

## **MILL RUINS PARK RESEARCH STUDY**

### **Expansion of the Waterpower Canal (1885) and Rebuilding of Tailrace Canals (1887-1892)**



**Prepared for  
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## Expansion of the Waterpower Canal (1885) and Rebuilding of Tailrace Canals (1887-1892)

### The Construction of the Expanded Waterpower Canal and Rebuilding of the Tailrace Canals

By the mid-1880s, the increasing number of mills and the demand for waterpower was jeopardizing the availability of that power, particularly as the height and flow of the Mississippi fluctuated from season to season. In 1883, the Minneapolis Mill Company hired William de la Barre as an engineer and agent for the waterpower works. A number of the mills had installed auxiliary steam engines to supplement the waterpower. Meanwhile De la Barre proposed to solve the waterpower problem by increasing the head and fall available.



*Working on the West Side canal (Minnesota Historical Society)*

According to Kane, “De la Barre undertook to deepen the canal and lower the tailraces under his jurisdiction, while the millers promised to lower their wheel pits, tailraces, and headraces.

Before the year ended, De la Barre had deepened the canal from 14 to 20 feet and lengthened it from 600 to 950 feet. The expansion increased its flowage capacity from 30 to 40 per cent and raised the water level to produce more power by bring water to the lessees’ wheels at a greater head. The engineer satisfied the second part of his bargain by building between 1887 and 1892 a capacious tailrace along the western shore to carry away the water which the mills discharged through the fifteen lateral races.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lucile M. Kane, *The Falls of St. Anthony: The Waterfall That Built Minneapolis* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1966; reprint 1987), 119.

The *Northwestern Miller* carried a series of accounts of the ongoing work:

It is now practically settled that the improvements for the West side canal are to be made next month. Agent de la Barre . . . succeeded in getting the parties having the contract for the iron work to supply the same a month earlier than they were required by the terms of their agreement. . . . The entire cover of the canal is to be removed and an iron one substituted; the ‘humps’ on the bottom of the canal taken off, the upper end of it straightened, and the elevated tracks in front of the mills replaced with an iron one. All of this is heavy work and will take time.<sup>2</sup>

For several days past there has been much speculation on the platforms to when the water would be shut out of the canal. Agent de la Barre, of the power company, informed us Wednesday that about two-thirds of the water would be shut off to-morrow (Saturday) morning, and the remainder by the 8<sup>th</sup> inst. This course is adopted, as part of the head gates are new, and they can be left open while the others are being also replaced. The tearing down of the elevated trestlework on the platform will be commenced Sunday. . . . For a while the milling district promises to bear a torn-up and ragged appearance. The work will be carried on night and day, and three crews employed. . . . The time that the improvements to the canal will take is estimated at from four to six weeks.<sup>3</sup>

Work on the canal is moving along quite smoothly, though there are some that are apprehensive lest the job will be prolonged into September. A considerable portion of the iron work has been placed in position at the lower end of the canal, and the work is progressing quite favorably. Owing to the peculiar formation of the rock on the bottom of the canal, it will be blasted out several inches deeper than was originally contemplated. It was supposed that the upper strata at the lower end ran the full length of the canal at nearly a uniform thickness, but when blasting was commenced it was discovered to run out near the middle of the canal. This necessitated going down another strata, where the blue limestone is reached, which it is believed extends the whole length of the milling district on a uniform level. On an average, this will amount to the deepening of the canal about 29 inches, at some places where there are “humps,” the excavation being four feet. This extra depth cuts off that much of the water head, unless tail races, intake pipes, etc. are lowered correspondingly. . . . It is intended to make the bottom of the canal level throughout, and place everyone on the same footing.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *The Weekly Northwestern Miller* 19 (June 12, 1885): 561.

<sup>3</sup> *The Weekly Northwestern Miller* 20 (July 3, 1885): 5.

<sup>4</sup> *The Weekly Northwestern Miller* 20 (July 24, 1885): 77.

The improvements on the canal were completed Saturday, and the water was let in on Monday at 1 o'clock. Half a dozen mills at once started up and nearly all the others followed the example within the next two days.<sup>5</sup>

The work on the tail races extended between 1887 and 1892, as the various mills did the work at different times. This also involved work on the railroad trestle as reported in the *Northwestern Miller*:

The work of tearing down the trestlework at the rear of the west side mills will begin Monday. At first, operations will be confined to the lower end, so that the mills above Sixth avenue, which have no front tracks, can have the benefit of those at the rear for some time yet. Work on the new tail-race under these tracks, which was partially completed last season, has been renewed and will be pushed along rapidly. As the work on the trestlework and the race progresses, it will be necessary to shut the water out of the canal, off and on, which will more or less interrupt operations by the mills, unless they run by steam.<sup>6</sup>

About 110 men were working on the tail races of the Washburn mills in March, but extremely cold weather slowed the work.<sup>7</sup>

