into the city. The railroad brought 24,513,000 bushels of wheat into the city, making it the second largest carrier in this category, not surprising as its route was through some of the best wheat-growing areas in the country. Great Northern also moved the largest amount of farm machinery, more than 29 million pounds; household goods, 1,628,940 pounds; sundries, 52,830,000 pounds; fruit, 5,673,232 pounds; and butter,

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\(^{119}\) Anfinson, “Archaeology of the Central Riverfront,” 110. The building was razed in the early twentieth century, although foundations may remain beneath the present-day parkland.  
\(^{120}\) Map of Minneapolis, Minnesota [United States?]: s.n., 1885 (Minneapolis Public Library); Atlas of the City of Minneapolis, Minnesota (Minneapolis: C. M. Foote and Company, 1892);.  
1,867,455 pounds, out of Minneapolis. It was the second largest carrier of merchandise, more than 135 million pounds, out of the city.  

The Stone Arch Bridge was apparently modified in 1895 when its roadway was widened and two 12-foot sidewalks were added, “without materially disturbing the masonry or requiring any additions or extensions of the piers,” according to the Engineering Record. The change was in response to increased rail traffic on the bridge. The bridge’s foundations were reinforced during the early years of the twentieth century. As the repair work approached completion, one newspaper noted: “For a long time but one train at a time was allowed to pass over the structure. There have been two tracks in use since repairs were started, but the tracks have been so arranged that the inner rails of the outbound tracks was half way between the rails of the inbound track.” In 1925, the track centers on the bridge were widened by six inches. To accommodate this change and the newer, larger trains, parts of the parapet walls were cut away.  

In 1911, James J. Hill announced that his company was planning to build a new station at Hennepin Avenue, perhaps spurred on by the Minneapolis Union Station Committee of One Hundred that was advocating a new union station that would serve all the lines coming into the city. The group was emphatic in their reasons for a facility. The committee, “sincerely believes that a permanent continuance of the present unsafe, inefficient, annoying, insufficient, badly managed, unwholesome, unsanitary, passenger depot facilities in this city is and will continue to be detrimental in every way to its personal well-being and business interests.” Late in 1912, work started on a replacement for the old Union Depot. The new Great Northern Station was located on the upriver side of Hennepin Avenue and designed by Charles S. Frost, who had earlier designed the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul (Milwaukee Road) Depot at Third and Washington. Frost was also the architect for Saint Paul’s second Union Depot (1917-1923).  

Like the old Union Depot, this one had monumental proportions measuring 297 by 600 feet, and was three stories in height. It cost about $2 million to build. Once it neared completion, newspapers began printing descriptions of its features. The exterior was of Kettle River sandstone from Sandstone, Minnesota, while brown Tennessee marble was used on the interior. The station had its own plant for heat, light, and power. One article noted, “One of the original ideas carried out is the equipment of the baggage room where electric motor trucks with rubber-tired wheels will noiselessly whisk big trunks from the main baggage room down a long gallery to heavy elevators, at the far end of the train sheds, and within a few feet of the waiting baggage cars of outgoing trains.” But none of this would be seen by the traveling public. Another novel feature was the ventilation system; “clean and water-washed air will be poured into the waiting rooms by means of enormous fans, while at the same time the vitiated air will be removed by

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122 Twentieth Annual Report of the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce (Minneapolis: Chamber of Commerce, 1902), 54-55.  
124 “Way Station or Terminal,” Minneapolis Journal, October 11, 1911; Minneapolis Building Permit A11933, December 30, 1912; Minneapolis Wrecking Permit I416, April 2, 1914;
exhaust fans, and the rooms kept at even temperature.” By 1916, about 125 trains, 5,700 passengers, and 1,700 pieces of baggage passed through the station daily.125

Some writers emphasized the safety of the new facility. The station had twelve tracks (twice the number of the old Union Depot); “these tracks are built in pairs, with platforms between each pair, and each platform has its own stairway and elevator. Thus every passenger can descend from the concourse directly to the platform adjacent to the track upon which his train stands, and it will be unnecessary for any passenger under any circumstances to cross a track thus eliminating the danger of accidents from this cause.” Although the writer did not mention it directly, the Milwaukee Road Depot was an old-style facility that did require the passengers to cross railroad tracks. Another article noted such features as “the front between the two entrances is protected by an iron picket fence to prevent the window embrasures from being used as lounging places,” the planned map of the Great Northern road that would grace the waiting room, and the “art marble” floors with borders. When the new station opened on January 22, 1914, the railroad celebrated with a large public party.126

On June 10, 1929, the Great Northern introduced an entirely new train, the Empire Builder, which complemented the earlier Oriental Limited. The new train offered even more amenities. During the summer months, the Empire Builder would slow down in Stryker, Montana, so that “the telegraph operator could hand up a package of freshly caught mountain trout to dining-car personnel, who quickly prepared them for appreciative dinner patrons.”127

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126 “Great Northern Road Completed New Million Dollar Passenger Station,” and “Interior of New Station,” Minneapolis Tribune, December 28, 1913; “Everyone Invited” (advertisement), Minneapolis Journal, January 22, 1914.

127 Hidy, Great Northern, 180.
Advertisement from the *Minneapolis Journal*, January 22, 1914.
Floor plans of the Great Northern Station, 1916
Taken from *Passenger Terminals and Trains*.

Postcard of the Great Northern Station, ca. 1945
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*
Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul Railroad (Milwaukee Road)

The Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul established the double-track Short Line between Minneapolis and Saint Paul which began regular operation in December 1880. Previously, the trains between the two cities followed a circuitous route that traveled from Saint Paul to cross the Mississippi at present-day Lilydale, then went south and crossed the Minnesota River at Mendota, and from there traveled to downtown Minneapolis. The new route shortened the trip between the two cities to about thirty minutes as trains traveled on a newly built bridge across the Mississippi, located between Franklin Avenue and Lake Street, just north of Twenty-ninth Street South. Writer August Derleth noted: “The Short Line provided the only interurban service between St. Paul and Minneapolis, with passenger trains being operated every half hour and making frequent stops along the route.” Derleth observed that the Short Line did a great deal of business with regular traffic, “but also because convivial citizens of one city, who considered it unwise to spend an evening of play in the home town, would board the train to seek entertainment in the other city, so that St. Paulites encountered a great many St. Paulites in Minneapolis,” while Minneapolitans found a similar situation in Saint Paul, “all having a good time uninhibited by the fear of discovery by any acquaintance except those bent on the same goal.” The bridge, rebuilt in 1902, is still in place.128

![Bridge over Mississippi River](image)

Chicago, Milwaukee, and Saint Paul Railway bridge over Mississippi River, ca. 1904

Sweet, photographer—Minnesota Historical Society Collections

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Minnesota Central’s Route into Minneapolis and Saint Paul
Taken from Dreams, Disasters and Demise: The Milwaukee Road
By 1884, the Chicago, Milwaukee, and Saint Paul Railway erected a viaduct to carry depot-bound trains over Washington Avenue near South Eighth Avenue. In 1881, the city council had considered a requirement that the railroad build gates at the Washington Avenue crossing, but rejected the idea as something that would “obstruct public traffic and prove a nuisance.” Over the years, the viaduct tended to serve as an obstruction to Washington Avenue traffic; the middle section was reserved for streetcars and the two outer lanes for automobile traffic. However, drivers, especially those who were intoxicated, often crashed into it. Starting in the 1940s, various city entities hoped to remove the viaduct. An account from 1980 noted, that after the middle lane was opened to vehicular traffic, there was an average of a crash per month. By 1982, it was clear that the viaduct would be removed. Milton Gray, a bankruptcy court officer, stated: “It obstructs traffic, is unsightly and is an impediment to redevelopment of the riverfront area.” However, before it could be removed, objections from the Minneapolis Star and Tribune Company and the Soo Line Railroad had to be overcome. The newspaper and railroad were opposed because “the bulk of the paper’s newsprint is carried by the Soo Line from Canada and delivered over the viaduct.” Without the viaduct, it was feared that transportation costs would go up. In 1984, demolition of the viaduct was started and continued over several months. Reporter Jim Parsons noted the structure was 100 years old. Another account observed that in the future, no one would be able to tell this landmark ever existed. However, if you look at the corner of Chicago where the viaduct used to cross over Washington Avenue, the grade is much higher than the surrounding blocks and there are a few blackened foundation stones at street level, reminders of the former overpass.\textsuperscript{129}

Looking south on Washington Avenue toward railroad viaduct from the intersection of Park Avenue, October 8, 1941
*Minneapolis Star Journal, photographer—Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

West Bank Milling District and surrounding railroads
Taken from *1885 Map of Minneapolis*, Minnesota Digital Library
Beginning in 1884, the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul contracted with the United States Post Office to carry mail on a new fast train between Chicago and Minneapolis. The train carried no passengers and consisted of four cars—three for mail and one for storage. A New York Times article reported that the “fast mail train” would leave Chicago at 3 a.m. and arrive in Minneapolis thirteen hours later, noting the train would average 36 miles per hour. From Minneapolis, mail bound for the west coast would be placed on a Northern Pacific train, “thus supplying all that section [of the country] with eastern mail 24 hours earlier than heretofore.” Derleth noted that although the post office dropped its written contract for mail transport with the line in 1892, the railroad continued to carry mail on the basis of verbal agreements.  

In addition to passenger traffic, the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul also hauled freight. In 1881, it carried 319,814 tons of grain and 96,152 tons of lumber within the state. Sometimes there was simply too much wheat coming into the city. An 1885 New York Times article noted that 1,609 cars filled with wheat were sidetracked in Minneapolis, an increase of 178 cars within a twenty-four hour period. “The Milwaukee and Manitoba yards are blocked to a greater extent than the others,” with some roads reporting that “their daily receipts are limited only by the number of empty cars they are able to send out.” That season, Minneapolis mills received 32,900,560 bushels of wheat (or 895,422 tons) and shipped out more than five million barrels of flour. In 1885, the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul carried 412,100 tons of grain and 383,320 tons of flour and meal within the state, making it the largest carrier of flour and the second largest of grain while the Manitoba was the largest carrier of grain that year.  

