The Minneapolis Riverfront as Birth Place and First Place

Prepared for
The Saint Anthony Falls Heritage Board
Minnesota Historical Society
704 South Second St.
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55401

by
Landscape Research LLC
1466 Hythe St.
St. Paul, Minnesota 55108

2008

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The Minneapolis Riverfront as Birth Place and First Place

Introduction

The Minneapolis Riverfront District selected the Minneapolis riverfront as a “birth place” and “first place” as its theme for 2008. The 2008 riverfront theme is intended to highlight the city’s birth along the riverfront, along with a number of other significant “births” and firsts associated with the area. This observation coincides with the City of Minneapolis’ celebration of its 150th birthday in 2008 and with the Minnesota Sesquicentennial.

The project boundaries are the Plymouth Avenue Bridge on the north; the river and University Avenue on the east; the I-35W Bridge on the south, and Washington Avenue North and South on the west. Hennepin Avenue marks the division between Washington Avenue North and South. The Saint Anthony Falls Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 1971, and also designated by the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) and the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), comprises much of the project area.

Fig. 1. Third Avenue Bridge and west side milling district, 1918. Nicollet Island is at right.

The first chapter of this report discusses the legislative and municipal events that led to the establishment and organization of St. Anthony and Minneapolis, and their eventual merger as a united city. It highlights some of the events that still cause debate about the question: which date best marks the birth of Minneapolis? This chapter also provides a timeline of people, places and events that are associated with the birth of Minneapolis
and some of the “firsts” that placed it in a prominent position in the region, nation, and world. The timeframe spans from the 17th-century European discovery of St. Anthony Falls to the present, and includes the development of commerce and industry and the construction of bridges, roads, buildings, and infrastructure along the riverfront.

The second chapter discusses a selection of civic celebrations, parades, and publications that have focused on the story of Minneapolis and the riverfront. Beginning with the processional held on a cold January day in 1855 to mark the completion of the first bridge across the Mississippi River, commemorative and celebratory events have been intended to educate and inspire as well as entertain. Successive generations chose from a variety of familiar stories to present local history and folklore, and government and business leaders have especially used historically-based themes to publicize the city’s strengths. During the early 20th century, celebrations were tied to new efforts to plan and beautify the modern city, even as dates and facts sometimes lost some of their early accuracy with the increased emphasis on marketing and entertainment.

Sources for this study include published histories, newspapers, historic photographs and maps, commemorative brochures, and other publications. The collections of the Minnesota Historical Society, Hennepin History Museum, and Minneapolis Public Library were consulted. Illustrations are from the Minnesota Historical Society Collections unless noted. Carole S. Zellie and Amy M. Lucas of Landscape Research LLC conducted the research and prepared the report. Ann Calvert and David Stevens of the Saint Anthony Falls Heritage Board provided valuable assistance.
Chapter One

The Birth of Minneapolis at St. Anthony Falls

The city has no marked characteristic except the great river with its wonderful water-fall, and the industries which it supports. Of all the industries, that of the flouring mills is the foremost, and of such extent as not only to characterize Minneapolis as a milling city but also to entitle it to the position of first in the world.¹

St. Anthony Falls mark the birthplace of Minneapolis and are at the heart of a number of “firsts” for the city, nation, and even the world. The falls were a significant spiritual center for Native Americans and a destination for generations of explorers and early tourists. During the mid-19th century they were the focus of millers and investors who created a unique hydropower district. By 1885, Minneapolis was the flour milling capitol of the world, a title retained until about 1930, when it was relinquished to Buffalo, New York. By 1890, Minneapolis sawmills cut a half-billion feet of lumber, and for about fifteen years the city retained its status as the world’s premier lumber market. An extensive railroad network connected the falls with national and international markets. The Minneapolis riverfront continued as a place of industry and commerce as well as residence through the 1980s, when significant new investment in creating a center of recreation and residence was underway.

Two cities grew on the banks of the Mississippi River at St. Anthony Falls—St. Anthony on the east side and Minneapolis at the west side—and were united in 1872 as Minneapolis. Minneapolis had a long period of municipal organization, and as a result other dates have also been observed as the city’s formal beginning. In 2008, Minneapolis observes its sesquicentennial (150th anniversary), which is based on the date of the first Town of Minneapolis council meeting, held on July 20, 1858. The Golden Jubilee History of Minneapolis (1917), for example, marked the city’s 50th birthday using the date of the city charter (1867).² The Minneapolis Centennial Celebration (1939) observed the beginning of “first real settlement” in Minneapolis in 1839. That date, the organizers noted, was when Franklin Steele established a homestead on the east side of the falls.³ Yet another date was chosen by the Minneapolis Centennial (1956), which observed the incorporation of the Town of Minneapolis (1856).⁴

¹ George E. Warner and Charles M. Foote, eds., History of Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis, Including the Explorers and Pioneers of Minnesota (Minneapolis: North Star Publishing Company, 1881), 387-388.
² Golden Jubilee (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce), preface.
³ Minneapolis Centennial Celebration, October 2nd to 7th, 1939 Souvenir Program ( Minneapolis, Minn.: Minneapolis Civic Council, 1939), 6.
⁴ Greater Minneapolis Centennial Issue 1856-1956 (Minneapolis, Minn.: Chamber of Commerce, 1956).
Before permanent white settlement could begin at St. Anthony Falls, land belonging to the Ojibwe and Dakota and the U.S. Government had to be opened to claim. Land on the east and west side of the falls was subject to different government regulation, and title to west side land took more than a decade longer to resolve. The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 was among the first of a series of federal actions and treaties that opened the Minneapolis riverfront to permanent white settlement and waterpower development. In 1805, Colonel Zebulon M. Pike (1779-1813), who headed the first American military expedition to reach the falls, signed a treaty with the Dakota that included about 155,000 acres. The treaty land extended “from below the confluence of the Mississippi and St. Peter [Minnesota], up the Mississippi to include the Falls of St. Anthony, extending nine miles on each side of the river.” The treaty was ratified by Congress in 1808, and cleared the way for the establishment of the Fort Snelling Military Reservation in 1819.

In 1837, the United States made two treaties with the Dakota and Ojibwe that ceded land in the triangle between the St. Croix and Mississippi Rivers, including the east bank opposite St. Anthony Falls. The treaties were ratified in 1838. The first legal land claim was made in 1838 at St. Anthony Falls by Franklin Steele (1813-1880), an ambitious Pennsylvania native then working as a storekeeper at Fort Snelling. At the age of 25, he already had experience with sawmills and land claims on the St. Croix. He was the future brother-in-law of Henry Sibley (1811-1891), a Mendota fur trader and future Minnesota governor. Steele was among many who wished to exploit the waterpower potential of the falls. Major Joseph Plympton of Fort Snelling, also wanted to make a claim. When news of ratification reached the fort, Plympton was outdistanced in his effort because Steele built a log shanty just hours before he arrived. One account of Steele’s quick action noted that after hearing news of treaty ratification, Steele “stealthily embarked on the Father of Waters in a birch-bark canoe, with two of his employees, and sent forth on a momentous voyage up the river to the Falls of St. Anthony, seven miles away.

St. Anthony: 1849 and 1855

In 1849, with the east side land open to claim, the first townsite plan of St. Anthony was laid out by surveyor (and future Minnesota Governor) William R. Marshall. As was typical of early plats along midwestern rivers, the grid plan was oriented to the river rather than to the cardinal points of the compass. Minnesota Territory was also organized in 1849, following the admission of Wisconsin into the Union as the 30th state. (At this time St. Anthony was part of Ramsey County, and was added to Hennepin County in 1856.)