Later in the month, it was reported:

The water was shut out of the west side canal this noon, and will probably not be let in again for a month, and perhaps six weeks. This was done to facilitate work on the big race-way at the rear of the mills, and to permit excavations to be made along under the elevated tracks which are being removed, and under which the water has to pass from the canal to the race-way. The force of men thus engaged has been increased to about 200, and dirt is flying in a very lively manner. Part of this crew is employed in removing debris and lowering the tail races up to the rear line of the mills or the lots upon which they stand, this preparatory work falling to the water power company to do.<sup>8</sup>

As the tail race neared completion, the *Northwestern Miller* gave a more detailed description:

Commencing at the foot of Sixth Avenue south, with a width of 40 feet, it follows the river bank down stream for 1,200 feet, gradually widening until it reaches a maximum width of 100 feet. At the lower end, which was begun some two years ago, the excavation started from zero and gradually increased in depth until 12 feet was reached at Sixth avenue. Seventy per cent of the material removed was

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<sup>5</sup> *The Weekly Northwestern Miller* 20 (September 25, 1885): 293.

<sup>6</sup> *The Weekly Northwestern Miller* 29 (February 14, 1890): 171.

<sup>7</sup> *The Weekly Northwestern Miller* 29 (March 7, 1890): 255.

<sup>8</sup> *The Weekly Northwestern Miller* 29 (March 21, 1890): 311.

solid rock, the remainder being boulders, heavy gravel, etc. The total amount of material moved exceeds 26,000 cubic yards. The more important and heavier part of the work at the upper end has been done this season. The clearing away of refuse at the rear of the mills was begun by the water power company on Feb. 15, and they removed of the trestlework on which the elevated tracks rested was started March 3. Commencing with a force of about 150 men, this number was soon increased to between 400 and 500, and has been kept at that figure most of the time since.

The elevated tracks which pass over the upper end of the race-way are being replaced in iron, this constituting a costly item of expense. In order to enable readers to appreciate some of the additional cost, as well as the great labor involved, it may be stated that the stone piers for the elevated tracks contain over 750 cubic yards of heavy bridge masonry; the retaining walls of the main and side races consist of over 2,400 cubic yards of rubble masonry, and the amount of lumber, sand, and cement consumed in the entire race-way reaches enormous figures.<sup>9</sup>

Then in 1892, the Minneapolis Mill Company put about 200 men to work on deepening and straightening the tail races of the mills above Sixth Avenue.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Workers on the Expansion of the Waterpower Canal and Rebuilt Tail Races**

#### Numbers, Ethnicity, Wages

The *Northwestern Miller* articles help to establish the numbers of workers on the projects, ranging from 100 to 500 depending on the time period.<sup>11</sup> The description of the work itself helps to define the types of jobs the workers performed. Laborers would have done such tasks as digging, excavating, and removing debris. Rock blasting would have been done by those skilled in the use of powder. Teamsters brought supplies to the site. Stone masons and brick layers put the masonry into place. Iron workers installed the trestle and worked on the canal gates. The Minneapolis Mill Company journal lists companies and contractors under such headings as “Improvements,” “New Gates,” “Canal Bridge,” and “Tail Races.” Among those listed is H. R. Farr, a photographer who recorded the progress of the work. Others include J. B. Bassett and Company, Clough Brothers, C. A. Coffin, T. J. Comfort, H. L. Day, Eastman Bovey and

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<sup>9</sup> *The Weekly Northwestern Miller* 29 (June 13, 1890): 631.

<sup>10</sup> *The Weekly Northwestern Miller* 33 (April 1, 1892): 487.

<sup>11</sup> We know very few specifics about the canal workers other than that they were all males. The Minneapolis Mill Company did not directly hire the canal workers at this point, but instead relied on contractors who recruited their own crews. We do not have any contractor ledgers that would give us the names or any other information about the canal workers they hired. Our suppositions about the ages and ethnic backgrounds of the canal workers in this period are based on the 1880 federal census, the 1895 Minnesota state census, and an 1884 record book from a Minneapolis business, Hennepin County Historical Society Box C8.2, that listed the daily hours worked by “scrapers.” While these workers were not connected to the ongoing canal work, this record book reinforces the idea that most people were expected to work ten-hour days, Monday through Saturday.