In 1900, the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul carried in the largest amount of wheat to Minneapolis, roughly thirty percent of the total 83,312,320 bushels that were brought in. It was also the largest carrier of merchandise into the city, 165,644,535 pounds or about twenty-eight percent of the more than 585 million pounds that was transported into the city that year. It also brought in twenty-nine percent of the farm machinery, more than thirty-five percent of the dressed meats, and more than thirty-one million pounds of fruit, or about a third of the total that came into the city. Milwaukee trains also carried in other grains such as corn, flaxseed (for the linseed oil industry), fuel oil, bricks, marble, and household goods. The railroad also carried out more than two million barrels of flour of the nearly fifteen million barrels that were shipped out of Minneapolis; only the Soo Line carried out more flour that year. The Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul also shipped out more than 146 million pounds of merchandise (slightly less than a quarter of the total); more than 130 million feet of lumber such as lath and shingles (about a third of the total); more than twelve million pounds of the nearly 85 million pounds of farm machinery; and more than twenty percent of the 11,198,064 pounds of linseed oil sent out from

130 Derleth, Milwaukee Road, 158-159; “Another Fast Mail Train,” New York Times, March 13. 1884;  
There are often discrepancies in volume of flour production from one source to another. One article (“The Milling Year,” New York Times September 21, 1885) placed the amount of flour produced at Minneapolis in 1884-1885 (year ending on September 1) at 5,450,163 barrels, while the Minneapolis Grain Exchange placed the number at 5,317,672 barrels exported. Part of the reason for these differences is accounted by different calendar years as well as the fact that the Minneapolis Grain Exchange seemed to keep track of products shipped out of the city, without noting the flour, for example, that was consumed within Minneapolis.
Minneapolis. That same year, the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul was also the largest carrier of hides and furs out of the city.\footnote{Twentieth Annual Report of the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce (Minneapolis: Chamber of Commerce, 1902), 54-55.}

During this period the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul constructed a new depot, which still stands at Third and Washington Avenues South. It was largely complete in the fall of 1898 and designed by Charles Frost. Just prior to its opening, the \textit{Tribune} ran an extensive article about the new building. The old depot, which fronted on Washington Avenue, was being razed and in its place a train shed would be built. The main building measured 120 by 120 feet, offered separate waiting rooms for men and women, and cost about $200,000 to complete. The station proper is three stories high and at the time of it completion had a clock tower described as modified Renaissance in style. The main passenger entrance was at Washington Avenue, while carriage and office doors were on Third Avenue South. The main waiting room, in the center of the building, measured 56 by 86 feet with a twenty-four foot ceiling. The floor is of marble and the walls enameled brick. The second-floor switchboard owned by Western Union Telegraph was characterized as the “finest one in the entire system.” The paper observed, “Most of the passengers arriving will leave the station by way of the midway and without passing through the waiting rooms. The train shed contains, or will contain, five tracks. The spaces between the tracks is floored with pine, on a level with the tops of the rails; all other parts of the shed, as the space between the tracks and the baggage rooms are paved with brick.” The second floor had offices belonging to the general superintendent, clerks and conductors. The third floor housed the railroad’s legal department, law library, and drafting rooms.\footnote{“The New Railroad Station,” \textit{Minneapolis Tribune}, November 6, 1898.}
Milwaukee Depot, ca. 1900
Sweet, photographer—Minnesota Historical Society Collections
The newspaper explained what the new depot represented: “Another tie binding . . . those bonds of friendship [between the city and the Milwaukee Road] . . . which for a third of a century have [contributed] to their common good. Beautiful in design, honest and substantial in condition, commodious and well located, the Milwaukee depot will remain many years a monument to the substantial corporation which owns it, and to Minneapolis.”

On May 5, 1898, the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul introduced the Pioneer Limited, an overnight train between Minneapolis and Chicago and one of the first named trains in the country. It ran for the next sixty-four years and was widely known for its dining-car service. For the first twenty-odd years, its dining car was run by Dan Healey, “the best known dining car steward in America.” Healey produced elaborate, multi-coursed dinners with “seconds” offered at no extra charge, all for a dollar. Derleth noted that although prices were later raised to $1.25 and $1.50, “at no time did the price actually cover the cost of the Pioneer Limited’s dinner service.” A dollar in 1898 would be the same as $24.61 in 2007 dollars.

According to Arthur Borak, at the turn of the century the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul was one of the strongest railroads in the Midwest. Borak noted the railroad had a history of progressive innovations. It was one of the first railroads to adopt grain shipment in bulk; it built some of its own cars and locomotives; and it was the first line to light passenger cars with electricity. It had a network of lines across the Midwest in Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa and South Dakota, but none to the Pacific coast. Late in 1905, the railroad’s board of directors authorized construction of a line to Seattle and Tacoma. By 1911 the railroad had completed its Pacific Extension, and in 1914, the railroad began electrifying about 450 miles of its lines through the mountains of Montana and Idaho. Borak explained that electric-powered trains were faster, cleaner, and more efficient than trains powered by steam engines.

Despite all these improvements, or perhaps because of them, the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul was bankrupt by 1925. By the end of World War I, shipping via the Panama Canal proved to be a cheaper alternative to the transcontinental railroad business. The growing use of automobiles, buses, and trucks for passenger and freight hauling hurt all railroads. But there were specific factors in the decline of the Milwaukee Road: in 1923, the Milwaukee carried much less freight than its closest competitors, the Great Northern and the Northern Pacific, and fewer passengers from the Twin Cities to Seattle than the Northern Pacific. The railroad had incurred massive debt by building what would be the last transcontinental railroad and the electrification project.

134 “The New Railroad Station,” Minneapolis Tribune, November 6, 1898.
135 Prosser, Rails to the North Star, 37-38; Derleth, Milwaukee Road, 159-160; The Inflation Calculator.
Travelers’ Aid at Milwaukee Depot, ca. 1925
Minnesota Historical Society Collections

Railroad yards at Milwaukee Depot; view toward milling district, looking down Washington Avenue, ca. 1900
Minnesota Historical Society Collections

The Rails
Hess, Roise and Company—Page 103
Minneapolis and Saint Louis Railroad

Passenger trains were improving but could still be unreliable, especially in bad weather. In 1881, the New York Times carried a long account of a Minneapolis and Saint Louis train that left Minneapolis on a Thursday afternoon, and became trapped in snowdrifts, less than twenty miles from Albert Lea. There were no hotels that the unfortunate passengers could go to and only a limited supply of food. Passengers slept in the coaches as best they could. On the first day, breakfast was served, but the next meal was not until that evening. Meanwhile, the railroad crew and men from the area tried in vain to free the train from the snow while the blizzard continued. A nearby supply of coal kept the cars warm during the ordeal, but “the drifting snow had crept in around the windows and doors, and through the roof in some way, and was melting at all times during Saturday,” and the train floor was covered with water. Although everyone’s patience was tried, “five traveling [sales] men did much to prevent discouragement among passengers by their good-natured jokes, stories, music, etc. One of these gentlemen, representing a Chicago firm, dispensed several pieces of first-class music from an instrument called a zither.” Still, despite the best efforts of the crew and help from outsiders, the train remained stuck until the following Thursday. 138

William Washburn resigned as the head of the Minneapolis and Saint Louis in 1882 and was replaced by Ransom Reed Cable, who was also vice-president of the Rock Island Railroad. That same year, almost all of the Minneapolis-based representatives on the board of directors, with the exceptions of Washburn and W. W. McNair, resigned and were replaced by men with ties to the Rock Island road. Within a few years, Cable would be replaced by William Truesdale, who also was closely tied to the Rock Island line. In general, the Minneapolis and Saint Louis line faced many challenges during the 1880s, mainly from increased competition. Instead of one railroad route to Chicago as was the case when the railroad was established in 1871, there were now six. Meanwhile, William Washburn and others were busily building the “Soo” Line, which would serve as another Eastern outlet. “Truesdale referred to this overproduction of railways as a ‘controlling’ cause of the M&StL’s plight.” To make matters worse, there were two and a soon-to-be third railroad going from the Twin Cities to Lake Superior. Two of the Twin City–Chicago based railroads lowered their rates on 400-mile hauls to make them competitive with 150-mile hauls, an action which affected not only the Minneapolis and Saint Louis, but just about every railroad in the Minnesota and Wisconsin area. “In 1886, M&StL was first among carriers delivering coal to Minneapolis, second in merchandise, fourth in wheat; was first in hauling away lumber and third in flour billing; and handled nearly 20 percent of all cars into the city.” But within two years, the railroad’s statistics had changed dramatically: it was third in merchandise, fourth in coal hauling, seventh in flour hauling, and handled only 8.7 percent of the incoming cars. The railroad retained its former ranking only in lumber and wheat hauling. That same year, the Minneapolis and Saint Louis could not make the interest payment due on its bonds; on June 28, 1888, a Hennepin County District judge declared the railroad company insolvent and Truesdale was appointed as the receiver. 139

139 Donovan, Mileposts, 63, 81-82; Hofsommer, Tootin’ Louie, 41-43.
As receiver, Truesdale worked to increase the railroad’s freight traffic and to that end, he bought new cars and upgraded the tracks. In 1891, there were 107 new freight cars; the following year, 200 new boxcars were added to the road. When another year had passed, the last iron rail from the main tracks had been replaced with more durable steel. In 1894, the railroad was reorganized with a slight name change as the Minneapolis and Saint Louis Railroad, which took over the property of the Minneapolis and Saint Louis Railway. Truesdale left to become a vice-president on the Rock Island and William Bull of New York took over as president of the line. By this time, even William Washburn had left the board of directors; Minneapolis was without even one representative on the board of directors. Clearly, the Minneapolis and Saint Louis was no longer a Minneapolis-based railroad.\(^{140}\)

In 1900, the Minneapolis and Saint Louis carried 7,342,050 bushels of wheat into the city, the fourth largest amount for the year; and brought more than 46 million pounds of merchandise, making it the fifth largest carrier in that category. It carried more than 61 million feet of the more than 398 million feet of lumber that was shipped out of Minneapolis, making it the third largest mover in that category. It was the sixth largest hauler of farm machinery (more than four million pounds) out of the city and the fourth largest carrier of “sundries” (small, miscellaneous items) at 22,410,000 pounds.\(^{141}\)

In 1892, the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul built a new depot at Washington Avenue North, just west of the depot at Third Avenue North built by the Great Northern, and leased it to the Minneapolis and Saint Louis. This replaced a smaller depot about a block away. A new freight house was also built at Third Street and Fourth Avenue North.\(^{142}\)

In 1886, the Minneapolis and Saint Louis Railroad took out a permit to build a one-story, 18 by 28 foot brick depot at 102 Tenth Avenue South at a cost of $2,000, and this served as an auxiliary to the main depot at Washington Avenue North. Apparently, this structure was razed around 1910. In 1916, the Washburn Crosby Company built a reinforced-concrete grain elevator on the site, at a cost that exceeded $500,000. In 1958, General Mills constructed a grain truck dump and hopper shed scale near the elevator. The elevators and truck facilities were razed in 1998 and the site is now home to Gold Medal Park.\(^{143}\)


\(^{141}\) Twentieth Annual Report of the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce, 54-55.