On March 3, 1855, the village of St. Anthony was incorporated as a city by act of the Minnesota Legislature. In 1923, historian Marion Shutter declared 1855 as the

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5 Warner and Foote, History of Hennepin County, 162.
6 Warner and Foote, History of Hennepin County, 358-359.
7 “Franklin Steele First Settler of Saint Anthony,” Minneapolis Journal 13 April 1911, 24.
9 Warner and Foote, History of Hennepin County, 353.
10 Warner and Foote, History of Hennepin County, 380; Holcombe and Bingham, Compendium, 125.
“beginning of the municipal history of Minneapolis.” St. Anthony had a population of about 2,000 and had grown steadily as a trade center and waterpower district around Franklin Steele’s 1848 dam. Henry T. Welles (1821-1898), a native of Connecticut who arrived in Minnesota in 1853, was elected Mayor. The Saint Anthony Express observed that St. Anthony had a brilliant part to enact in Minnesota Territory, “but notwithstanding our great gifts of nature, it must, in a high degree, be the work of our own hands. . . . St. Anthony is now a city, and many measures heretofore neglected for the want of an organized and efficient local government we may hope will now be speedily carried out.” Its early population included many speculators and potential waterpower developers from Maine and other New England states; it was noted that it “presented the appearance of a thriving New England village.” Lumber was the primary industry, and sawmills ran day and night. One witness remembered that 1855, which began with an economic boom that collapsed two years later, proved to be memorable for the “influx of money, brought or sent by the owners for the purpose of loaning, and who were lured by the prevalent high rates of interest, and also for the rapid increase in the value of real estate.”

The Town of Minneapolis: 1852

Planning for the municipal organization of the west side of the river began when only a few white settlers had been granted claims—notably John H. Stevens and Robert Smith—and before the land was available for public sale. Hennepin County was organized on October 21, 1852 and the act of the Territorial Legislature provided that the commissioners select a county seat. A west side site was approved, and Albion was first selected as a name, but on November 5, 1852 Charles Hoag (1808-1888), a native of New Hampshire, suggested “Minneapol[e]s,” combining the Dakota word for laughing water, “Minne ha-ha” with the Greek word for city, “polis.” The “h” was dropped.

By the spring of 1854, there were only twelve houses in Minneapolis. One observer noted that they were “scattered at long intervals . . . their architecture was somewhat uniform, and, though picturesque, could hardly be called elegant, for at this time it was quite uncertain what action the government would take in reference to the [Fort Snelling Military] reservation.”

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13 Saint Anthony Express, 10 March 1855.
14 Holcombe and Bingham, Compendium, 74.
15 Ibid, 80.
16 Welles, Autobiography, 39.
17 Warner and Foote, History of Hennepin County, 183; Holcombe and Bingham, Compendium, 109, 111.
19 Warner and Foote, 375.
The Treaty of Mendota of 1851 ceded the Dakota land on the west side of the Mississippi to the U.S. Government, but the Fort Snelling Military Reservation still occupied the future site of Minneapolis. Legal land title following its reduction and survey would not be available for another four years.\textsuperscript{20} The first legal title to claim holders on the west side of the river was finally granted by the U.S. Government by the Pre-Emption Act passed in 1855.\textsuperscript{21} Within three months of its passage, an observer noted, “nearly twenty thousand acres were entered for title. Streets, buildings, stores, and community activities took form and shape.”\textsuperscript{22} The west-side population was estimated at 2,000, an increase of 1,800 in two years.\textsuperscript{23}

In 1854 surveyor Charles W. Christmas surveyed and platted about two-thirds of John Stevens’ property near the suspension bridge.\textsuperscript{24} The grid plan was oriented to the river as well as the existing Territorial Road to St. Anthony Falls (Hennepin Avenue). The convergence of present-day Nicollet and Hennepin Avenues created Bridge Square, which would be the focus of civic, commercial, and cultural life. Additions platted on both sides of the river created a patchwork pattern of blocks and lots.

\textit{Fig. 2. Map of the City of St. Anthony, Map of Minneapolis (Chapman & Curtis, 1856; Minneapolis Public Library).}

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid, 123, 163.
\textsuperscript{21} Theodore C. Blegen, \textit{Minnesota: A History of the State} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1963), 178.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{23} Warner and Foote, \textit{History of Hennepin County}, 378.
\textsuperscript{24} Horace B. Hudson, \textit{A Half Century of Minneapolis} (Minneapolis, Minn.: Hudson Publishing Co., 1908), 37; Warner and Foote, 375.
Town of Minneapolis Incorporated: 1856

On March 1, 1856, the Minnesota Territorial Legislature authorized the incorporation of the Town of Minneapolis and established its boundaries.

Minnesota Statehood and Town of Minneapolis Ratification: 1858

Future municipal progress followed the admission of Minnesota into the Union, which was passed by the U.S. Senate on April 7th, 1858 and was followed by approval by the House of Representatives.25 On May 11th, 1858, President James Buchanan approved Minnesota’s admission as the 32nd state. On July 5, 1858, a celebration was held on Nicollet Island that attracted thousands from across the state (see Chapter 2).26

It was not until July 7, 1858 that voters ratified the incorporation of the Town of Minneapolis.27 When the Town Council was organized on July 20, 1858, Henry T. Welles (1821-1898), having recently moved from St. Anthony, was elected president, along with council members for each of four wards. The first meeting was held in the Tribune Block in the office of attorney William Parsons.28

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26 Atwater, History of Minneapolis, 128, Shutter, History of Minneapolis, 661.
28 Warner and Foote, History of Hennepin County, 378.
Further complexity followed. Although Minneapolis was granted independent taxing authority was in 1860, in 1862, the state legislature repealed the act under which the village was incorporated, and merged township and village government under three township supervisors.\(^{29}\)

**City of Minneapolis: 1867**

A bill passed on March 2, 1866 by the Minnesota State Legislature granted a charter establishing Minneapolis as a city, but Minneapolis voters turned down the proposal by a vote of 551 to 466. In 1867, another attempt was made when the legislature approved a charter, but with a provision that approval by voters was not required. The city boundaries included about nine square miles on the west side of the river. On February 19th, 1867 municipal reorganization and election of the city’s first officers was completed.\(^{30}\) The charter provided for the offices of mayor, treasurer, comptroller, two justices of the peace, and aldermen representing the city’s four wards. It also provided for the creation of two districts for education, improvement of streets, and taxation for special purposes.\(^{31}\) Dorilus Morrison (1816-1898), a native of Maine who arrived in Minnesota in 1854, was elected the city’s first mayor.\(^{32}\) Morrison was a founder of the Minneapolis Mill Company and was an organizer of the Northern Pacific Railway.

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\(^{29}\) Ibid, 378.

\(^{30}\) Ibid, 378, 383; Atwater, *History of Minneapolis*, 86.

\(^{31}\) Atwater, *History of Minneapolis*, 86.

United Cities: 1872

The growing interest in merging St. Anthony and Minneapolis under a single municipal government and name was realized on February 28, 1872, when the Minnesota State Legislature approved consolidation. By 1870, Minneapolis had taken a strong lead in population and economic growth, and had 13,066 residents, compared to St. Anthony’s 5,013, and the west side flour mills were achieving high levels of production and profit. The vote in St. Anthony was 655 in favor, 146 against; in Minneapolis it was 987 in favor to 83 against. The first council meeting of the united cities was held on April 9, 1872. The oath of office was administered to Mayor-elect Eugene M. Wilson. Ten wards were created; six in Minneapolis and four in St. Anthony. At his inaugural address on April 12, 1872, Mayor Wilson addressed the topic of the “New Minneapolis:”

It is no easy task we have assumed. The union of the East and West Divisions is a most important epoch in the history of Minneapolis, giving her a true position among the cities of the West. A new strength seems gathered from united effort. A new life has been awakened in our citizens, and fresh hopes aroused. But the very necessity of trying to meet these lively expectations renders our situation more difficult. Widely extended city limits produce many apparently diverse interests and many conflicting opinions. The new attempt to unite two cities under one government presents many disorganized circumstances, and calls for much time and attention in their management. We must expect, at best, many complaints, and can only resolve to do our duty, carefully and conscientiously, asking of all good citizens a charitable consideration of our acts.