Company, P. Fay, Jensen Gilbranson, Grove and Rowe, Herzog Manufacturing Company, Janney, Semple and Company, E. Kennedy and Son, Merriman, Barrows and Company, G. Morrison, J. Ortquist, Nelson, Tenney and Company, D. Reagan, Rush and Billingsley, Smith and Murphy, W. S. Taintor and Company, J. M. Webster, and Wheeler and Carter.<sup>12</sup>

Several of these contractors had associations with the lumber industry in Minneapolis, such as Joel B. Bassett, Eastman Bovey and Company, and Merriman, Barrows and Company. Bassett operated a sawmill at the falls starting in the 1850s.<sup>13</sup> The Janney, Semple and Company was one of the largest wholesale hardware firms in the Midwest. It had grown out of the hardware store founded by John S. Pillsbury in 1855. Pillsbury sold his store to Thomas Janney in 1875. Frank Semple and Horace Hill later joined Janney in the business. Located in Bridge Square, this firm would later build the Janney, Semple, Hill and Company warehouse at First Street and Second Avenue. Benjamin Franklin Nelson, born in Kentucky in 1843, founded Nelson, Tenney and Company. He came to Minneapolis in 1865 and began working in the lumber industry and later, with W.M. Tenney formed Nelson, Tenney, which operated sawmills.<sup>14</sup>

The position and status of these contractors tended to reflect their length of tenure in Minneapolis. Most continued to be Old Stock American and Irish, with a few Scandinavians. William de la Barre, the engineer, was an immigrant from Vienna, Austria, and the photographer Farr may have been German. By the 1880s, however, the ethnic composition of laborers in Minneapolis had shifted, based on an examination of census records. Approximately 30 percent were American born. The percentage of Irish immigrants had diminished to about 10 percent, while that Norwegians and Swedes had risen to slightly under 30 percent for each.

Wages seemed to vary from \$3.00 to \$5.00 per day. The ten-hour, six-day work week was still the norm. During the summer of 1890 when the tail race was being rebuilt, two ten-hour work shifts were on the job. Such a schedule was feasible only in the summer when the daylight hours were long.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> These names were taken from Northern States Power Company, Accounting Records of Predecessor Companies, Minneapolis Mill Company Journal October 1, 1885-November 23, 1894, 142.G.5.4F-2 Box 4, Manuscript Collections, Minnesota Historical Society. The *Minneapolis City Directory for 1889-90* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Directory Company, 1889) lists Clough Brothers as a lumber company operated by David Clough, estate of Gilbert Clough, and Fred Kilgore. That same directory lists Thomas J. Comfort as a blacksmith and Philip Fay as sign painter. Herzog Manufacturing was an iron-working firm founded by Bavarian-born Philip Herzog in 1869 according to Penny A. Petersen, *Hiding in Plain Sight: Minneapolis' First Neighborhood* (Minneapolis: Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Association/NRP, 1999), 104.

<sup>13</sup> Kane, 58. Petersen, 88-89. Horace B. Hudson, ed., *Half Century of Minneapolis* (Minneapolis: Hudson Publishing Company, 1908), 536

<sup>14</sup> Hudson, 427. Larry Millett, *Lost Twin Cities* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1992), 245.

<sup>15</sup> There is no evidence of a shift differential or extra pay for working nights. To get an idea of what present-day equivalents are of 1887-1892 dollars, we consulted the Columbia Journalism Review Dollar Conversion Calculator at [www.cjr.org](http://www.cjr.org). Using the Columbia Journalism Review Conversion Calculator, an 1885 dollar is \$18.52 in 2002 dollars; an 1887-1888 dollar is \$18.87; an 1889-1892 dollar is \$19.61. Workers paid between \$3-\$5 per day would receive the present-day equivalent of \$55.56-\$94.25 (1885 dollars) or \$58.83-\$98.05 (1892 dollars).

### Cost of living

With the growth of the city and the expansion of the railroads, Minneapolis was becoming a major commercial center for the Upper Midwest. Thus many products would be much more available. There are many published prices for consumer goods during this time period.<sup>16</sup>

### Workers' Housing and Transportation

Horse car lines had been introduced to Minneapolis beginning in 1875. Electrified streetcars began to be introduced in 1889. Both forms of public transportation allowed residents to live beyond walking distance of their workplaces. Nonetheless, because of the costs of transportation (fares were five cents), the majority of laborers continued to live close to the work site, within walking distance.<sup>17</sup> By the mid-1880s many of them were living on the west side as the city began a massive population and expansion boom. Many lived in boarding houses or rented a room in a house owned by a family, often of the same ethnic background.<sup>18</sup> Whether in a