\(^{143}\) Minneapolis Building Permit A243, July 21, 1886 and A227, June 28, 1886; Anfinson, “Archaeology of the Central Riverfront,” 71; Minneapolis Building Permits A13343, July 12, 1916; and A33374, September 24, 1958; Minneapolis wrecking Permit I24739, January 29, 1998. Possibly, remnants of the depot foundation may still exist beneath the present-day parkland.
Washburn Crosby elevator and Minneapolis and Saint Louis railroad track, October 12, 1916

Minnesota Historical Society Collections
Minneapolis Eastern

With only a few miles of track within Minneapolis, the Minneapolis Eastern did not have any passenger traffic. A railroad commission report for 1882-1883 noted this line carried 96,732 tons of grain, 104,340 tons of flour and other meal, 27,204 tons of forest products; and an overall total of 258,048 tons of freight carried for that period. Three years later, the Minneapolis Eastern hauled a total of 344,727 tons of freight, mostly wheat (108,738 tons), flour and meal (155,848 tons), lumber (49,768 tons), and coal (9,165 tons). In 1925, the Great Northern purchased .51 miles of its track on the east side of the Mississippi River. Based on illustrations in the Minneapolis atlases of 1903 and 1914, this track was probably located along Main Street S.E.144

![Minneapolis Eastern trestle](image)

West side mill district with Minneapolis Eastern trestle, ca. 1885 (site of present-day Mill Ruins Park)

*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

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144 Prosser, *Rails to the North Star*, 144; Annual Railroad Commissioner’s Report for the Year Ending June 30, 1883 (Minneapolis: Johnson, Smith and Harrison, 1884), 90; Annual Railroad Commissioner’s Report for the Year Ending June 30, 1886 (Saint Paul: Pioneer Press Company, 1886), 112.
Tracks of the Minneapolis and Saint Louis and Minneapolis Eastern railroads, (near present-day Mill Place) ca. 1891

Minnesota Historical Society Collections
Northern Pacific

By 1881, Henry Villard had become president of the Northern Pacific after he bought a controlling interest in the railroad. In his autobiography, Villard recalled (always referring to himself in the third person), “Mr. Villard had assumed the burden of forging a new rail chain across the continent, twenty-seven hundred miles long, by connecting the existing links.” He continued, “Moreover, Mr. Villard, through the Oregon & Transcontinental, in accordance with its programme, had taken in hand in 1883 the building of nearly five hundred miles of Northern Pacific branches in Minnesota, North Dakota, Montana, and western Washington.” During this same period, Villard set about acquiring real estate in both Minneapolis and Saint Paul, often through the use of third parties, as “there was an urgent need of ample facilities in both places in view of the approaching change of the Northern Pacific from a local into a transcontinental line.” He then turned these holdings over to the Saint Paul and Northern Pacific Company. In 1882, Villard announced the purchase of track along the eastern bank of the Mississippi from Watab, (located in the present-day Saint Cloud metro area), to Anoka from the Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba. Villard stated the railroad would build a bridge over the river at Anoka and extend the line into Minneapolis: “These changes assure to the northern Pacific a continuous line, owned by itself from Minneapolis to Brainerd on its trunk line. . . Minneapolis trains will reach St. Paul over the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Short Line track.” Two years later, the Northern Pacific announced the completion of 125 miles of track between Minneapolis and Brainerd. Villard also actively promoted immigration from Europe to the Northwest. He set up hundreds of immigration agents in Europe, which brought thousand of immigrants to the United States. Many of these people settled along the Northern Pacific lines and produced agricultural products that were shipped by rail.145

In 1883, the Northern Pacific achieved its goal of being a transcontinental railroad. To celebrate this event, Villard invited dignitaries from Great Britain, Germany, and Austria as well as former President U. S. Grant, senators, and congressmen. He commissioned two special trains to begin traveling from the Atlantic to Chicago, where another train was added. After celebrations in Chicago, the party traveled northwest to Saint Paul and Minneapolis, arriving on September 3, after traveling over the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul Short Line track. As Villard recalled, “With their traditional rivalry, St. Paul and Minneapolis had striven to outdo each other with decorations, triumphal arches, salutes, parades, and entertainments. Military and civic associations more than twenty thousand strong passed in review before Mr. Villard and his guests in the morning in St. Paul, and over thirty thousand in the afternoon in Minneapolis.” The New York Times noted the Minneapolis festivities included live demonstrations of wheat being threshed, lumber being sawed and planed by machines, and a huge stack of flour barrels festooned with the words, “Give us the wheat and we will feed the world.” All the activities underlined the connection between the products that were manufactured in the city and the railroads that carried them to customers. Another train was added at Minneapolis and the party

continued on to Gold Spike, Montana, where a ceremonial golden spike was driven into the track, commemorating the completion of the railroad from Saint Paul to Portland and Tacoma. 

Celebration at Minneapolis of the opening of the Northern Pacific Railroad, September 3, 1883

Daniel W. Webb, photographer—Minnesota Historical Society Collections

In addition to turning the Northern Pacific into a transcontinental railroad, Villard was concerned about passenger comfort. Before the introduction of dining cars, passengers on cross-country railroad trips had to rely on eating houses or hotels of questionable quality where the trains stopped. Elizabeth Custer, wife of George Custer, described such a trip in 1874: “After we left St. Paul, the usual struggle for decent food began.” One of their companions volunteered to be a taster, and he would determine how rancid the butter was and warn the others to place another layer of bread over the buttered slice below so as to better disguise the awful taste. In 1879, Villard’s predecessors had canceled the use of Pullman cars on the line in order to cut costs, but the result was fewer paying passengers. Once Villard took over, he restored the use of Pullman sleeping cars, and in late 1882, he ordered ten dining cars from Pullman. The first one was shown off to the public in Chicago in 1883. A contemporary source described them as sixty-six feet long, with seating for forty, and finished in mahogany and other natural woods and decorated with hand-painted flowers. “A novel feature is the sideboard at one end of the car, while another is the funnel in the kitchen over the range which absorbs the heat and odors of the car.” Another writer described the cars as “a line of dining cars of the most luxurious character, really first class hotel tables on wheels.” During the inaugural transcontinental trip of the Northern Pacific, writer Eugene Smalley noted, “The meals were bountiful in quantity and excellent in quality. Ducks from Dakota ponds, trout from the Yellowstone [River], venison from the Rocky Mountains, and salmon from the Columbia, were added to the regular bills of fare in the course of the trip.” In 1909, Hazen Titus, superintendent of dining cars on the Northern Pacific introduced what was probably the Northern Pacific’s single most famous food item, the “Great Big Baked Potato.” While on a trip west in 1908, Titus had overheard two Yakima Valley farmers complaining about the gigantic potatoes growing on their farms, some as large as five pounds. Domestic customers preferred smaller specimens that were easier to cook, so the farmers concluded that the giant spuds would go to feeding their pigs. Titus approached the farmers and obtained a bushel of these potatoes. After some experimentation, his cooks found the potatoes were perfect for baking and superior to other similar potatoes. Titus ordered all the potatoes the farmers could produce that did not exceed two pounds. The Big Baked Potato became a staple of the Northern Pacific’s menu for the next six decades.147

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Young girl with "famous Big Baked Potato" as served on the dining car of the North Coast Limited, Northern Pacific Railway, ca. 1930

Minnesota Historical Society Collections

Interior of Northern Pacific, Yellowstone Comet dining car, 1925

Minnesota Historical Society Collections
In the year 1900, the Northern Pacific brought more than 13 million of the 85 million feet of lumber hauled into Minneapolis, making it third in this category; and brought in the second highest amount of hides and fur, 1,057,600 pounds or slightly more that twenty-six percent of the total. The Northern Pacific moved more than 29 million pounds of farm machinery out of the city, making the second largest carrier in that category and the fifth largest carrier of merchandise out of the city at more than 75 million pounds.¹⁴⁸

Meanwhile in Minneapolis, in 1887, the Saint Paul and Northern Pacific Railroad (actually part of the Northern Pacific) built a double-track truss bridge just below the University bend. Among the earliest steel-truss bridges in the Northwest, it was designed by F. W. Cappelen. As described by Atwater, “the project of bridging the river at this point was seriously objected to by the regents of the University, who obtained a temporary injunction.” But the court ruled in favor of the railroad, “holding that so important a public convenience could not be arrested, even if it should disturb in a slight degree, the quiet of the scholastic retreat.” However by 1921, the superstructure of the old bridge, by then known as Northern Pacific Bridge No. 9, was moved several hundred feet upstream to accommodate the University.(The tracks used to cross the area now occupied by Johnston and Morrill Halls.) The bridge was abandoned in 1981 and opened as a bikeway/pedestrian bridge in June 2000. Remnants, such as abutments and piers, of the original bridge, may remain.¹⁴⁹