Infrastructure improvements were the first order of business, including the issuance of bonds for the preservation of the falls. A petition signed by 824 citizens requested bonds valued at $50,000 at 8 percent interest. A series of improvements, in addition to the dike and wooden apron already built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, would be undertaken during the next decade. The construction of new bridges was also among the first tasks for the government of the “New Minneapolis,” and a bond issue of $250,000 was authorized.

Fig. 5. City Hall and Bridge Square, ca. 1873

33 Atwater, History of Minneapolis, 87.
34 Minneapolis Centennial Celebration (Minneapolis, Minn.: Minneapolis Century Celebration, 1939), 12.
35 Minneapolis Daily Tribune, 10 April 1872, 4.
36 Minneapolis Daily Tribune, 13 April 1872, 3.
37 Ibid.
In 1873 the first City Hall of the united cities was erected in Bridge Square, about one block from the river. The Second Empire Style building had a steep mansard roof above its four limestone-clad stories. The building also housed the Minneapolis Tribune and the post office.\textsuperscript{39} With the migration of the city’s retail and institutional functions away from the square during the next thirty years, it was inevitable that its replacement of 1902—the present Minneapolis Municipal Building—would be sited six blocks from the river at 5th Street and 3rd Avenue S.\textsuperscript{40}

**Minneapolis Park Board: 1883**

A number of Minneapolis mill owners led the founding of the Minneapolis Park Board and oversaw the development of the city’s early park system. Minneapolis did not have a plan for a comprehensive park system until the Board of Trade requested legislative action for passage of a Park Act.\textsuperscript{41} In 1883 the state legislature authorized the creation of the Minneapolis Park Board. The body was to be independent of city government, and before voters approved the bill, there was debate over the value of a park system. Some groups, including the Minneapolis Knights of Labor, argued that real estate dealers and special interests were the primary beneficiaries, while others believed that park improvements benefited the entire population and added to the quality of life.

The election to ratify the Park Act was held on April 3, 1883, and passed by 1,405 votes. H.W.S. Cleveland, the designer of the early park system, reassured the Board that parks would increase land values and property taxes and provide the city with a long-term return.\textsuperscript{42}

The promoters of the park board included a core group of St. Anthony Falls millers and industrialists. Many served on the board over the next decades. Charles M. Loring was the first President of the Board of Park Commissioners and the first board included Dorilus Morrison, John S. Pillsbury, Samuel H. Chute, Benjamin F. Nelson, William W. Eastman, and George A. Brackett\textsuperscript{43}. The 1884 election of John A. Pillsbury as mayor of Minneapolis further “symbolized the millers’ political power.”\textsuperscript{44} These men and other investors at the falls arrived in the 1850s and 1860s, and they led several generations involved not only in milling, manufacturing, railroads, and real estate, but also in many aspects of local and national political life.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{39} Warner and Foote, *History of Hennepin County*, 497.
\textsuperscript{40} Larson, *Municipal Monument*, 11-13.
\textsuperscript{41} Theodore Wirth, *Minneapolis Park System 1883-1944* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners, 1945), 19.
\textsuperscript{42} “Suggestions for a System of Parks and Parkways for the City of Minneapolis,” in Wirth, 28-34.
\textsuperscript{43} Wirth, 26.
\textsuperscript{44} Joseph Stipanovich, *City of Lakes, an Illustrated History of Minneapolis* (Woodland Hills, California: Windsor Publications, Inc.), 150.
Minneapolis Timeline

1680
First Europeans at St. Anthony Falls

Father Louis Hennepin (1626-ca.1705), a Franciscan priest, and Antoine Auguelle were the first Europeans to visit St. Anthony Falls in July 1680, and Hennepin named the falls for St. Anthony of Padua. His travels along the upper Mississippi occurred during a period of North American exploration by the French under Louis XIV. Hennepin and his party, including Auguelle and Michel Accault, also visited Niagara Falls on their journey. Hennepin’s description of his experience at St. Anthony Falls, Description de la Louisiane, was published in Paris in 1683, and made the cataract “a widely known landmark in the wilderness.” Accompanied by Dakota at the falls, Hennepin called attention to Native American veneration of the cataract, and observed that a Dakota man

...was up in an oak opposite the great fall, weeping bitterly, with a rich dressed beaver robe, whitened inside, and trimmed with porcupine quills, which he was offering as a sacrifice to the falls; which is, in itself admirable and frightful.”

The Ojibwa called the falls Kakabikah in reference to the severed rock, and the Dakota used Owahmenah (falling water) and Mineehahhah (curling water).

Fig. 6. Father Hennepin at the Falls of St. Anthony. Painting by Douglas Volk (1856-1935), ca. 1905.

Hennepin was the first in a succession of white European and American explorers, geologists, and others to reach St. Anthony Falls. He was followed by Jonathan Carver of Connecticut, who explored from Mackinaw (Michigan) to Prairie du Chien (Wisconsin) ...

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47 Warner and Foote, History of Hennepin County, 24, 357.

48 Kane, The Falls of Saint Anthony, 2.
in 1766. The publication of Carver’s *Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America* (1778) provided a written description as well as an engraved illustration of the falls that was seen by a wide audience. In 1805, the Dakota granted the United States nine miles of each side of the Mississippi from its junction with the St. Peter’s (Minnesota) River, including St. Anthony Falls. Subsequently, American explorers made well-documented trips to the falls, including Zebulon Pike (1805), Stephen Long (1817), and Lewis Cass and Henry R. Schoolcraft (1820).49 The establishment of Fort Snelling in 1819 and the availability of steamboat travel after 1823 brought a new group of travelers who were variously scientists, artists, writers, politicians, and “wealthy excursionists” from the United States and Europe.50 They produced a new collection of written descriptions and artistic work focused on the falls and the surrounding landscape.

1819

*Fort Snelling*

Fort Snelling was the first fort established in present-day Minnesota by the U.S. Government. An important post placed at the edge of European-American settlement in the Northwest about seven miles below St. Anthony Falls, it was surrounded by extensive acreage and was a “strategic center for encircling settlement,” most notably the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul.51 Originally Fort Saint Anthony, it was renamed Fort Snelling in 1824 for its first commander, Colonel Josiah Snelling (1782-1828).

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49 Isaac Atwater, ed., *History of Minneapolis, Minnesota* (New York: Munsell and Company, 1893), 13-17, provides one of many outlines of exploration at St. Anthony Falls.


1821

*Government Sawmill and Gristmill*

A frame sawmill was the first building on the site of what would become Minneapolis. The mill was built was built by 5th Regiment soldiers from Fort Snelling near present-day Portland Avenue and the riverbank to supply lumber for the construction of buildings at the fort. The U.S. Government ran the mill until 1849, when it was leased to Congressman Robert Smith of Alton, Illinois, who was speculating on the industrial potential of the area. Smith refitted the building as a gristmill. Under Perkins and Crocker after 1862 it continued as the City Flour Mill until 1879, when it burned. The Northwestern Flour Mill was erected on the site.