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<sup>16</sup> *Minneapolis Tribune*, April 2, 1885, Ingram, Olson, & Co. advertised “gents’ socks” for 8 cents a pair, regularly priced at 15 cents. *Minneapolis Tribune*, April 4, 1885, offered Duffy’s Pure Malt Whiskey for one dollar per quart bottle. Ostensibly this was supposed to be medicine, so probably non-medicinal whiskey would be a little cheaper. *Minneapolis Tribune*, April 5, 1885, March Bros. offered men’s shoes for \$3. These appear to be dress shoes. The Plymouth Clothing House offered men’s suits for \$5-\$35. *Minneapolis Tribune*, May 3, 1885, Syndicate Clothing advertised trousers from \$2.50-\$7 and boys’ suits at \$3-\$12. C.F. Ainsworth offered men’s shoes from \$3-\$6 and ladies’ kid Newport button shoes at \$1. In the same issue, a yearly subscription to the *Tribune* cost \$8 per year or daily (6 days a week) by carrier at 20 cents per week. *Minneapolis Journal*, September 7, 1887, J.W. Fields offered all \$7.50 shoes for \$6; all \$6.50 shoes for \$5.25, \$6 shoes for \$4.75, and \$5 shoes for \$4. These were described as fine ladies’ and gents’ shoes. In the same issue Dr. J. Cresap McCoy who worked out of the West Hotel offered consultations at the office or by mail for \$1. *Minneapolis Journal*, September 9, 1887, Olson’s Dept. Store advertised a sale on gents’ imported dog skin gloves for \$1, ladies’ underwear at 50 cents each, men’s extra heavy shirts and drawers in scarlet and bronze mixtures at \$1. Meanwhile, Donaldson’s offered gray shirts and drawers at 50 cents each, heavy all wool red shirts and drawers at 89 cents each, suspenders at 15 cents a pair and heavy-duty suspenders at 25 cents a pair. *Minneapolis Journal*, October 14, 1887, the Minneapolis Provision Co. offered picnic hams at 9 cents per pound, spring chicken at 10 cents per pound, beef roasts at 7 cents per pound. Donaldson’s advertised gents’ scarlet shirts and drawers at 95 cents each, and men’s lined kid gloves at 75 cents a pair. H.O. Peterson sold blankets from 95 cents to \$5 each. The *Minneapolis Journal*, July 6, 1892, advertised a 2.5-pound canister of Dromedary coffee at 90 cents, roasted Rio coffee at 18 cents a pound at Davis and Preston. In the same issue, merchant George S. Pearl offered ladies’ muslin underwear for 95 cents, cambric underwear at \$1.39, gents’ Balbriggan [a type of Irish knitted fabric] shirts and drawers in grays, tans and natural at 69 cents, unlaundered shirts [probably meaning they would shrink some] at 50 cents to \$1.25 and men’s socks at 12 ½ cents a pair. Segalbaum’s offered men’s underwear shirts at 25 cents and ladies’ vests [underwear] at 15 cents. Knoblauch’s sold ladies’ shoes from \$1-\$2.15 and men’s shoes from \$3-\$5. Hire’s Root Beer, “A Great Temperance Drink,” advertised a 25-cent package that would make five gallons of root beer. The People’s Clothing store sold straw hats “worth 50-75 cents,” for 15 cents and first class business suits that were \$15-\$20 for \$6-\$7.25.

<sup>17</sup> Goodrich Lowry, *Street Car Man: Tom Lowry and the Twin City Rapid Transit Company* (Minneapolis: Lerner Publications Company, 1979), 47.

<sup>18</sup> The letters of Walter Post offer a glimpse of St. Paul boarding houses. “Well I have got a roommate now. I do not like it very well, he seems to be a respectable man, but I know nothing about him, I can change for a single room if I want to but the single room is so small, smaller than my room at home was no place to put my things hardly room to turn around and it is only a half dollar less than this room. I have been looking around this morning at different boarding places but did not find anything suitable. I could get a handsomely furnished room with out board for ten dollars per month, but I cannot starve, and it would cost three dollars and a half per week for table board.” (13 May 1890) By May 30, 1890, Walter found new accommodations. The new place offered better food and a better class of boarders: “... so you see all the people are nice and not rough day laborers like they were at the other place.” By

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boarding house or in a private house, the worker would pay for the cost of a room and meals, usually by the week.<sup>19</sup> The better paid worker would also have the option of living in a hotel, where he might eat most of his meals. The number of restaurants had also increased, but the number of saloons, particularly in the area around Bridge Square and along Washington Avenue, had increased dramatically. A skilled worker or “mechanic” might be able to afford a small house, a portion of which might be rented out to defray expenses. Bohemian Flats and the Southeast Flats, along the Mississippi River banks, were popular with many immigrant workers because land was cheap enough to build a house.<sup>20</sup>

An archaeological study conducted on the site of the present-day federal courthouse provides some insight on how some workers lived in the 1880s and 1890s. The neighborhood here seemed to have a high percentage of Irish-born skilled workers. These inhabitants appeared to have had a fairly high standard of living. City permits indicate plumbing was installed in 1886, but the houses were still served by privies. Unlike the residents of the North First Street study, this group did not use the privies for the disposal of other household refuse. There was also a notable absence of parasite eggs from the privies and cisterns, suggesting the residents had good sanitation habits.<sup>21</sup> It is possible that some of the canal workers boarded with families in this neighborhood.