The Northern Pacific built a railyard and roundhouse in the Bassett Creek area, along Second Street North, running from approximately Fourth Avenue North to Tenth Avenue North, adjacent to the Omaha line’s facilities, as seen on the Sanborn Insurance Map, 1912-1930. Although Anfinson does not specifically address this site, the Northern Pacific roundhouse, formerly at Second Street North and Tenth Avenue North, is now occupied by the Star Tribune printing plant. In 1884, the Northern Pacific built a bridge over the Mississippi upstream of the Broadway Avenue Bridge (outside the Heritage Zone) that allowed the railroad access to the riverfront north of Plymouth Avenue.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Anfinson, Archaeology of the Central Riverfront,” 122; Atwater, History of Minneapolis, 353.
¹⁵⁰ Anfinson, “Archaeology of the Central Riverfront,” 34-36. Anfinson does discuss the adjacent Omaha Railroad complex, but the Northern Pacific complex was outside the limits of his particular study.
Northern Pacific Railway passenger train crossing Mississippi River near University of Minnesota, ca. 1900
*Minneapolis Journal, photographer—Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

Interior of a Northern Pacific Pullman car, 1896
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*
Minneapolis Western

In 1884, a group of millers including several such as Charles A. Pillsbury, Charles J. Martin, and C. H. Pettit, who had served on the board of the Minneapolis and Saint Louis, incorporated the Minneapolis Western Railway as a switching and transfer railroad that would serve west bank mills and manufacturers. This entity had a friendly relationship with James J. Hill and his Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway, later known as the Great Northern Railway. In fact, the Manitoba advanced the funds to pay for the new facilities. Within a few years, the Great Northern had purchased all outstanding shares of the Minneapolis Western. In 1892, Hill built the Minneapolis Western Railway Bridge between Eleventh Avenue South and Eighth Avenue S.E. “to make a direct connection to the previously disjointed properties. Eventually GN’s Minneapolis Western had fourteen stub tracks by which to serve the west-bank mills, further curtailing M&StL’s once dominant position.” The Minneapolis Western was sold to Great Northern in 1928, and the bridge over the Mississippi was removed in 1952.151

In 1891, the Minneapolis Western Railroad began construction of yards south of the west side mill district, adjacent to the Minneapolis Transfer Railroad yards, which had been built in the early 1880s, along the river, near Tenth Avenue South. The Sanborn Insurance Maps, 1912-1951 show both yards in existence and in 1989, Anfinson conjectured that remains of these yards may have existed below the parking lots on the site. This site is now part of Gold Medal Park.152

Bohemian Flats below the Minneapolis Western Railroad Bridge, looking down river, ca. 1890
Minnesota Historical Society Collections

151 Hofsommer, Age of Railways, 123, 149-151; Prosser, Rails to the North Star, 146; Anfinson, “Archaeology of the Central Riverfront,” 122.
152 Anfinson, “Archaeology of the Central Riverfront,” 72;
Minneapolis, Saint Paul and Sault Ste. Marie Railway Company—Soo Line

Mildred Hartsough noted that the railroads in this area “first had to meet competition with the Great Lakes and Mississippi River traffic; [and] shortly after 1870 the road to Duluth was competing also with the lines running to Chicago and Milwaukee. It was this factor of competition that made the construction of the Sault Ste. Marie line in the eighties so significant.” The new line started “a violent rate war with the roads running to Chicago. . . [and] played no small part in securing to the Twin Cities the low rates that have been such an important factor in their development.” On June 11, 1888, four railroad companies, Minneapolis and Saint Croix; Minneapolis and Pacific; Minneapolis, Sault Ste. Marie and Atlantic; and Aberdeen, Bismarck and Northwestern Railways were consolidated to form the Minneapolis, Saint Paul and Sault Ste. Marie Railway Company, often called the Soo Line, with operations in five states and headquarters in Minneapolis. Five years earlier, many of the same players in the Soo Line had founded the Minneapolis, Sault Ste. Marie and Atlantic Railway with the purpose of bypassing Chicago and linking Minneapolis and Atlantic outlets via Sault Ste Marie, at the juncture of Lake Superior and Lake Michigan. The organizers of the Soo Line were many of the same men who had been associated with the earlier Minneapolis and Saint Louis line: William Washburn, H. T. Welles, W. W. Eastman, John Martin, and C. A. Pillsbury, and like the earlier railroads, this one was intended to ensure that Minneapolis flour would not be shipped through either Duluth or Chicago. Almost from the beginning, the Canadian Pacific had a great deal of influence over the Soo Line. At each end of its line—Portal, North Dakota, and Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan/Ontario—it linked with Canadian Pacific roads, and by 1890, the Canadian line owned a majority share in the company. The Soo Line took over the Minneapolis and Pacific depot and storage facilities which had been built at 501-625 North Second Street in 1885 and 1886. By 1900, the Soo Line had replaced the old facilities with a larger brick and iron freight depot and passenger depot; an addition was made to the freight house in 1915. None of these buildings survive today; the site is now home to the Marriott Towne Place Suites and Mill City Apartments.\footnote{Hartsough, “Transportation as a Factor in the Development of the Twin Cities,” 226; Prosser, Rails to the North Star, 28; Hofsommer, Age of Railways, 113-114; 134, 156; Minneapolis Building Permits B8378, September 4, 1885; A298, November 12, 1886; A6777, May 31, 1900; and A6835, July 14, 1900; B117648, August 23, 1915. William Washburn was still on the board of directors for the Minneapolis and St. Louis Railway, when he helped found the Minneapolis, Sault Ste. Marie and Atlantic. Hofsommer commented “the idea of conflict of interest was not yet mature.” (Age of Railways, 113).}

Within a year of its founding, 1889, the Soo Line carried over 11,000 carloads of freight in and out of Minneapolis, making it the fifth largest carrier into the city. By contrast, the Manitoba delivered an excess of 40,000 carloads of freight to Minneapolis, while the first-ranked Milwaukee line carried out more than 38,000 carloads of freight from the city that year. In 1900, the Soo Line brought more than four million bushels of wheat into the city, well behind other railroads such as the Great Northern (24,513,000 bushels) or Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul (24,781,090 bushels), but at 2,486,398 barrels, it was the largest hauler of flour out of the city as its route was well-positioned to reach Eastern markets. By 1907, the Soo Line was the sixth...
largest carrier of freight and the seventh of passengers within the state. In 1916, the Soo Line was the fourth largest freight carrier in the state.\textsuperscript{154}

During the decade between 1900 and 1910, the Soo Line laid the most tracks in the state, and had lines from the Twin Cities to Chicago; Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan; Portal, North Dakota; and Glenwood, Detroit Lakes, and Thief River Falls, Minnesota. In 1904, the Soo Line also built a six-story office building, costing more than $150,000, which still stands at 317 Second Avenue South. During this same period, the Soo Line added shop and yard facilities.\textsuperscript{155}

By 1913, officials of First National Bank and the Soo Line Railroad, by then both key players in the economy of Minneapolis and the region, announced their plans to jointly build a “skyscraper of 16 to 20 stories” at the corner of Marquette and Fifth Street South that “will cost not less than $1,200,000.” The Soo Line ticket offices occupied the first floor; the bank had the lower stories, while the railroad office occupied the upper levels. Designed by Robert W. Gibson, a New York-based architect, the building is still occupied in part by Canadian Pacific rail offices.\textsuperscript{156}

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{minneapolis_saint_paul_sault_ste_marie_railway_locomotive_ca_1890.png}
\caption{Minneapolis, Saint Paul, and Sault Ste. Marie Railway locomotive, ca. 1890 \newline \textit{Minnesota Historical Society Collections}}
\end{figure}


\textsuperscript{156} “Skyscraper of 16 to 20 Stories Planned for Soo Line and First National Bank,” \textit{Minneapolis Journal}, March 21, 1913; and “Tallest Building in Minneapolis to be a Distinctive Ornament in Architecture,” \textit{Minneapolis Journal}, July 27, 1913.
Soo Line Freight Depot, 500 Second Street North, ca. 1905
Minnesota Historical Society Collections

First National-Soo Building, Fifth and Marquette, 1915
Norton and Peel, photographer—Minnesota Historical Society Collections
Chicago, Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railway

The Chicago, Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railway, a consolidation of several lines, was organized in 1880. It had terminals in Elroy, Wisconsin; Duluth, Sioux City, Iowa; and Saint Paul, where it was also headquartered. It soon became known as the Omaha and was controlled by the Chicago and North Western Railway from the start. Prosser noted that like the Manitoba, the Omaha was “able to reach resources, manufacturing points, and the markets with [its] own rails, and thus [was] well situated for heavy lumber traffic.” Beginning in 1880, the Omaha built yards and a freight depot near Bassett’s Creek and over the years continued to expand its holdings there, building a roundhouse, trackage, and a gas house complex. Today, only the freight house survives; it has been converted to the Riverwalk Apartments at 50 North Fourth Avenue. The oldest parts of the former Omaha freight house date to the early 1880s with additions and alterations occurring in 1885, 1901, and 1928. St. Anthony Falls Rediscovered noted that, “the main shipping and receiving center for ‘Implement Row,’ the Omaha Depot literally grew with the city’s implement trade.”

In 1889, the Omaha line ranked third in the amount of freight carried to Minneapolis (25,726 car loads) and second in the amount of freight carried from the city (21,716 car loads). In 1907, the Omaha was the fifth largest freight carrier in the state (4,597,298 tons) and Minnesota’s third largest passenger carrier (1,321,136). Professor H. Roger Grant observed, “Over the years there would be several additional corporate acquisitions [to the Omaha] and new construction: by 1910, track mileage reached 1,738, more than a quarter of which was in Minnesota.” Although the Omaha was only medium-sized compared to other midwestern lines, it soon developed a reputation as “Minnesota’s good railroad,” as a farmer dubbed it in 1889, by paying attention to safety issues, passenger comfort, equipment maintenance, and fair shipping rates, especially of lumber products. In the words of one Mankato builder, “I can afford to erect more and bigger houses because of the lumber rates levied by the CMStP&O Ry.”

In 1900, the Omaha line brought the most barley (1,628,830 bushels) into the city. It was the second largest carrier of merchandise (117,437,123 pounds) and dressed meat (10,662,980 pounds); and the third largest mover of wheat (15,959,610 bushels) and lumber (14,760,000 feet) into Minneapolis. The Omaha was the second largest shipper of lumber (94,960,000 feet) and the third largest shipper of merchandise (103,880,595 pounds) and farm implements (13,789,519 pounds) out of the city.