In 1823, soldiers erected a gristmill at the falls adjacent to the sawmill. The small stone structure was described in 1824 by Colonel Josiah Snelling as “a fine building of stone, twenty-five feet high from the Bottom of the Cog-pit to the eaves; it is furnished with an excellent pair of burr stones and the flour manufactured the last year was equal to any in the world.” Food was often scarce in the unsettled territory with no surrounding agriculture, and the mill initially ground grain shipped from as far away as St. Louis. Corn was ground for the government cattle herd that was also stabled near the mills. Robert Smith also leased the gristmill in 1849, and purchased it in 1853. His leases established the “first non-military strongholds” on the west side of the river. The mill was abandoned by 1857 and razed in ca. 1866 for the construction of the Minneapolis Paper Mill.

![Fig. 8. Ruins of Government Mills (1821-1823), in ca. 1863.](image)

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52 Anfinson, 66.
55 “Soldiers Built First Flour Mill at St. Anthony,” *Greater Minneapolis Centennial Issue* (Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce, 1956), 38.
1838

First Land Claim and White Settlement at the Falls

When Franklin Steele beat Joseph Plympton in the race to stake a claim on the east bank of the river at St. Anthony Falls, he became the first permanent white settler of St. Anthony and present-day Minneapolis. His claim shanty was at Main Street and 2nd Avenue S.E. Steele received a deed for the property in 1848, but not before he began development of a dam and sawmill.60 Meanwhile, the land on the west side of the river was still part of the Fort Snelling Military Reservation and would not be open to legal claim until 1855, after ratification of the Treaty of Mendota, the reduction of the reservation lands, and government land survey.

1847

First Ferry
First Store in St. Anthony

Franklin Steele established the first ferry connecting the east and west riverbanks; such transportation was essential to early commerce. The ferry was a flat boat connected to a cable and was operated from the foot of Hennepin Avenue.61 Other crossing was by foot or team at low water along the ledge at the foot of Nicollet Island, or at Boom Island with canoes. Several people operated the ferry for Steele. Also, one Dakota woman, “who netted fish and lived mostly on the river, derived considerable income from setting travelers across with her canoe.”62 In 1854 Steele was among incorporators of the Minneapolis Bridge Company, which was formed to build a permanent crossing.63

Roswell P. Russell (1820-1896) opened the first store in St. Anthony in 1847 in a room of a house belonging to his future father-in-law, Luther Patch. Russell, a native of Vermont, arrived at Fort Snelling in 1839. He would later own flour and planing mills, serve in the state legislature, and hold City of Minneapolis offices.64 The house he built in 1847 was reportedly constructed from the first lumber sawed in St. Anthony, and his marriage to Marian Patch in 1848 was the community’s first.65 Russell and his family later operated a farm at W. 26th Street and Hennepin Avenue while he was active in real estate. Three of the four islands in Lake of the Isles were among his holdings. Calling him “a pioneer of the pioneers,” in 1893 Isaac Atwater wrote that he was

the first white man, now surviving, who looked upon the falls of St. Anthony, in its almost pristine wilderness . . . and the first, who selecting a picturesque claim on one of the emerald lakes [of Minneapolis], still makes the place his home, though changed from the country farm to the center of a populous suburb.66

60 Warner and Foote, History of Hennepin County, 175.
61 Anfinson, “Archaeology,” 45.
63 Atwater, History of Minneapolis, 31.
64 Ibid, 361.
65 Pennefeather, 31.
66 Atwater, 738.
1848

Franklin Steele’s East Side Dam and Sawmill

Franklin Steele saw the industrial potential of the falls situated between high bluffs, which could permit water to flow through sluices conducting water to flumes and canals powering mills.67 The first dam across the east channel of the river was built by Steele and Ard Godfrey (1813-1894), a native of Maine who arrived in 1847. The log structure was placed below Nicollet Island.68 Steele and Godfrey next erected a sawmill that rested on a 50-foot wide platform. In the spring of 1848, “the mill was ready and the sawing began.”69 In 1849 two more sawmills were completed.70 This was the first commercial sawmill at the falls, the previous mill having been the one built for government use in 1821. At this time, one observer noted,

Minneapolis consisted of nothing but a few pioneers who were putting up rude cabins near the Falls of St. Anthony. The combination of magnificent water power and unlimited forests is too familiar a story to need amplification here; it was an easy step to convert the finished lumber into trimmings for the houses of the new colony, and from that to take the further step of making a surplus and supplying the outlying country.71

During the following decades, Steele was occupied with promoting and developing his holdings. He was a partner in developments such as the Minneapolis Bridge Company (1854), the St. Anthony Water Power Company (1856), and many real estate schemes. He was at the center of a community of new arrivals with similar interests in waterpower development, and was the “most powerful friend of the new settlement.”72

67 Warner and Foote, History of Hennepin County, 389.
69 Warner and Foote, History of Hennepin County, 177.
72 Ibid, 361.
Fig. 11. East side dam and platform sawmills looking west at Minneapolis, ca. 1857.

1849

*John Stevens’ West Side House*

Permission to occupy the military reservation on the west side of the river was first granted to Robert H. Smith, who obtained a lease for the government gristmill and sawmill, and John Harrington Stevens (1820-1900). A native of Canada, he arrived in Minnesota Territory in 1849. Like a number of early settlers, his career was diverse and included roles as farmer, newspaper editor, merchant, and state legislator.

Fig. 12. John H. Stevens in ca. 1858.  
Fig. 13. John H. Stevens House, ca. 1855.
Stevens, who agreed to maintain a ferry for the transport of government troops and supplies, was permitted by the U.S. Secretary of War to occupy 160 acres of land extending from Bassett’s Creek to 2nd Avenue S., and he began construction of the first house built by a white settler on the west side. \(^{73}\) Completed in 1850, the one and one-half story, Greek Revival Style building was situated near present-day West River Parkway at the Hennepin Avenue Bridge, while his garden occupied part of what later became Bridge Square. This house was a center of civic life in the sparse settlement. Stevens and his wife Francis hosted meetings that resulted in the creation of the first school district, the organization of Hennepin County, and the naming of Minneapolis. As the city developed around it, the building was moved several times it, finally to Minnehaha Park in 1896. \(^{74}\)

Stevens’ property, however, was not available for legal claim until 1855. \(^{75}\) When he legally claimed the land in 1855 he sold and gave away many of the lots for development. \(^{76}\) By this time there were more than 100 houses in the area and one author noted, “some would do credit, both in structure and durability, to the city of New York.” \(^{77}\)

\(\text{Fig. 14. View of first suspension bridge in ca. 1865, looking northwest; John Stevens House is white building near center, Pacific Sawmill is in the background.}\)

\(^{73}\) Ibid, 372; Holcombe and Bingham, History and Biography, 485.
\(^{74}\) The house is owned by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. See http://www.minneapolisparks.org/default.asp?PageID=4&parkid=274.
\(^{75}\) Ibid, 376-377.
\(^{76}\) Anfinson, “Archaeology,” 45.
\(^{77}\) Warner and Foote, 877.
1850

First Steamboat Arrival

On April 1, the Anthony Wayne was the first steamboat to reach St. Anthony Falls from St. Paul.\textsuperscript{78} On May 25th, the Governor Ramsey left Minneapolis on the first steamboat launched above the falls. The vessel was built in St. Anthony by John Rollins, and the boiler and other machinery was built in Bangor, Maine, and shipped to New Orleans, and then upriver by steamer.\textsuperscript{79} Despite Minneapolis’ claim as the head of navigation, reliable service between St. Paul and Minneapolis was not assured due to low water and river hazards. By 1857 there were 52 steamboat arrivals at Minneapolis and St. Anthony, bearing a total of 4,720 tons of freight.\textsuperscript{80}

Boatbuilding was among the occupations represented in St. Anthony, which now had a population of about 500.\textsuperscript{81} William Gates LeDuc, then living in St. Paul and later a resident of Hastings, stood at the falls in ca. 1852 and later wrote:

The hammer of the ship builder is now heard . . . The mills, boat building and the teams hauling lumber give occupation to a great many hands for which labor they receive cash and for their wants they pay it out. Wants stand no chance amongst such a people. Town lots that this time last year sold for 50$ have been successively sold for 1, 2, 3 times and now some of them cannot be bought for 500$. Schools and academies, library and historic associations, are shedding their beneficent influences around and a healthful industry is marking this place for its own.\textsuperscript{82}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{steamboat.png}
\caption{Steamboat Governor Ramsey (anchored at Lake Minnetonka), ca. 1870.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid, 121.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid, 178; “The Early Chronology of Minneapolis,” Minneapolis Journal 31 March 1911, 4.
\textsuperscript{80} “Early Chronology,” 4.
\textsuperscript{81} Anfinson, “Archaeology.” 22.
\textsuperscript{82} William Gates LeDuc, ca. 1854-55 manuscript in William G. LeDuc and Family Papers, Minnesota Historical Society.
First Churches and Hotels

By 1880, Minneapolis would have sixty churches representing diverse congregations comprised of European immigrants and African-Americans as well as the city’s founding group of New England settlers. Many of these churches had their roots in the early congregations of St. Anthony and Minneapolis. The early congregations often organized and met in temporary quarters before the construction of permanent buildings, and the first generation of buildings were typically simple frame buildings. One of the first churches erected near St. Anthony Falls was for the Catholic congregation of St. Anthony of Padua at 9th Avenue N.E. and Main Street. The simple wood structure was completed by Father Augustin Ravoux in 1850-51, and served many French-Canadians.83 The Holy Trinity Protestant Episcopal Church congregation completed its first building in 1850 at 2nd Street and 2nd Avenue S. E.84 The First Methodist Episcopal Church congregation built their first church in 1852 on present-day University Avenue between Central and 2nd Avenues S.E.85 This was one of the first “Methodist church edifices in the state.”86

The First Congregational Church of St. Anthony completed its first building at 4th Street N.E. and East Hennepin Avenue in 1854.87 The First Baptist Church of St. Anthony built a chapel on the corner of 4th Avenue and 2nd Street S.E.88 While most of these congregations were comprised of New Englanders, Irish, and French-Canadians, the early African American community organized St. James African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in 1863 and occupied a “small frame building” on 2nd Street between 1st and 2nd Avenues S.E.89 St. James AME Church is now at 3600 Snelling Avenue S., and is the city’s oldest African-American congregation.

84 Shutter, ed. History of Minneapolis, 588; Atwater, History of Minneapolis, 194.
85 Warner and Foote, History of Hennepin County, 465.
86 Ibid, 465.
87 Shutter, History of Minneapolis, 585.
88 Ibid, 572.
89 Atwater, History of Minneapolis, 178.
The most impressive of the early buildings was that of the Universalists. In 1859 they erected a Greek Revival limestone church on Prince Street overlooking St. Anthony Falls; at the time of its construction, it was considered “the finest church building in Minnesota.” It survives as Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, after having been sold to that French-speaking congregation in 1877. It was extensively remodeled by the new congregation in the 1880s. It is the oldest continuously used church building in Minneapolis.

Hotels were also important symbols of the community’s progress. The first hotel in St. Anthony was the Charles, opened in 1850 by Anson Northrup at 6th and Marshall Streets S.E. It accommodated 75 guests. Its west-side counterpart, also erected by Northrup, was the Minneapolis House in Bridge Square, opened in 1853.

1851
State University, First Newspapers, and First Photographers

![Fig. 17. Looking north from Winslow House toward the preparatory school of the State University in 1857.](image1)

![Fig. 18. Second Ave. South and Washington Ave. looking east toward St. Anthony Falls; Minnesota Democrat office is in foreground, ca. 1857.](image2)

The State University was incorporated and its first building was erected as a state university preparatory school operated by Professor E. W. Merrill. The Greek Revival Style building was located at Orman and Bank Streets, to the rear of the future Winslow House (1857). The first building on the University’s present campus, downriver, was erected in 1858.

The first newspaper at the falls, the weekly St. Anthony Express, was organized on May 31. Elmer Taylor, a tailor, was the publisher, and Isaac Atwater, a lawyer, served as editor until 1858. The Northwestern Democrat was started in St. Anthony in 1853 by George W. Prescott. He sold it to W.A. Hotchkiss who published it on the west side in

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90 Shutter, History of Minneapolis, 611.
91 Atwater, History of Minneapolis, 218.
92 Warner and Foote, History of Hennepin County, 497; Atwater, History of Minneapolis, 30.
93 Ibid, 439; Atwater, History of Minneapolis, 113.
1854.\textsuperscript{94} These weekly papers were characterized as conservative. The \textit{St. Anthony Republican} was founded in 1855. The anti-slavery and temperance sentiment of many early settlers was reflected in its first editions; in 1857 it was purchased by W. A. Croffut and Edwin Clark and they issued it as the \textit{Daily Falls Evening News}, the “first daily paper to be published in Minneapolis.”\textsuperscript{95}

Among the first photographs taken of the falls were those by photographers such as Joel Emmons Whitney (1822-1886) and Alexander Hesler (1823-1895). Like travelers and artists before them, they were inspired by the chaotic scene of the broken limestone ledge, white water spray or chunks of ice, and townsites precariously flanking the river’s edge.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{st_anthony_falls_image}
\caption{St. Anthony Falls, ca. 1850-1855 \newline Photographer: Joel Emmons Whitney (1822-1886).}
\end{figure}

\textbf{1853}

\textit{West Side Retail Trade}

Thomas Chambers is credited with opening the first store on the west side of the river. The building was leased from John Stevens and was located on Bridge Square. By 1854, one observer counted nine stores in Minneapolis, and the number grew to seventeen by 1855.\textsuperscript{96}

\textsuperscript{94} Sources disagree on the date the paper was published on the west side. Shutter, \textit{History of Minneapolis}, offers 1854.
\textsuperscript{95} Shutter, \textit{History of Minneapolis}, 438.
\textsuperscript{96} Warner and Foote, \textit{History of Hennepin County}, 378; different totals are given in accounts such as “The Early Chronology of Minneapolis,” \textit{Minneapolis Journal} 31 March 1911, 4.
1854

*Island Mill*

The Island Mill built on Hennepin Island was the first commercial flour mill on the east side of the river and the second at the falls. Owned by John Eastman, John Rollins, and Rufus P. Upton, the three-story, 40 x 60-foot mill was overbuilt for its time of construction, because not enough wheat was yet raised in the surrounding area to keep it in production; grain was shipped Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota by barge. With improved milling techniques and rail transportation, however, flour output and shipment potential was greatly enhanced; by 1858, the Island and other mills at the falls reached production levels that allowed Minneapolis flour to be shipped to eastern markets.  

![Image of Island Mill](image.png)

*Fig. 20. Building boom in St. Anthony: Main St. to Seventh St. S.E., looking down Second St. in St. Anthony in 1857.*

The first building boom in Minneapolis and St. Anthony extended from 1854 to the Panic of 1857. A number of “elegant private residences” were reported on both sides of the river, along with 42 business places, and a variety of physicians and attorney’s offices, and several hotels and boarding houses. Many of the houses of this period were of Greek Revival style, with low-pitched gable roofs and resting on limestone foundations quarried from nearby ledges. Millwork trim was applied to the windows and entries, and sidelights and a glazed transom framed the entry of some of the well finished. Two Greek Revival houses from the pre-1857 period survive, but not in their original locations. The Ard Godfrey House (1849), is now in Chute Square, and the John H. Stevens House (1849), is now in Minnehaha Park.