### Marital Status and Ages

Based on an examination of census records during this period, it can be determined that the patterns for male workers in Minneapolis remained similar to the earlier periods. About two-thirds were single and white and in their 20s and 30s. There is no reliable way to determine which laborers listed in the census worked on the Minneapolis Mill Company projects at any

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October 8, 1891, Walter is at another boarding house and paying \$22 per month for a nice room, but the landlady tells him he must have roommate for that price. She had asked \$25 per month. “Walter T. Post letters, 1889-1897,” Manuscript Collections, Minnesota Historical Society. Walter was a clerk for the railroad and seemed to be better paid and have steady work unlike the day laborers. If Walter’s account is any guide, most of the laborers at the Falls could not afford the luxury of even a tiny single room. They would move frequently in search of better accommodations (thus making them harder to find in the census or city directories) and often have incompatible roommates. For further reading on ethnic boarding houses, see Walter Mattila, “The Boarding House Finns,” *Finnish American Historical Society of the West* 7 (August 1972): 1-24.

<sup>19</sup> The *Minneapolis Journal*, September 14, 1887, under the rooms-to-rent classified: “I can give two gentlemen a neat room with board and comforts of home for \$5 per week.” “On first floor, a nicely furnished front [room], with bay window, heat and gas. Gentlemen preferred, private family \$15 per month, 212 Ninth Street South.” The *Minneapolis Journal*, July 5, 1892, ran an ad for “Desirable rooms and board, table board \$3 [probably a week] 416 First Avenue North. The *Minneapolis Journal*, July 13, 1892, advertised “Nicely furnished rooms, front parlor and board, twenty-one first class meals, \$3.50, 21 Seventh Street S” Presumably this was the weekly price.

<sup>20</sup> Millett, 82-83.

<sup>21</sup> John P. McCarthy, Jeanne A. Ward, and Karl W. Hagglund, “An Archaeological Evaluation and Data Recovery Investigation at the New Federal Building/United State Courthouse: Material Insights into Working Class Life in the Late 19th Century,” 42-50, prepared by Institute for Minnesota Archaeology, February 1996. See also: John P. McCarthy and Jeanne A. Ward, “Archaeological Investigations at the Bridgehead Site, Minneapolis, Minnesota, The 1994 Season, vol. 2, Site Area B: Residential and Commercial Occupations in the Vicinity of 1st Street North: Working Life in an Emerging Industrial District,” prepared by Institute for Minnesota Archaeology, October 1996: *Mill Ruins Park Research Study—Expansion (1885) and Rebuilding (1887-1892)*

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particular time. Unskilled laborers tended to be young as the work was physically demanding. They were often unmarried because their low wages could not support a family.

The wives listed in census records are often described as “at home” or “keeping house.”<sup>22</sup> But they might take in laundry, run a boarding house, or tend to the renters in the house.<sup>23</sup> Most single women of this period, unless sufficiently educated to work as a teacher or sales clerk, might be working in a boarding house, saloon, or restaurant, or living with a family as a domestic servant. Some factory jobs were also becoming available to young single women.<sup>24</sup>

### Work conditions

Work conditions and equipment remained similar to the earlier periods. Unskilled laborers still performed the vast majority of the work, using rudimentary machinery like wedges, pulleys, levers, picks, shovels, and wheelbarrows and wagons for removing debris. Horses and other work animals were used to pull heavy loads. Blasting powder assisted the workers in the excavation effort. Ironworkers used more specialized tools to erect the trestle. As might be imagined, this work was dirty and often dangerous. Without present-day safety glasses, hard hats, or other safety equipment, workers could be injured by falling debris, blasting powder, or accidents with their tools. Without antibiotics, even a small wound could become infected and lead to permanent injury or death.<sup>25</sup>

De la Barre would have had general oversight, while the contractors supervised various work crews. On-site amenities were probably somewhat improved as the city’s first sewerage system had been extended into this part of the city in the early 1870s. Electricity, produced by individual generators, was also used to light some of the work, as the Washburn and Pillsbury mills had been electrified in 1881.<sup>26</sup> The nation’s first central hydroelectric station, located on Upton Island, went into operation on September 5, 1882. Its power was used to run arc lights at several Washington Avenue saloons and shops. To counter public fears about the safety of electricity,

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<sup>22</sup> A married couple might live in a rented room similar to these listings. The *Minneapolis Journal*, July 7, 1892, advertised “Rooms—one large front \$10, two back \$8 at 424 Nicollet,” and “A nicely furnished room with alcove and closet \$7, 722 Tenth Street South.”

<sup>23</sup> Under such circumstances, the family might have rented something like “Four rooms, pantry cellar...city water \$16 per month” advertised in the *Minneapolis Journal*, September 14, 1887.