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157 Prosser, Rails to the North Star, 20, 85; Anfinson, “Archaeology of the Central Riverfront,” 34, 36,37, 39; St. Anthony Falls Rediscovered, 29;
158 Hofsommer, Age of Railways, 134; Railroad and Warehouse Commission Annual Report for 1907, 202, 196; H. Roger Grant, “‘Minnesota’s Good Railroad’, The Omaha Road,” Minnesota History (Winter 2001-2001), 200-203.
North Loop railroad yards
Taken from 1885 Map of Minneapolis, Minnesota Digital Library
North Loop railroad yards
Taken from *1914 Atlas of Minneapolis*
The former Chicago, Saint Paul, Minneapolis, and Omaha Freight Depot at 50 North Fourth Avenue

Penny Petersen, photographer
Chicago Great Western

Incorporated in 1892, the Chicago Great Western was a consolidation and reorganization of the Chicago, Saint Paul and Kansas Railway Company, which had been established in 1886. At the time the Chicago Great Western took over, it acquired 668.88 miles of track in Minnesota and Iowa. Among the Minneapolis properties that were taken over by the Chicago Great Western was a freight house and small depot, built by the Minnesota Northwestern Railroad in 1886, located at 1000 Washington Avenue South. By 1946, the Winston and Newell Company, a wholesale grocer that later changed its name to SuperValu, occupied the site. Winston and Newell made alterations to the existing freight house, turning it into a cold storage produce building. In 1951, the company enclosed the loading dock. In 1963, all the buildings, a two-story brick building and three, one-story structures on the site were razed.\(^{159}\)

In 1900, the Chicago Great Western brought under a million bushels of wheat into Minneapolis, hardly significant compared to other lines, but that year it was the largest mover of hides and furs into the city, carrying more than a third of the 4,044,068 pounds that were brought in. At 28,140,000 feet, the Chicago Great Western carried the fifth largest amount of lumber out of the city.\(^{160}\)

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\(^{159}\) Prosser, *Rails to the North Star*, 123., 30; Minneapolis Building Permits A227, June 28, 1886; A27120, December 13, 1946; A29992, October 23, 1951; and Wrecking Permit I9229, May 14, 1963; *Minneapolis Atlas, 1898*, plates 2, 12. The depot is not mentioned on building permit; however it does appear on the atlas. The wrecking permit lists the Chicago and Great Western as the owner of the property.

\(^{160}\) *Twentieth Annual Report of the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce*, 54-55.

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Chicago Great Western depot and freight house at left on Washington and Tenth Avenue
South, ca. 1912

*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*
Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railway

In 1886, the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railway, often referred to as the Burlington, an Illinois-based railroad, finally managed to build a new line into Saint Paul and Minneapolis, although some saw this as an example of overbuilding on the already crowded Minneapolis–Chicago corridor. However, Hofsommer noted this new line did offer some advantages such as bringing in Chicago coal and merchandise and carrying away Minneapolis lumber and flour, and at the same time “acting as a conduit for traffic to and from Manitoba and NP [Northern Pacific], neither of which had lines east of St. Paul.” In 1900, Burlington trains carried in more than 33 million pounds of merchandise, more than ten million pounds of farm equipment, and more than ten tons of coals to Minneapolis. It hauled away more than 36 million feet of lumber products and more than a million barrels of flour.161

Minneapolis Street Railway—Twin City Rapid Transit

Between 1875 and 1889, the horse drawn streetcar system grew from 2.1 miles of tracks to 66 miles. In 1889, spurred on by examples in Saint Paul and the threat of losing its exclusive franchise, the Minneapolis Street Railway agreed to build several electrified street car lines that covered a good portion of downtown, the central riverfront and the east side of the river. There was one along Washington Avenue from Twentieth Avenue North to Cedar Avenue; another on Bloomington Avenue South from Thirty-second Street to Franklin, to Eighth Avenue South, to Fourth Street, to First Avenue (present-day Marquette), to High Street; another on Hennepin Avenue from Lyndale to Central Avenue, to Sixth Street S.E. to Third Avenue S.E. to Harrison Street N.E., to Twenty-ninth Avenue N.E.; a loop running along First (now Marquette) Avenue South, High Street, Hennepin and Washington Avenues; and along First Avenue to Grant and to Nicollet Avenue as far as Thirty-first Street. In addition to serving customers within the city, the streetcars worked in conjunction with the railroads. The lines offered transportation to travelers going to and from the railroad depots including the Union Depot at Hennepin, the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul Depot on Washington and Third Avenue South, and those located near Third and Washington Avenues North. A drawing from the late 1880s shows the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul Railway Depot on Washington Avenue with trains lined up at the rear and horse-drawn carriages and streetcars sharing the roadway. Only one structure associated with the early streetcar system survives on the west side: the Minneapolis Street Railroad Company building at 200-218 Third Avenue North, now known as the Colonial Warehouse. Built from 1885 to 1909, this series of buildings served as a horse car barn and shops for the Twin City Rapid Transit Company.162

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161 Hofsommer, Age of Railways, 130; Twentieth Annual Report of the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce, 54-55.
Streetcars on Hennepin Avenue from Third Street, ca. 1885
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

Streetcars on Washington Avenue South looking toward Hennepin Avenue, 1896
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*
Map showing the Southeast Steam Plant, Lower Dam and portion of West Side Milling District
Taken from 1914 Minneapolis Atlas
Colonial Warehouse, Third Avenue and Second Street North, June 1974
Charles W. Nelson, photographer—Minnesota Historical Society Collections

Lower dam and gatehouse in foreground and the Twin City Rapid Transit Steam Plant in the background, 1945-1949
Minnesota Historical Society Collections
While the streetcar system in Minneapolis came to a close in 1954, three remnants of the streetcar era survive on the east side. The East Side Station (now Superior Plating) at First Avenue N.E. between University and Fourth Street N.E., was built in 1891, and was the last streetcar barn to be used before the demise of streetcars; also the Southeast Steam Plant and the Hennepin Island Power Plant, both supplied electricity to the streetcar company. In 1895, engineer William De la Barre began construction of the Lower Dam also known as the Lower Hydrostation that captured the waterpower of the rapids below Saint Anthony Falls. When it was completed in 1897, De la Barre leased it to the streetcar company, which by that time was known as the Twin City Rapid Transit Company (TCRT). A TCRT manhole cover can still be seen just outside the lower entrance to the Hennepin Island Hydro Plant. The power plant proved inadequate almost from the beginning, and another structure, the Southeast Heating Plant, then known as the Twin City Rapid Transit Company Steam Power Plant was built by TCRT to provide a more reliable source of power. Completed in 1903, the Southeast Heating Plant enabled “the streetcar enterprise to function as the chief mode of public transportation in the Twin Cities for over forty years. The building is one of the principal industrial structures from the area’s early transit history. As such, it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1994.” De la Barre built a hydroelectric station on Hennepin Island which was completed in 1908, which also supplied power to the streetcar company. The Hennepin Island facility is still in operation.163

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Washington Avenue at Seven Corners, Minneapolis, ca. 1915
Minnesota Historical Society Collections

Streetcar at Hennepin Avenue and Sixth Street, Minneapolis, August 21, 1953
John Runk, photographer—Minnesota Historical Society Collections

The Rails
Hess, Roise and Company—Page 129
The Decline of the Railroads—1931 to present

From the 1930s onward, railroads in Minneapolis saw even more consolidation as they tried to become more efficient to survive competition from cars, trucks, airplanes, and even water traffic. During the 1920s, in response to pressure from farmers who were hoping for lower freight rates, the federal legislative and executive branches began to advocate for the expansion of inland waterways. That resulted in the nine-foot channel legislation that was included in the Rivers and Harbor bill that became law in 1930. Although work on the channel on the Upper Mississippi above Saint Paul did not begin until 1947 and the Saint Anthony Falls Upper Lock was not completed until 1963, it was clear that the railroads were facing many more challenges. In the fall of 1929, a *New York Times* article noted a fleet of new barges began operating on the Upper Mississippi. “Fully laden, the barges can carry 2,000 tons in the nine-foot channel of the Lower Mississippi; they can carry 1,000 tons as far as Minneapolis [municipal dock near Washington Avenue]. Thus a barge which leaves Minneapolis loaded with 1,000 tons of grain or flour can pick up an additional 1,000 tons of cargo at St. Louis for transportation to New Orleans.”

The Great Depression also hastened the decline of railroads as both the freight and passenger business contracted. At Minneapolis, which was no longer the foremost flour milling center, mills were abandoned and often demolished as there was less grain and flour to be shipped. By 1930, Minneapolis flour production had fallen to 10,797,194 barrels. By the late 1930s, Minneapolis was consistently shipping out slightly more than 6 million barrels of flour annually. By 1960, the total of Minneapolis flour production was 5,471,456 barrels. The amount of railroad track within the state dropped from its peak of nearly 9,400 miles in 1929 to about 8,880 in 1940. By 1984, Minnesota had about 5,555 miles of rails statewide, or less than sixty percent of what it had at its peak. Meanwhile, in an attempt to lure passengers back to the trains and better compete with cars, three of the railroads in the Minneapolis–Chicago trade introduced new high-speed trains in 1935. These were the Burlington Zephyr, the Milwaukee Hiawatha, and the North Western’s 400, so named for its ability to travel 400 miles in 400 minutes. While steam engines were still in use during this period, their drawbacks—dirt, noise, frequent maintenance, and inefficiency—made diesel preferable for the streamlined trains.

By the early 1960s, the Minneapolis flour millers were facing problems of overcapacity and changing technology. Writer Dave Kenney explained, “The rail freight system on which the grain trade had always depended was undergoing a major transformation. Hopper cars, introduced during the early 1960s, were catching on quickly. They held more grain and were much easier to load and unload than the old, leaky boxcars they replaced.” Just as shippers modified their facilities to accommodate hopper cars, the “unit train” made its appearance.