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98 Ibid, 378.
99 Ibid.
Figure 21. Ard Godfrey House, 109 Prince St. (1849), in 1899.

Figure 22. Ard Godfrey House after relocation to Chute Square, 1924.

1855
Suspension Bridge

The wire Suspension Bridge over the Mississippi from Minneapolis to St. Anthony is one of the most successful and beautiful structures that exists in the United States . . . . Future generations will say that the great “father of Waters” was successfully bridged by private individuals, residents mostly of St. Anthony and Minneapolis, and every stockholder a citizen of the Territory. Truly this is an age of progress. Six years ago St. Anthony was a howling wilderness and Minneapolis was not known.100

The first permanent bridge over the Mississippi “throughout its entire length” was opened between Nicollet Island and the west bank by the Mississippi Bridge Company.101 Designed for the Minneapolis Bridge Company by New York engineer Thomas M. Griffith, the wood-towered, wire suspension structure was 620 feet long. Operated as a toll bridge, one observer noted that “the tolls were high, the travel increased rapidly, and the revenue was large.”102 A wood-beam span bridge crossed the east channel.

Figure 23. First suspension bridge (1855), looking toward St. Anthony, in 1865.

100 “Grand Celebration,” St. Anthony Express, 13 Jan 1855, 2.
102 H. T. Welles, Autobiography, 34.
Although the land on the west side was part of the Fort Snelling Military Reservation and not yet open to settlement, the bridge marked the potential of a city spanning both sides of the river. A celebration to mark the opening of the bridge was held on January 23; in addition to a mile-long procession, there was a banquet at the St. Charles Hotel at Marshall Street and 6th Avenue S.E. in St. Anthony (see Chapter 2). The wire suspension bridge was replaced by a new stone suspension bridge in 1876.\textsuperscript{103}

One witness remembered that 1855, which began with an economic boom that collapsed two years later, proved to be “memorable for the influx of money, brought or sent by the owners for the purpose of loaning, and who were lured by the prevalent high rates of interest; and also for the rapid increase in the value of real estate.”\textsuperscript{104}

**1857**

*Winslow House*

A surge of new settlement that began in 1854 and the economic boom that followed was checked by the Panic of 1857:

> the fortunes which seemed already in the grasp of many, treacherously slipped away and passed into the hands of others, and in this way some of the first claimants, who were entitled to, and were worthy of, the highest rewards came out poor.\textsuperscript{105}

Despite the poor economic times, the Winslow House opened as the first “luxury” hotel on the riverfront. The five-story, Italianate Style building was intended for a new class of visitors to St. Anthony Falls including those from southern states, and became a center of life in early St. Anthony. Perched on a high bluff overlooking the falls, and built of limestone from the riverbank ledge on Central Avenue at a cost of $150,000, the hotel closed during the Civil War.\textsuperscript{106} Following other short-term uses including a hospital, it was torn down in 1886. It was replaced by the Exposition Building (1887), which was next replaced by the Coca Cola Plant (1940) and most recently, the Lourdes Square townhouses (1994).

The west-side counterpart of the Winslow House was the yellow-brick Italianate Style Nicollet House (1858), which stood on Washington Avenue at the foot of Bridge Square. The hotel hosted an opening banquet on May 26, 1858 for 200 guests. After serving as a center of civic and social life, the building’s 50th anniversary was celebrated with another gala on May 26, 1908. The building survived until 1923.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{103} Anfinson, “Archaeology,” 119.
\textsuperscript{105} Warner and Foote, *History of Hennepin County*, 377.
\textsuperscript{107} Millett, *Lost Twin Cities*, 74-75.
1858

*Minneapolis Mill Company and St. Anthony Falls Water Power Company*

*First Platform Sawmills*

The first dam across the channel was completed in 1858. In 1856, the Minneapolis Mill Company was created for east-side power development, and the St. Anthony Falls Water Power Company was created for west-side development. Between 1856 and 1858 the companies erected a V-shaped dam to divide the flow into two millponds. The Minneapolis Mill Company began construction of a 300-foot waterpower canal along 1st Street South in 1857, which increased the number of potential mill sites and would eventually underpin one of the densest flour milling districts in the world. The company also built a 350-foot-long wood platform for sawmills. A waterpower canal was not constructed on the east side until 1880. The well-managed Minneapolis Mill Company, led by stockholders including Dorilus Morrison and William D. and Cadwallader C. Washburn, “laid a solid base for industrial expansion in Minneapolis.”

The Pioneer and Champion were the first platform sawmills opened on the west side of the river. The platform supported other sawmills and a planing mill and cotton mill. An estimated 300 saws were operation in Minneapolis and St. Anthony by the end of 1858. Mills processed logs floated from the winter’s timber harvest into lumber, shingles, and lath, and employed hundreds of workers.

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110 Anfinson, “Archaeology,” 73.
111 Anfinson, “Archaeology,” 24, 72.
The west side platform was demolished in 1887, but not before an observer noted in 1881:

The business to which Minneapolis owed its growth entirely for many years was that of lumber. This industry has been extended and is now one of vast dimensions. Situated near the southern boundary of the extensive pineries, the falls were first utilized in reducing its logs to lumber . . . Every log that comes down the river bears testimony by the rings of its successive year’s growth, to the preparation of centuries for the habitation of enlightened men.112

![Image of St. Anthony Falls and Pioneer Lumber Mill in ca. 1860 (left), Cataract, Holly, Union, and Arctic Mills, 1859-61 (right).]

**1859**

*First Commercial Flour Mill*

The Cataract, the first commercial flour mill built in Minneapolis, was erected by Eastman & Gibson on the west side power canal along First Street S. The three-story mill was built from limestone excavated from the building site.113 By 1880, 25 flour mills would line the canal.114

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112 Ibid. 400.
113 Anfinson, “Archaeology,” 60.
114 Anfinson, “Archaeology,” 50.
1862

First Railroad

The Minnesota and Pacific Railroad was the first to reach St. Anthony Falls. On June 28, the locomotive Wm. Crooks led cars carrying about 100 passengers along ten miles of track built from St. Paul. Until this date, only poor roads and the river brought settlers and freight to the falls. The first depot was built at Main Street and E. Hennepin Avenue. The Minnesota Central Railroad Company was the next to operate from the vicinity of the falls, and eventually provided a connection from the west side of the river to Chicago. Construction began in 1863, and followed a southerly route to Mendota along present-day Minnehaha Avenue, which was the territorial road to Fort Snelling. The first railroad bridge linking the east and west-side riverbanks was completed in 1867. Railroad construction surged after the Civil War with the opening of grain markets to the west. By 1910 the lines of eleven railroad companies crossed Minneapolis.

![Railroad Map of St. Paul and Minneapolis (St. Paul: R.W. Johnson, 1875)](image)

1865

First Telegraph

The Northwestern Telegraph Company opened an office “over Baldwin’s Bank” in Bridge Square and offered the first telegraph service on one line extending from St. Paul to Faribault via Minneapolis. By 1886, Western Union and the North American Telegraph Company, a local firm, also offered service.

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116 Ibid, 429.
118 “Railroads Make Minneapolis Like Hub of A Wheel,” *Minneapolis Journal* 13 April 1911, 68.
1866

Milling Advances

The Pacific Mill, a steam sawmill, was constructed north of the flour mill district on the west side. Located east of River Street between 1st and 2nd Avenues N., it was the “first major sawmill” outside the mill district, and demonstrated that steam power could successfully complete with waterpower (Fig. 14).  

Fig. 28. Washburn A Mill (1873-74), before the 1878 explosion.