<sup>24</sup> During the spring and summer of 1888, the *Saint Paul Daily Globe* ran a series of articles on various jobs commonly held by women in the Twin Cities. Reporter Eva Gay had gone undercover, posing as a job seeker in several Minneapolis factories, retail stores, laundries, and employment agencies. Gay found dressmakers earned about \$4 a week (June 10, 1888), while female workers in a clothing factory made \$3.75-\$9 per week (April 8, 1888). Retail clerks were paid \$4 a week (June 17, 1888), while girls washing blankets at the North Star Woolen Factory earned 90 cents a day (May 20, 1888). [The building that housed this factory still exists. A local developer rehabbed the abandoned building into condominiums now known as the North Star Lofts, several years ago.] Female domestic servants could expect to earn \$2-\$2.50 per week as well as receiving room and board (July 8, 1888). Servants often worked twelve-hour days, six days a week. Gay found the cheapest boarding houses charged from \$2.50-\$3 per week and did not include laundry (August 5, 1888). The correlation between men and women’s wages remained roughly the same as in the earlier periods with the male canal workers earning in a day what many female workers made in a week.

<sup>25</sup> Penicillin, the first important antibiotic, was not discovered until 1928.

<sup>26</sup> Kane, 135. The Pillsbury A Mill had its own electrical plant as of 1881.

the electric company, then known as Minnesota Brush Electric Company, built a light mast, 257 feet high with eight huge arc lights on Bridge Square in 1883. This wonder, which was supposed to light the entire downtown area, proved unequal to the task. Nonetheless, it did show electricity could be safely used for street lighting, as well as in other ways.<sup>27</sup> Canal workers in the area would certainly have been aware of the light mast as they passed through Bridge Square.

### Neighborhood Conditions

By 1880 the population had grown to 46,887. Between 1880 and 1890, Minneapolis experienced its greatest increase in numbers of any decade, growing to 164,738. The city annexed more land and greatly expanded in size.<sup>28</sup>

Bridge Square was still the center of government, business, and commerce on the west side of the river with shops extending along Hennepin, Nicollet, and Washington Avenues. The first City Hall was built at Bridge Square in 1873. This four-story, wedged-shaped, French Second Empire style building would have been clearly visible to canal workers going to and from work and probably many of them lived within sight of it.<sup>29</sup> The City Market House, located at First Street and Hennepin, where local farmers could sell their produce, had opened in 1876. Fish, game, and meat would also have been sold here. The introduction of the electric streetcars helped to expand the commercial center outward. Workers were no longer limited by how far they could walk in order to shop.



*Hennepin Avenue Bridge and Exposition Building ca. 1890 (Jacoby & Son, Minnesota Historical Society)*

<sup>27</sup> Kane, 137-141. Millett, 109. This electrical mast was removed in 1892.

<sup>28</sup> Calvin F. Schmid, *Social Saga of Two Cities: An Ecological and Statistical Study of Social Trends in Minneapolis and St. Paul* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Council of Social Agencies, Bureau of Social Research, 1937), 56. John R. Borchert, David Gebhard, David Lanegran, and Judith A. Martin, *Legacy of Minneapolis: Preservation Amid Change* (Minneapolis: Voyageur Press, 1983), 64.

<sup>29</sup> Millett, 90-91.

Meanwhile, across the river, the landmark Winslow House Hotel was razed in 1886 to make way for the truly enormous Industrial Exposition Building. Historian Larry Millett called it the largest public building of the nineteenth century in the Twin Cities, measuring 356 feet long, 336 feet wide and 80 feet high, with a 260-foot tower in one corner.<sup>30</sup> Workers in the area could not help but notice such a structure and may have attended some of the agricultural expositions, concerts, or other shows held there during its brief period of glory during the late 1880s and early 1890s.

Minneapolis had begun a municipal water system in 1867 and installed its first sanitation system beginning in 1871, although many houses still had backyard privies. In 1870 the Minneapolis Gas Light Company started manufacturing gas, which was used to light street gas lamps and a limited number of residences and business buildings. By 1880 twenty-five miles of gas mains had been laid in city streets. More skilled workers, who could afford their own homes, and those living in boarding houses, may have enjoyed indoor gas lighting. Electric lighting was largely confined to business buildings, work sites, and the homes of the wealthy. Historian Lucile Kane stated that charges for running lights were 33-1/3 cents per lamp for service from dusk to 9:15 PM; dusk to 11:15 PM service cost 45 cents per light per night.<sup>31</sup>

### Churches and Schools

The number of churches had continued to increase following the path of residential development. Some of the original downtown churches relocated, following the path of their congregants. In 1871, eighteen Swedes, who had been members of the First Baptist Church of Minneapolis, withdrew to form First Swedish Baptist Church. By 1872, they built a wood frame church at Sixth Street and Twelfth Avenue South.<sup>32</sup> In 1875, the Benedictine Order established the parish of St. Joseph for German Catholics. By 1889, this parish built a large church at Fourth Street and Twelfth Avenue North. In 1878, the Dominican Fathers established the Church of the Holy Rosary. At first located Fifth Street and Twentieth Avenue South, this parish built a large church that still stands at Twenty-fourth Street and Eighteenth Avenue South.<sup>33</sup> First Presbyterian Church of Minneapolis, which was founded in 1853, first held its services in a hall over a Bridge Square store. It later built a small church at the corner of Fifth Street and Sixth Avenue South. By 1873, a new church was built on Park Avenue, which served the congregation for the next fifteen years. In 1889, this congregation relocated to a larger church on the corner of Portland and East Nineteenth Street.<sup>34</sup> The congregation that was originally known as Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church, organized in 1855, had a small church building at Seventh Street and First Avenue. But by 1891, this congregation had laid the corner stone of their new church at the corner of Grant and First Avenue. That same year, it changed its name to Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church. Wesley Church is still located at 101 East Grant Street.