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165 Kane, *Waterfall*, 173; Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce Annual Report, 1940, 19; Prosser, *Rails to the North Star*, 48, 60-61; Henry Bellows, “Rehabilitation Efforts may Reduce Effects of Declining Railroad Mileage,” Minneapolis Star-Tribune, June 4, 1984. For the years 1936 to 1939, flour shipments (in barrels) from Minneapolis were: 6,035,890; 6,275,326; 6,331,429; 6,052,750.
unit train was made up of many hopper cars and were particularly efficient in moving large amounts of grain from point to point, without intermediate stops. Railroads encouraged grain processors to buy grain directly from country elevators and from there it was sent directly to a processing plant, often bypassing the Minneapolis Grain Exchange and Minneapolis millers. As summarized by one newspaper article: “The changes have made it cheaper to move wheat east for milling near the nation’s population centers than to mill it in Kansas or Minnesota and ship the flour to the big Eastern markets.” By 1965, the Minneapolis flour millers were dealt another blow from freight rates on railroads. This time there was a change in the rates for shipping wheat versus flour, meaning it was cheaper to ship a given amount of wheat than the same amount of flour and the freight rates were adjusted accordingly. While this appeared to be an unfair practice, it reflected the new reality of hopper cars and unit trains. Speaking to a reporter, Ray Smith, of the Soo Line observed: “Unit trains for grain have meant streamlined, high-speed operation—rapid turnaround and high utilization of equipment—that have kept profits up in spite of lower rates. And the problem is that no one has come to us with any kind of similar development for flour.”

About this time, at least one riverfront milling operation was receiving grain shipments by truck. In 1958, General Mills erected a grain truck dump and hopper shed scale at 102-128 Tenth Avenue South. No longer standing, this facility was apparently razed along with the grain elevators in 1998 and is now part of the site of Gold Medal Park.

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By 1960, Minneapolis flour production had fallen to 5,471,456 barrels, and in 1965 General Mills ceased operations at the Washburn A Mill. The Upper Harbor project, completed in 1963, drastically altered the West Bank Milling area, destroying the functionality of the Minneapolis Mill canal. By the mid-1960s, many of the mill foundations and railroad facilities near the river were buried by the J. L. Shieley Company sand and gravel yards. Meanwhile, some railroad facilities along the riverfront were being torn down, such as the shops formerly owned by the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy at Fourth Avenue North and the Mississippi River.\(^{168}\)

A 1981 study written for the Minneapolis Planning Department enumerated the many problems faced by railroads. “Currently, for every 100 miles that a freight car runs loaded, it runs 80 miles empty.” The report observed this was caused in part by the specialized nature of most freight cars. One such example was the “100-ton capacity cars that are designed exclusively for coal usage. Because of that design, they represent a 100 percent empty backhaul.” Other problems included outdated facilities and old tracks that could not bear the weight of heavier and faster freight trains. At that point, the Burlington Northern, Chicago and North Western, Milwaukee Road, and Soo Line were the main railroads operating on the riverfront. Burlington Northern had the most tracks and still sent unit trains of coal over Nicollet Island Bridge as well as leasing the bridge to Chicago and North Western trains. Although its passenger service had ceased, the Milwaukee continued to bring freight into the city and exchange cars with the Burlington Northern. The Soo Line had its Shoreham Yards in Northeast Minneapolis and regularly brought shipments of grain and chemicals such as potash and sulfur into the city. Another railroad, the Minneapolis Northfield and Southern, had a small amount of trackage on the riverfront that ran along Eighth Avenue North, following Bassett’s Creek and ended at Seventh Street North. The city was looking for ways to reuse underutilized railroad facilities and hoped to have the cooperation of the railroads.\(^{169}\)

In 1975, the Burlington Northern Railroad proposed redeveloping the land it owned along the riverfront from the Plymouth Avenue Bridge to Hennepin Avenue, but delayed its plans when it recognized the need for a partner in development. A few years later, the project was pronounced viable, but it was not until 1983 that the railroad came to an agreement with the City to transfer land that would become part of the extension of West River Parkway, which is under the jurisdiction of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. Further downstream, the City acquired more railroad land, including the Milwaukee Depot and its attendant property, and the General Mills grain elevators in the late 1980s and early 1990s.\(^{170}\)

\(^{168}\) Lucile Kane, *Waterfall*, 173, 174, 176; Anfinson, “Archaeology of the Central Riverfront,” 64, 66-67; Minneapolis Wrecking Permit 115623, October 18, 1971.

\(^{169}\) “Railroads in Minneapolis,” Prepared for the City of Minneapolis City Planning Department, 1981, 11-12, 40, 42-44, 46-47; 49.

The Railroads

Great Northern Railroad

As planning for the nine-foot channel progressed in the 1930s, it became clear that the Stone Arch Bridge and the Great Northern Railroad would be affected by this development. A 1938 newspaper noted that the Army Corps of Engineer’s plan called for the removal of four spans of the bridge that would be replaced by two steel trusses that would allow barges access to the planned upper lock. Another article quoted Third District Representative Henry G. Teigan: “The harbor above St. Anthony Falls is essential to Minneapolis if Mississippi river navigation is to be of any ‘practical value to owners of industry in Minneapolis because most of them are located above the falls.’” Representatives from the Great Northern pronounced the harbor project “a wholly unnecessary expense” and balked at paying the more than one million dollars that would be needed to alter their bridges. 171

One longtime Great Northern employee, Duane Johnson, recalled that the “busiest time for the Great Northern station at Hennepin Avenue was during WWII, when the trains were heavily used to transport troops around the country. The skylights were painted black so no light would be visible if enemy bombers attacked.” He also remembered that groups of about 150 draftees were marched from the federal building to the station. The USO was located at the station and each man got a small bag containing things such as a comb, toothbrush, and magazine just before he got on the train. Johnson also remembered winter nights (probably after World War II) as another busy time for the station. “During the winter, when the weather was bad, the station filled with people waiting to get a train out because planes weren’t flying. I remember many a night when . . . passengers would be brought to the depot from the airport by busloads.” 172

By 1935, Empire Builder trains were fully air conditioned, and in 1947 an entirely new Empire Builder was introduced that made the trip between Chicago and Seattle in about 45 hours. By the 1950s, the Great Northern, like many other railroads, faced increasing competition from airlines for passengers, but despite efforts to adjust fares, cut costs, redesign its logo, and improve its appearance, the railroad continued to lose passengers. Great Northern passenger trains, like many other railroads, carried mail between various points; its major mail route was between Saint Paul and the Pacific Northwest and “postal revenue was critical. It had grown from $8.6 million in 1951 to $9.4 million in 1967, when it made up 44 percent of passenger train revenue.” However, in the 1950s the Post Office began canceling mail contracts on some trains, and by the “late 1960s began a massive shift to airlines, trucks, and to trailer-on-flat car (TOFC) service. All railroads had suffered from the ‘passenger problem,’ but the loss of enroute sorting revenue was the last straw for most.” 173

According to Ray Lowry, a total of eighty-two passenger trains, representing nearly a dozen rail lines, left the Great Northern Station every day in 1948. By 1965, an average of thirty passenger

171 Unidentified clipping from Minneapolis Special Collections, March 15, 1938; “Appeal is Made for Construction of Upper Harbor,” Minneapolis Tribune, March 15, 1938.
172 Margaret Zack, “The Late Great Northern Railway Station,” Minneapolis Tribune (Picture Magazine), December 10, 1978.
173 Hidy, Great Northern, 209, 242, 244-245, 278-281.
trains, including those of the Northern Pacific, Burlington, Chicago and North Western, as well as the Great Northern travelled over the Stone Arch Bridge. As early as 1927, the Great Northern, Northern Pacific, and the Chicago Burlington and Quincy lines proposed to merge, but this did not meet with the approval of the regulatory authorities. Northern Pacific and Great Northern owned 97 percent of Burlington stock and the merger would have placed all of the northern lines in one entity. In 1956, the railroads again started to explore the idea of a merger, with the idea of forming one viable railroad. However, opposition to this merger delayed its implementation until 1970, when Great Northern, Northern Pacific and the Chicago Burlington and Quincy combined to form the Burlington Northern. There were only four daily Amtrak trains using the station by the time the last passenger train left the Great Northern Station on March 1, 1978. The railroad, citing maintenance and security costs, asked that the station be razed. Within weeks of the last train leaving the station, the railroad managed to obtain a wrecking permit from the Minneapolis City Council, despite the fact that the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission had declined to issue a demolition permit. Alderman Lou DeMars who represented the ward in which the station was located said that he had investigated possible re-uses for the structure, ―but no one has been willing to commit money to [the] venture.‖ When the station came down in July, one newspaper reported that “Burlington Northern has no use for the depot now and is considering a ‘mixed-use development plan’ that would include recreational, commercial, retail, office, warehouse, and residential facilities on the land along the Mississippi River.” The site is currently home to the Ninth District Federal Reserve Bank.\(^{174}\)

After the last freight train crossed the Stone Arch Bridge in 1981, it was fenced off and remained unused for several years. In 1989, the Burlington Northern agreed to sell the bridge to Hennepin County as the commissioners believed it could be reused as part of a light-rail system. However, public support was building for the idea of converting the bridge to pedestrian and bicycle use. In 1992, State Representative John Sarna attached a rider to the Omnibus Transportation Bill that transferred ownership of the bridge to the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT). Using federal, city, and county funds, MNDOT and the Saint Anthony Heritage Board remade the bridge into a pedestrian walkway and bicycle trail, which opened in 1994.\(^{175}\)


\(^{175}\) Penny A. Petersen, *Hiding in Plain Sight: Minneapolis ‘First Neighborhood* (Minneapolis: Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Association, 1999), 92-95.
Great Northern Empire Builder crossing the Stone Arch Bridge, ca. 1935
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

Railway Mail Service clerks on a Great Northern Railway Post Office car sort mail at the Saint Paul Union Depot, March 23, 1949
*St. Paul Dispatch & Pioneer Press, photographer—Minnesota Historical Society Collections*
Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul—Milwaukee Road

During the 1930s, the Milwaukee Road (by then the familiar name for the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul) did its best to make its passenger service competitive with automobiles. There was the hope that the trains could regularly make the ninety-odd mile journey between Milwaukee and Chicago in seventy minutes but Derleth, quoting a Milwaukee Road official, observed, “It costs heavily to keep the tracks open for fast trains, and it delays the movement of freight.” Fast trains also presented a great danger at grade crossings with an increase in fatalities at the crossings. The Milwaukee Road introduced a new streamlined train, the Hiawatha, on May 15, 1935. Derleth described the initial run: “At 91 m.p.h. everyone remarked that it didn’t seem as though the Hiawatha was traveling much faster than about 45. At 100 m.p.h. a shout went up.” In some stretches, the train attained a speed of 112.5. The ride was smooth, a dining-car superintendent noted that no “test” glass of water spilled during the entire trip; the engineer remarked that “the faster it ran, the better it rode.”