The Washburn B Mill, at 622-626 S. 2nd Street, was completed in 1866 and was the largest flour mill west of Buffalo, New York. This title was next held by the Washburn A Mill completed in 1874, which was destroyed by an explosion in 1878. George H. Christian, a developer of new milling technology known as the middlings purifier, became a partner of Cadwalder C. Washburn in 1868. Middlings purifier equipment was first installed in the Washburn B Mill in 1871. The “new process” flour produced by Minneapolis mills, and supplied by a vast wheat region to the west, provided consumers with a fine flour and yielded more flour per bushel of wheat. Minneapolis milling firms’ increasing command of technology, distribution, and marketing would propel them to world prominence.

121 Anfinson, “Archaeology,” 42.
122 Anfinson, “Archaeology,” 68.
123 Anfinson, “Archaeology,” 68.
1870

Wood Apron

On October 5, 1869, the Eastman Tunnel under construction between Nicolleit and Hennepin Islands collapsed. The already fragile soft sandstone below the thin limestone ledge was undermined by tunnel construction as well as natural erosion. The cataclysmic event threatened St. Anthony Falls and brought great fear for the future of Minneapolis. One observer wrote, “Men saw in imagination a ruined water power, crushed hopes, the loss of large investments, and a deserted city.” The first full-length wood apron was constructed over the falls in 1870 to prevent further erosion of the thin layer of limestone.

1873

Roller Milling

The first roller milling system was installed in the Zenith Mill (1871) at 708-710 S. 1st Street in 1873. Rollers were substituted for millstones and, along with the middlings purifier, contributed to the revolution in flour production. The Zenith Mill was destroyed in a fire caused by the Washburn A Mill explosion in 1878. It was rebuilt, and torn down in 1931.

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124 Welles, Autobiography, 158.
125 Pennefeather, 70.
1875

Streetcars

The first horse-drawn streetcar service offered by the Minneapolis Street Railway Company was routed from Bridge Square along 4th Street S.E. to the University of Minnesota campus that was now located on University Avenue at 15th Avenue S.E. The equipment consisted of one car drawn by a single horse. By 1889, the system expanded to the edges of the city, and in 1889 improvement and electrification began.\textsuperscript{128}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{horse-drawn-streetcar.png}
\caption{Horse-drawn streetcar, ca. 1885}
\end{figure}

1877

Telephone Service

One historian noted that “Minneapolis was one of the first cities in the country to make a practical application” of the telephone invented in 1875 by Alexander Graham Bell.\textsuperscript{129} The city’s first telephone line ran from the residence of the general manager of the Northwestern Telegraph Company to City Hall in Bridge Square. The Northwestern Telephone Company was organized in 1878 and opened exchanges in Minneapolis and St. Paul in 1879.\textsuperscript{130} The first subscribers included the Nicollet Hotel, West Hotel, the Pillsbury Mills, a physician, the city jail, two liveries, a restaurant, and a meat market.\textsuperscript{131}

1880

Center of Flour Production

The Washburn Crosby Milling Company received the gold medal at the first (and only) International Millers Exhibition in Cincinnati. Minneapolis attained the national lead in flour production, out-producing St. Louis. It held this title until 1930.\textsuperscript{132} In 1884, it surpassed Budapest, Hungary and gains the title of the world’s leading flour producer.\textsuperscript{133}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{128} Hudson, Half Century, 519. \\
\textsuperscript{129} Shutter, History of Minneapolis, 174. \\
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid; Hudson, Half Century, 521. \\
\textsuperscript{131} Shutter, History of Minneapolis, 174. \\
\textsuperscript{132} Kane, Falls of St. Anthony, 99. \\
\textsuperscript{133} David B. Danbom, "Flour Power: The Significance of Flour Milling at the Falls," Minnesota History 58 (Spring 2003), 271-285.
\end{flushright}
Fig. 32. Pillsbury A Mill, Minneapolis (1881), in 1885.

The Pillsbury A Mill was erected at Main Street and 3rd Avenue S.E. Designed by Minneapolis architect Leroy S. Buffington, this mill was regarded as the largest in the world at the time of its construction, and contributed to the mill district’s capacity as the world’s flour milling capital. The A Mill was a symbol of the progress of the C.A. Pillsbury Company to create a pure, high-gluten flour using the latest steel roller technology. In the 1880s, the Minneapolis flour mill industry enjoyed a vast supply of hard spring wheat, which made the finest flour. The industry’s leadership in flour production was based on cheap rail transportation, an efficient cost of production including methods of raising, harvesting, and storing wheat, as well as “greatly improved” methods of grinding.  

Fig. 33. First Chamber of Commerce Building (left), 3rd St. and 4th Ave. S. (in ca. 1895), and Second Chamber of Commerce Building, 4th St. and 4th Ave. S. (in ca. 1903, right).

The Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce was created in 1881 for grain exchange. In 1883, after receiving nearly 33 million bushels of grain, Minneapolis was

ranked first of the country’s ten primary wheat markets, over New York, Chicago, and Toledo.\textsuperscript{136} The first building occupied by the Chamber of Commerce was replaced by a ten-story building at 4th Street and 4th Avenue S. in 1902. It was the “largest grain and flour business conducted in any one structure in the world.”\textsuperscript{137} An annex was constructed in 1909.

1882

\textit{Hydroelectricity}

One of the first hydroelectric central stations in the U.S. was put in operation on Upton Island by the Minnesota Brush Electric Company. The plant was a small wood building housing five Brush arc-light generations turned by a line shaft connected to a water wheel.\textsuperscript{138} The city’s first arc lamp streetlights were installed in 1883; the contract with the Brush company called for seven arc lamps on Washington Avenue between 4th Avenue N. and 8th Avenue S. The firm also built a short-lived, 257-foot steel tower that carried eight 4,000-candle power lamps to advertise the advantages of electric light.\textsuperscript{139} Although the central station was only in operation for two years, when it relocated to a new steam plant at 3rd Avenue N. it had demonstrated the potential of efficient distribution of electricity to multiple customers. The building was torn down in the 1890s and the site was redeveloped for the Upper Lock and Dam in 1959.\textsuperscript{140}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{light_mast.png}
\caption{Light mast at Bridge Square, 1883.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{136} “Minneapolis Was Recognized,” \textit{Minneapolis Yesterdays (Minneapolis Morning Tribune}, 1947), 45.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid, 641.
\textsuperscript{139} Shutter, \textit{History of Minneapolis}, 162-63.
\textsuperscript{140} Anfinson, “Archaeology,” 73, 41.
Stone Arch Bridge

This viaduct, which has now been nearly three years in building, is the only one of its kind that spans the Father of Waters, and is one of the longest and most noteworthy in the United States. 141

The 2,100-foot-long Stone Arch Bridge that curved across the Mississippi from 6th Avenue S.E. to Portland Avenue S. was completed in 1883 and opened for service in 1884. Designed by Colonel Charles C. Smith as a unique 23-arch structure, this was the first and only stone arch bridge across the main channel of the Mississippi. Financed by James J. Hill, it carried the first line to reach into the heart of Minneapolis, where the Union Depot (1885) at Bridge Square served seven railroads.142

In 1879 the St. Paul and Pacific Railway Company was reorganized as the St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Manitoba, with James J. Hill as manager. Hill became president of the St. Anthony Falls Water Power Company in 1882, and of the Great Northern Railroad in 1890.143 Under “Manitoba” the route gave Minneapolis a direct outlet to the Pacific.144 The St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba was renamed the Great Northern Railway in 1890. Rail traffic across the bridge ceased in 1981, but it reopened as a pedestrian and bikeway in 1994.

Fig. 35. Stone Arch Bridge (1883) and St. Anthony Falls in ca. 1900. Spirit Island is in the foreground. Industrial Exposition building is in the background.