On the east side of the river, one of the earliest church buildings, that of the First Universalist Society of Saint Anthony was purchased by a group of French Catholics in 1877 who renamed it

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<sup>30</sup> Millett, 178-179.

<sup>31</sup> Millett, 109; Kane, 137.

<sup>32</sup> Shutter, 1:576.

<sup>33</sup> Shutter, 1:583.

<sup>34</sup> Shutter, 1:606.

Our Lady of Lourdes and proceeded to make so many external changes to the structure, that its original Greek Revival appearance is almost impossible to detect today. The church still stands at 1 Lourdes Place. This group of French Catholics had originally been part of the Saint Anthony of Padua parish in Northeast Minneapolis. However, as more Irish and German immigrants poured into that neighborhood, the French-speakers found themselves outnumbered and decided to form a church of their own. This French-speaking congregation was a remnant of the old French-Canadian-Metis community that dated back to the area's fur trading era. After selling their building to the Catholics, the St. Anthony Universalist congregation, whose members were mainly New Englanders associated with the lumber business, met in private homes for a time and finally built another church in 1884.<sup>35</sup>

First Congregational Church, founded in Saint Anthony in 1851, had two previous buildings before building the structure that still stands at 500 Eighth Avenue SE. This edifice was started in 1886 and completed two years later.<sup>36</sup> The east side Presbyterians, now known as Andrew-Riverside Presbyterian Church, also built larger quarters for themselves during this period. This congregation started out in 1857, meeting in David Edwards' stone block on Main Street. By 1860, they had built their first meetinghouse, a small wood frame structure on Second Street and Fourth Avenue SE. By 1890, the congregation hired architect Charles Sedgwick to design the large stone building which still stands at 729 Fourth Street.<sup>37</sup>

First Baptist Church of Saint Anthony, built a larger church in 1870 to accommodate their growing congregation, replacing their very tiny first building at Fourth Avenue and Second Street SE. A year later, the Baptists moved their church building to the corner of Fourth Avenue and Fifth Street SE. By 1884, the congregation had outgrown this building and built an even larger structure at Fifth Street and Ninth Avenue SE. The Methodist congregation in Southeast Minneapolis built a bigger building in 1872, on University, near Second Avenue SE, to replace their first church built in 1852. In 1879, this congregation had changed its name to Olivet Baptist Church to avoid confusion with the *other* First Baptist Church which had been found on the west side of the Mississippi, when the two towns were still separate entities. In 1884, Olivet Baptist started construction of a new large brick building at the corner of Ninth and Fifth Street SE.<sup>38</sup>

The growing number of Catholics on the east side got a new church in 1887, when the first St. Lawrence Catholic Church was built. Although the original wooden church was replaced by a much larger building, St. Lawrence still stands at 1201 Fifth Street SE.<sup>39</sup>

Union School, built in 1857 on the site of the present-day City Hall, burned down in 1865. It was replaced by Washington School, which was built on the same site in 1867. The high school originally held classes in Washington School, but the population had grown sufficiently to

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<sup>35</sup> Petersen, 30-32, 48-49. Metis meaning "mixed" refers to persons of mixed American Indian and European ancestry.

<sup>36</sup> Petersen, 38-39.

<sup>37</sup> Petersen, 37-38

<sup>38</sup> Petersen, 34-37.

<sup>39</sup> Petersen, 39-40

demand a separate facility. When the first Washington School was razed to make way for the new city hall, a second Washington School was built in 1888 on Sixth Street between Park and Chicago Avenues South.<sup>40</sup>

The Central High School was built in 1878 at Fourth Avenue South and Eleventh Street. Several other grade schools were built to accommodate the city's growing population. In 1868, Lincoln School was erected on Washington Avenue North between Sixth and Seventh Avenues. In 1872, Madison School was built at the corner of Fifth Avenue South and Fifteenth Street. Jefferson School was built at Hennepin Avenue and Tenth Street North in 1873. The following year, Adams School was built on Sixteenth Avenue South between Nineteenth and Franklin. Numerous grade schools were built during the 1880s and 1890s. Irving School at East Twenty-eighth Street between Sixteenth and Seventeenth Avenues South was built in 1884. Holmes School, located on Fifth Street SE, between Third and Fourth Avenues SE opened in 1890.<sup>41</sup>