In 1970, the Milwaukee Road announced it would discontinue its Pioneer Limited trains, “which for decades afforded luxury overnight service between Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Minneapolis.” In 1971 the last passenger train, the Hiawatha, left the Milwaukee Depot just as the government-run Amtrak was gradually taking over passenger rail service. Many ideas would be put forward during the almost thirty-year period that the depot remained empty. The Milwaukee Depot presently houses a hotel–restaurant complex and about half of its train shed has been converted to an ice-skating rink.

In 1977, the Milwaukee Road, anticipating significant losses, sought bankruptcy protection from the federal courts. In 1979, the railroad received permission to make significant cuts in service, ending service on 6,400 miles of its nearly 10,000 mile system. By 1981, a Minneapolis Planning Department study summarized the Milwaukee Road as follows: the company was reorganized in 1927 after going through bankruptcy; it was bankrupt again by 1935; and the Milwaukee Road was in bankruptcy for the third time by 1977. It “has not known from one year to the next what their final system would include,” and since rail users need reliable service, “many of their customers either switched to other modes of transportation or other rail carriers when possible.” While some of its track was in good condition and could handle trains traveling at 60 miles per hour, some was so poor as to only tolerate a maximum speed of 25 miles per hour.

The Minneapolis-based Soo Line purchased the Milwaukee Road’s operations in 1985. A year later, a newspaper noted that the acquisition “doubled the railroad’s size and richly diversified its

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176 Derleth, Milwaukee Road, 238, 239.

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customer base, but, unhappily, it also wiped out the Soo’s 23-year record for consistent profitability.”


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“Hiawatha” lounge-observation car, May 27, 1948
*Minneapolis Star Journal, photographer—Minnesota Historical Society Collections*
Milwaukee Road Railroad Depot ca. 1948
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

Passenger car, Milwaukee Road, May 1948
*Minneapolis Star Journal, photographer—Minnesota Historical Society Collections*
Minneapolis and Saint Louis

The Chicago and North Western assumed control of the Minneapolis and Saint Louis in November 1960.180

Minneapolis Eastern

As of 1966, the Minneapolis Eastern Railway Company was jointly owned by the Chicago and North Western and the Chicago, Milwaukee, Saint Paul and Pacific Railways. The Chicago and North Western, which was purchased by Union Pacific Railroad, no longer exists. The bankrupt Milwaukee Road was acquired by the Soo Line in 1985. The Minneapolis Eastern went out of business at some point, but it is not clear exactly when that happened.181

Northern Pacific

This railroad became part of the Burlington Northern in 1970.

Chicago, Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha

Stock ownership of this railroad was acquired by the by the Chicago and North Western Railway in 1904. By 1960, it was operating as a subsidiary of the Chicago and North Western 182

Chicago Great Western

This railroad was merged into the Chicago and North Western Railway in 1968.183

Minneapolis, Saint Paul and Sault Ste. Marie—Soo Line

This railroad officially became the Soo Line in January 1961 after it was combined with the Wisconsin Central, Duluth South Shore and Atlantic, with headquarters in Minneapolis. In 1989, it became a wholly owned subsidiary the Canadian Pacific Ltd.184

180 Prosser, Rails to the North Star, 78; Hofsommer, Age of Railways, 291.
181 Prosser, Rails to the North, 144.
Wisconsin Central Roundhouse, rail yards and bridge between Nicollet and Boom Islands, 1955
Fairchild Aerial Surveys
Chicago, Burlington and Quincy–Burlington Northern

On April 21, 1935, the first high-speed, stainless-steel, Zephyr rolled into Minneapolis from Chicago, via the Stone Arch Bridge. Introduced by the Burlington line, this was one of the new streamlined trains that were supposed to lure passengers back onto trains. A 1940 newspaper article noted: “Today there are ten such trains, on four separate railroads, carrying more than 2,000 passengers a day to and from Minneapolis.” However, the Zephyrs could not compete with automobiles. By the late 1960s, Zephyrs and other streamlined trains were being phased out; one newspaper article reported the Zephyrs were losing $2,000 per day. The Chicago, Burlington and Quincy line merged with Northern Pacific and Great Northern in 1970 to become the Burlington Northern.185

Chicago and North Western

The Chicago and North Western was purchased by Union Pacific Railroad in 1995 and ceased to exist. By 1996, the Burlington Northern had merged with the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe to become Burlington Northern Santa Fe, and the Union Pacific had proposed joining with the Southern Pacific. Critics of the railroad mergers observed that these two giant railroads would control more than ninety percent of all rail traffic west of the Mississippi River.186

By 1996, the Union Pacific Railroad received approval for the acquisition of the Southern Pacific railroad, making it the largest railroad in North America. One newspaper reported that, “Since 1995, Union Pacific has been the primary railroad system serving southern Minnesota, with 724 miles of track and two main lines that run from the Twin Cities to Sioux City, Iowa, and Kansas City, Mo. The railroad also is the region’s major hauler of corn and soybeans.”187

Today, the railroad corridor that was first established by the Saint Paul and Pacific in the 1860s that crosses the river at Nicollet Island serves only one rail line, Burlington Northern Santa Fe.

The railroad bridge over Nicollet Island, looking into the west bank rail corridor, currently used by the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad

*Penny Petersen, photographer*
TIMELINE FOR RAILROADS CONNECTED TO THE MINNEAPOLIS RIVERFRONT

1857 The Minnesota and Pacific Railway is established.

1861 Minnesota and Pacific becomes the Saint Paul and Pacific.

1862 On June 28, a Saint Paul and Pacific Railroad train arrives in Saint Anthony. The Saint Paul and Pacific is the first railroad to actually operate in Minnesota.

1864 The Northern Pacific Railway is incorporated.

1865 The Minnesota Central Railway (incorporated in 1856, as the Minneapolis and Cedar Valley Railroad) is built, and runs from Minneapolis (from the present-day Milwaukee Depot site) to Faribault.

1867 May 1, the first train of the Saint Paul and Pacific Railway arrives in Minneapolis by crossing the Mississippi River on the bridge at Nicollet Island.

The Minnesota Central Railway is sold to the McGregor Western Railway. That same year, the McGregor line is sold to the Milwaukee and Saint Paul Railway (incorporated in Wisconsin in 1867). Then the Milwaukee and Saint Paul is sold to the Chicago, Milwaukee, Saint Paul, and Pacific Railway. This line is often called the Milwaukee Road.

1870 On May 27, the Minneapolis and Saint Louis Railroad is organized.

1878 The Minneapolis Eastern Railway is incorporated. At some point, the Minneapolis Eastern was acquired in equal parts by the Chicago and North Western Railway and the Chicago, Milwaukee, Saint Paul, and Pacific Railway.

1879 The Saint Paul and Pacific Railroad is sold to the Saint Paul, Minneapolis, and Manitoba Railway. This line is often called the Manitoba Road.

1880 The Chicago, Saint Paul, Minneapolis, and Omaha Railway is incorporated.

1884 The Minneapolis Western Railway is incorporated.

1888 Minneapolis, Saint Paul, and Sault Ste. Marie Railway (Soo Line) is incorporated.

1889 The Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway is reorganized as the Great Northern Railway (first incorporated in 1856 as the Minneapolis and Saint Cloud Railway).

1892 The Chicago Great Western Railway is incorporated.
1904  The Chicago, Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railway is acquired by the Chicago and North Western Railway.

1928  The Minneapolis Western Railway is sold to the Great Northern Railway.

1960  The Minneapolis and Saint Louis Railway is sold to the Chicago and North Western Railway.

By this year, the Chicago, Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha is operating as a subsidiary of the Chicago and North Western

1968  The Chicago Great Western merges into the Chicago and North Western Railway.

1970  The Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy line merges with Northern Pacific and Great Northern. The new name is Burlington Northern.


1995  The Chicago and North Western is purchased by Union Pacific Railroad and ceases to exist.

1996  The Burlington North merges with the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe to become Burlington Northern Santa Fe.
Main railroad lines on the Minneapolis Riverfront, in alphabetical order

Chicago and North Western Railway (incorporated in 1864), acquired the Minneapolis and Saint Louis Railway and the Chicago Great Western and was in turn swallowed by the Union Pacific.\textsuperscript{188}

Chicago Great Western Railway (1892). Merged with the Chicago and North Western Railway in 1968; sold to Union Pacific in 1995.\textsuperscript{189}

Chicago, Milwaukee, Saint Paul and Pacific Railway/Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul Railway, more commonly known as the Milwaukee Road. Founded in 1863 in Wisconsin as the Milwaukee and Saint Paul Railway. It became part of the Soo Line, which in turn was controlled by Canadian Pacific from a very early date; it is now owned by Canadian Pacific Ltd.\textsuperscript{190}

Great Northern Railway (first incorporated in 1856 as the Minneapolis and Saint Cloud Railway). In 1970, it became part of the Burlington Northern; two decades later this became the Burlington Northern Santa Fe.\textsuperscript{191}

Minneapolis Eastern Railway Company (incorporated in 1878), was owned jointly by the Chicago and North Western Railway, and the Chicago, Milwaukee, Saint Paul and Pacific Railroad as of 1966. Later, the Chicago and North Western Railway was purchased by the Union Pacific Railroad, and no longer exists. The bankrupt Chicago, Milwaukee, Saint Paul and Pacific Railroad was acquired by the Soo Line in 1985. The Soo Line, in turn, is owned by the Canadian Pacific Ltd.\textsuperscript{192}

Minneapolis, Saint Paul and Sault Ste. Marie Railway Company also known as the Soo Line. Established in 1888, this railroad was a consolidation of several railroads: Minneapolis and Saint Croix; Minneapolis and Pacific; Minneapolis, Sault Ste. Marie and Atlantic. It is now owned by the Canadian Pacific Ltd.\textsuperscript{193}

The Minneapolis Western Railway, incorporated in 1884, was sold to the Great Northern Railway in 1928. The Great Northern is now part of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe.\textsuperscript{194}

The Minnesota and Pacific (incorporated in 1857) became the Saint Paul and Pacific Railway, which in turn became the Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba and later the Great Northern Railway. The Great Northern became part of the Burlington Northern in 1970 and is now part of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe.\textsuperscript{195}

\textsuperscript{188} Prosser, \textit{Rails to the North Star}, 120-121, xi.
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid., xi.
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid., xi.
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid., xi.
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid., 144.
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid., xi.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid., 146.
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., 160, xi.
Minnesota Western Railroad (incorporated in 1853) changed its name to the Minneapolis and Saint Louis Railroad in 1870. In 1960, it was sold to the Chicago and North Western Railway. The Chicago and North Western was acquired by the Union Pacific.  

Northern Pacific Railway, established in 1864, became part of the Burlington Northern in 1970. Two decades later, the Burlington Northern joined with the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe to become part of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe.  

Union Pacific is now the largest railroad in the country. 

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196 Ibid., 142-143.
197 Ibid., 155, xi.
**Transportation Sites on the Riverfront**

**Trails** (See Map, 1 on page 7, and maps on pages 10, 26, 27, and 28 for locations) We will have to insert page numbers or change this phrase, since we are not numbering the figures.

Based on an 1839 map of the Ft. Snelling Military Reservation by Lieutenant J. L. Thompson, there was one trail on the east side of the river leading from the falls to Saint Paul, called the “Saint Paul Road.” It roughly parallels present-day University Avenue SE. There were three trails on the west side, all of which converged somewhat downstream of the falls, at a site called “Public Mills.” One trail leading from Fort Snelling was approximately the path taken by present-day Hiawatha Avenue. The second trail seems to run along present-day Portland Avenue, but then unlike Portland Avenue, it leads to Lake Calhoun, more akin to present-day Hennepin Avenue. The third trail seems to start near Bassett’s Creek, run through the present-day warehouse district and ends at the “Public Mills.” The original land survey map of Minneapolis from 1854 also shows a trail beginning on the west side of the river across from Nicollet Island and proceeding south toward Lake Calhoun, approximately following the route of present day Hennepin Avenue.

**Ox Cart Trail** (See Map 1 for location)

The Red River Ox Cart Trail went along present-day Marshall Street N.E. and then joined Main Street S.E. until about present-day Thirteenth Avenue S.E. where it turned to go along present-day University Avenue to avoid a large ravine.

**Boat Landings** (See Map 1 for locations)

- Canoe Ferry. An American Indian woman operated a canoe ferry that crossed at Boom Island in the 1840s
- Portage Landing. Canoes and other human-powered boats were unloaded on the east bank below the falls near the present day foot of Fifth Avenue S.E. Boats and cargo were carried up along present-day Main Street and then set back in the river near Nicollet Island. See Pike map for details.
- Cheever’s Landing (1847 - 1860s). Cheever’s Landing was located at the foot of Essex Street S.E., site of the present-day East River Flats Park.
- Government Landing (1821-1974), which was located downstream of the Washington Avenue Bridge and was later known as the Municipal Levee.
- Ferry Landing (1847-1855). This ferry was located just below the present-day Hennepin Avenue Bridge on the west side. For a time it was operated by John Stevens. Once the first suspension bridge was completed in 1855, this ferry ceased operation.
- Upper Landing (1850s-1860s). This landing where present-day Eight Avenue N.E. met the river was for steamboats that traveled above the falls. This was in operation from 1850 to the early 1860s.
Livery Stables

Brown-Ryan Livery Stable (1880-present). The Brown-Ryan Livery stable, originally known as Baldwin Brown’s livery stable was located at 20 Second Street N.E. from about June 1880 to January 1982, when it was moved to Main Street S.E.

RAILROAD SITES (See map number 4 on page 147 for locations)

Railroad Depots and Freight Houses

The following lists railroad depots and freight houses and their locations on or near the central riverfront. Today, only portions of the Milwaukee Depot complex (now a hotel and coffee shop), and the Omaha freight house (converted to housing) survive; all the other structures have been razed.

1. Saint Paul and Pacific Depot (1862-1865), Main Street and East Hennepin
2. East Side Depot (1884-1905), Main Street S.E. and Sixth Avenue/Stone Arch Bridge, owned by the Manitoba Road.
3. East Minneapolis Depot (1866-ca. 1884), Second Avenue N.E., between Fourth and Fifth Streets N.E. (1866-ca. 1884) owned by the Saint Paul and Pacific, but apparently was used by other lines.
4. Saint Paul and Pacific Depot (1867 to at least 1951), Washington and Third/Fourth Avenue North. The railroad corridor which connects to the Nicollet Island Bridge is still in use, although all the old freight houses and depots are gone.
5. Minnesota Central/Milwaukee and Saint Paul Railroad Depot (1865-1904), 411-417 South Second Street. The complex at Third Avenue South and Washington Avenue dates back to 1864 and almost all the early structures are gone.
6. Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul Depot (1877-1898), 320 South Washington Avenue.
7. Milwaukee Road Depot and train shed (1898-present), Third Avenue and Washington Avenue South.
8. Milwaukee Road In-Bound Freight Depot Headhouse Section (1878) is currently a Dunn Brothers coffee shop. The rest of the in-bound freight house and the out-bound freight house that paralleled it were removed.
9. Minneapolis and Saint Louis (1871-1878), 402 Second Street South.
10. Minneapolis and Saint Louis depot and freight house complex (1884 to at least 1951), North Third Street and Fourth Avenue, plus other holdings at 610-618 Third Avenue North
11. Soo Line Freight House, (1900 to at least 1951), 500 Second Street North
12. Minneapolis and Saint Louis Auxiliary Depot (1890-1910), 100 Tenth Avenue South
13. Union Depot (1884-1914), Hennepin Avenue (downstream side).
14. Great Northern Station (1914-1978) (Second Union Station) Hennepin Avenue (upstream side).
15. Omaha Line Freight Depot (1880-present), 50 North Fourth Avenue. This was part of a much larger depot/freight Omaha complex that dated back to 1880.


17. American Railway Express Depot (1914-1978). This was in the same location as the first Union Depot at Hennepin (downstream side).

18. Minneapolis and Pacific Depot/ Soo Line Depot (1885-1900), 501-625 North Second Street. The depot and storage facilities were taken over by the Soo Line.

19. Soo Line Depot and Freight Depot (1900 to at least 1951), North Second Street and Fourth Avenue. This brick and iron depot replaced the older facilities built by the Minneapolis and Pacific. An addition was made to the freight house in 1915. None of these buildings survive. The site is now home to the Marriott Towne Place Suites and Mill City Apartments.

Railroad Bridges

20. Burlington Northern Santa Fe Bridge (1926). This was built on the site of the original 1867 Saint Paul and Pacific Bridge across Nicollet Island, which was rebuilt in 1893. Trains continue to use this rail corridor.


22. Original Northern Pacific Railroad Bridge.

23. Northern Pacific Railroad Bridge No. 9 (Moved to current location in 1921). The bridge was abandoned in 1981 and converted to pedestrian and bicycle use in 2000.

24. Milwaukee Road Washington Avenue Viaduct (1884-1984). Abutments to the viaduct can still be seen at the southeast corner of Washington and Chicago.

25. Minneapolis Western Railway Bridge (1892-1952), between Eleventh Avenue South and Eighth Avenue S.E. The bridge was removed in 1952.

26. Wisconsin Central Railroad Bridge (1901-present). This bridge was converted to pedestrian and bicycle use connecting Nicollet Island with Boom Island Park.

Other Railroad Facilities

27. Minneapolis Eastern Railway Engine House (1914-present), 333 South First Street. The large brick engine house (converted to the First Street Station Restaurant, now the office of Riley and Hayes) was built by the railroad to consolidate operations on the site of its former office building.

28. Minneapolis Eastern Railway Trestle (1879/1890-present). This trestle allowed the row of mills closest to the river rail access. Later covered up, its remnants were rediscovered during the construction of Mill Ruins Park.

29. Northern Pacific Roundhouse and Railyard (Second Street and Tenth Avenue North). The Northern Pacific built a rail yard and roundhouse in the Bassett Creek area, along Second Street North, running from approximately Fourth Avenue North to Tenth Avenue North, adjacent to the Omaha line’s facilities, as seen on the Sanborn Insurance Map, 1912-1930. The roundhouse site is now occupied by the Star Tribune printing plant.
30. Minneapolis Transfer Railroad Roundhouse and Yards (1885-1890s), 101 Tenth Avenue South.

31. Minneapolis Western Railroad Yards. (1891-1980s). The Minneapolis Western Railroad constructed yards downriver from the west side mill district, adjacent to the Minneapolis Transfer Railroad yards. The *Sanborn Insurance Maps, 1912-1951* show both yards in existence. This site is now Gold Medal Park. In 1892, James J. Hill built the Minneapolis Western Railway Bridge between Eleventh Avenue South and Eighth Avenue SE. The bridge was removed in 1952.
32. Wisconsin Central Railroad Roundhouse and Rail Yards (1901-1970), now the site of Boom Island Park

Many of the remaining mill and warehouse buildings still have evidence of the loading docks that were adjacent to rail lines.

**Streetcar Facilities**

33. Twin City Rapid Transit Company Steam Power Plant (1903-present). This plant provided electricity for the streetcar system until the final conversion to buses in 1954. It is now the Southeast Heating Plant for the University of Minnesota.

34. Hennepin Island Hydroelectric Plant (1908-present). Northern States Power, now Xcel Energy, purchased this plant from the Twin City Rapid Transit Company in 1951. It is still in operation.

35. East Side Station (1891-present), First Ave. N.E. at University. This was the last streetcar barn to be used before the demise of the streetcars. It is now Superior Plating.

36. Minneapolis Street Railway Company Horsecar Barns and Shop (1885-present), Third Avenue North at Second Street North, now Colonial Warehouse. This building was intended to be the powerhouse for a cable car system that was never built. Instead it became an electric carhouse and the first electric powerhouse for streetcars in 1890. It was also the main offices of the Minneapolis Street Railway Company until 1904.
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