East side residents still had their own separate school board until 1878, even though the two towns of Minneapolis and Saint Anthony had merged in 1872. In 1865, the school board had acquired the land for the school that would be known as Winthrop School. Located on the present-day sight of the Eastgate shopping center at Central and University Avenues SE, this school was completed in 1867 and served grades one through eleven. Winthrop School was replaced by East High School in 1900. The Fourth Ward School, later renamed William Learned Marcy School, was first opened in 1872 and located on Ninth Avenue between Fourth and Fifth Streets SE. This school offered grades one through eight. Marcy School would remain in this location until 1908.<sup>42</sup> Humboldt, another elementary school, was built on Main Street NE, between Thirteenth and Fourteenth Avenues NE. The University of Minnesota was relocated from its one building on present-day Chute Square to the present campus in 1854. This institution was dormant during the 1850s-1860s due to lack of funds and students. By 1873, it graduated its first class, consisting of two students. During the late 1880s and early 1890s, the University enrollments started to grow, as there were more jobs, such as teaching, that required a college education.<sup>43</sup>

### Recreational activities

Organized baseball had been played in Minneapolis since the late 1860s. In 1884 professional baseball arrived when the Minneapolis Millers became charter members of the Northwestern League. Minneapolis got its first stadium in 1889 when the Athletic Park at Sixth Street and First Avenue North opened.<sup>44</sup> This structure was also used for University of Minnesota football games.

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<sup>40</sup> Millett, 84-85.

<sup>41</sup> "The Minneapolis Public Schools 1851-2000, A History of Past and Present Schools and Sites." Poster in the Minneapolis Public Library, Special Collections.

<sup>42</sup> Petersen, 25-26.

<sup>43</sup> Petersen, 84.

<sup>44</sup> Millett, 124, 218-219.

Roller-skating was very popular in the 1880s; by 1885 Minneapolis had eleven indoor skating rinks including one at Tenth and Washington Avenues North and another at Sixth and Marquette. One newspaper complained “there are more people in the rinks than attend church on Sundays.”<sup>45</sup> There were also traveling theater troupes that regularly appeared in Minneapolis as well as periodic civic celebrations such as The Great Harvest Festival of 1891. For several years prior to 1891, the local harvests had been poor, but that year was good for farmers. To celebrate this change in fortune, Minneapolis held a daylong festival on September 23 that was attended by an estimated 300,000 people. The parade, which included floats, marching units, agricultural machines, farm animals, and actors in Roman costumes, took three hours to pass by the grandstand at Tenth and Nicollet Avenue.<sup>46</sup>

A variety of theaters and concerts were available to Minneapolis residents by the mid-1880s. Minneapolis got its first opera house in 1867 when the Pence Opera house opened. But it, like the nearby Academy of Music (1872), had an auditorium that was built above shops on the first floor. The ground level commercial space provided rent that helped support the less frequently used performance space above. In 1883, Minneapolis got its first “downstairs” theater when the Grand Opera House was built at Sixth and Nicollet. Within a few years, Minneapolis residents had more theaters to choose from: the Hennepin Avenue Theater (1887) and the Bijou Opera House (1887), the Metropolitan Opera House (1894).<sup>47</sup> A theater-like experience could be had at the Panorama Building at Fifth Street and Marquette. Built in 1886, this twelve-sided structure offered huge paintings of landscapes or historical events such as the “Battle of Atlanta,” complete with a lecture that explained the panorama. Admission was fifty cents for adults and a quarter for children.<sup>48</sup>

If the canal workers desired less edifying entertainment there was always the Theatre Comique (built 1879), which offered scantily clad female dancers or “dime museums” which featured such attractions as vaudeville shows, odd displays like pieces of George Washington’s coffin, or Jo-Jo the Dog-faced Boy.<sup>49</sup>

Minneapolis got its first public library in 1885. The library grew out of the Athenaeum, a private subscription lending library founded in 1860. The Athenaeum served the wealthy and therefore would not have been available to canal workers at St. Anthony Falls. The public library offered ordinary people opportunities for education as well as reading for entertainment. By 1889, the library was housed in a new Richardsonian Romanesque-style building at Hennepin and Tenth Street. It was open from 8:30 A.M. to 10:00 P.M., Monday through Saturday, and on Sundays and holidays from 2:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M. The first branch library opened in February 1890 in the basement of North High School, located at Eighteenth and Emerson Avenues North. Another

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<sup>45</sup> Millett, 122.

<sup>46</sup> Shutter, 1:672-674.

<sup>47</sup> Millett, 121-122.

<sup>48</sup> Millett, 182-183.

<sup>49</sup> Millett, 50, 123.

branch library was opened at Franklin Avenue and 17th Street South later in 1890 to serve the growing Scandinavian population.<sup>50</sup>



*Minneapolis Public Library on Hennepin Avenue (Minnesota Historical Society)*

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<sup>50</sup> Millett, 204-205. Bruce Weir Beneidt, *The Library Book* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Public Library and Information Center, 1984), 53-54, 56.

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