141 Daily Minneapolis Tribune, 23 Nov. 1883.
143 Hudson, Half Century, 467.
144 Richard S. Prosser, Rails to the North Star (Minneapolis: Dillon Press, 1966), 27.
1886

*Industrial Exposition Building*

The Industrial Exposition Building was the first of its kind in Minneapolis and was created to increase the national prominence of the city’s manufacturers and other businesses. The eclectic architectural design of the $250,000 building, which was the “largest public building of the nineteenth century in the Twin Cities,” featured a 260-foot corner tower overlooking the river. The building was designed by Isaac Hodgson and occupied a city block at the corner of Main Street and Central Avenue S.E. Intended to promote new technology as well as to serve as a convention center, it hosted a six-week gala opening in 1886, followed by annual expositions. In 1892, before the exposition business went bankrupt in 1895, the building was the stage for the national Republican National Convention. In 1903 the hall became the International Stock Food Company mail order warehouse. It was demolished in 1940 for construction of a Coca Cola bottling plant. Although it had a short life as an exposition hall, the building was associated with a period of boosterism that also produced events such as the Harvest Festival of 1891 (see Chapter 2).

![Industrial Exposition Building](image)

*Fig. 36. Industrial Exposition Building (1886) in 1895.*

1890

*Lumber Production*

Minneapolis reached first place among lumber-producing cities in the United States. In 1890, 15 mills cut 360 million feet of lumber, with 400 million feet cut in 1891. Minneapolis continued to lead the world in flour production, boasting the largest mill in the world: the Pillsbury A had a capacity of 7,500 barrels per day. The city’s mills collectively produced more than 7 million barrels with a value of $35 million.

1892

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147 Atwater, *History of Minneapolis*, 570.  
Presidential Convention

The first presidential convention held in Minnesota (and the first Republican Convention held west of St. Louis) was headquartered at the Industrial Exposition Building, where seating for 12,000 was prepared, and “six telephones were available for delegates.” Benjamin Harrison was nominated.

Fig. 37. Interior of the Exposition Hall at the Republican National Convention, 1892.

1897
With the introduction of Vitos, the Pillsbury Milling Company was the first Minneapolis miller to enter the breakfast cereal market.

1924
The country’s first radio cooking show, the Betty Crocker School of the Air, was produced by Washburn, Crosby. In 1926, the company ran the first singing commercial, when a barbershop quartet performed “Have You Tried Wheaties?” on the company-owned radio station, WCCO.

1966

1968
Reiko Weston built the Fuji-Ya Restaurant on the foundation of the Columbia Mill and the Bassett Sawmill Engine House. The Fuji-Ya was the first of several restaurants and other new businesses that were opened on the east and west sides of the river by the early 1970s. The building was acquired by the Minneapolis Park Board in 1987.

1969

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149 “When the G.O.P. Came to Town,” Minneapolis Yesterdays (Minneapolis Morning Tribune, 1947), 3.
150 Prohofsky, 86.
152 Peterson and Pearson, Architecture and Historic Preservation, 41.
One of the first adaptive reuse projects on the riverfront was by architect Peter Hall, who began renovation of the Pracna Building (1890) at 117 Main St. S.E. as a residence and office, and then as the Pracna Restaurant.  

1971
The Saint Anthony Falls Historic District was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

1972
*Mississippi/Minneapolis* was published by the city of Minneapolis. It was not the first planning study of the riverfront, but the recommendation that industrial land use along the river be replaced with housing and parkways was a first comprehensive statement of this new potential use.

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154 Ibid, 8.
Chapter Two

Celebrations, Pageants, and Centennials:
Telling the Story of the Falls, 1855-1956

This chapter examines the parades and celebrations that involved thousands of residents and visitors in displays and reenactments of the city’s pioneer history around St. Anthony Falls. The Harvest Festival Parade (1891), Minneapolis City of Waters Civic Celebration (1911), Diamond Jubilee Pageant (1928), Minneapolis Century Celebration (1939), Minneapolis Centennial (1956), and a number of other parades and events incorporated historic themes into all or part of their programs.

Publications and programs sometimes accompanied these productions, as well as detailed newspaper coverage. The sponsors’ objectives included education and civic boosterism as well as entertainment. Significant portions of the events were based on the telling and retelling of familiar stories, but across eras that put different demands on participants’ sense of the past and their available leisure time.

Never before, did such a collection of distinguished men and women meet within sight and sound of Saint Anthony Falls . . . .

Minneapolis began to chronicle and celebrate its founding at St. Anthony Falls beginning with a processional marking the opening of the first bridge across the Mississippi in 1855. The parades, festivals, pageants and civic events that followed marked important events and increasingly included carefully-told stories of the pioneer landscape, business leaders, industries, and institutions.

The citizens present at the election of Minneapolis’ first town council in 1858 and at other 19th-century events would still recognize a few features of their early urban landscape, most notably the islands spanned by the first bridges, a piece of escarpment ledge clinging to the east bank, the outline of the V-shaped dam and the falls, the oldest surviving house in St. Anthony (now located in Chute Square), and a few commercial buildings on Main Street. Citizens present 25 years later, in 1883, would see the new, already landmark-scaled Pillsbury A Mill and the rebuilt Washburn A Mill, and the spectacular Stone Arch Bridge. These sites have since been described and celebrated by generations of historians and civic promoters. Some—such as the Stone Arch Bridge reopened as a pedestrian bridge in 1994—are symbols of the renewal of the riverfront.

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Early Historians: Newspapers and Published Histories

Pioneer settlers of St. Anthony and Minneapolis recorded their personal stories of the founding and early days of each community. In addition to the eyewitness narratives published in the St. Anthony Express, Minnesota Republican, and other newspapers, letters of early residents, and their quotes published in city histories established a template for the telling and retelling of the progress of the riverfront. The succession of published histories—including Warner and Foote (1881), Stevens (1890), Atwater (1893), Holcombe and Bingham (1914), Hudson (1908), and Shutter (1923) were supplemented by numerous features in city, territorial, and state centennial publications, city and business directories, and special trade publications. Many of the authors and editors of these and other publications had personally witnessed much of the city’s early history.

By 1900, special features in the Minneapolis Journal presented detailed chronologies of the city’s history. Such features were typically interwoven with trade promotions. A standard theme was the remarkable population growth of the city: from 46,887 in 1880 to 164,738 in 1890, and to 202,718 in 1900 and 380,582 in 1920.156 By 1900, with millions of bushels of grain pouring into elevators and flour manufacture conquered, city promoters predicted that Minneapolis would also be a great distribution center for manufactured goods. Despite the primacy of a rail network with twenty lines entering the city, they observed that Minneapolis “has not faltered in steady and rapid growth because she has both the tributary country and the water transportation.”157 The Minneapolis Journal asked,

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156 Shutter, History of Minneapolis, 675.
157 “The Facts About Minneapolis,” Minneapolis Journal April 18, 1900, 1, Special Section.
... what more natural site than the falls of St. Anthony, at the head of navigation in the Mississippi—a site combining the advantages of the commercial location with that of great water-power and natural manufacturing advantages?\textsuperscript{158}

Special features in the \textit{Minneapolis Journal} such as “Commercial Minneapolis at Dawn of 20th Century” (1900), and “History of Minneapolis” (1911) combined detailed descriptions of every variety of business with historical chronologies.\textsuperscript{159} Coverage of civic and centennial celebrations also triggered such special historical features.

Other types of publications continued the same theme. The \textit{Minneapolis Golden Jubilee, 1867-1917}, published by the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce, extolled the city’s firsts as well as its modern position in the grain markets of the world.\textsuperscript{160} The editors solicited articles from existing business owners rather than churning familiar pioneer stories.

Despite the shift of community life away from the downtown riverfront, the Minneapolis Civic and Commerce Association’s \textit{Quarterly Magazine} of May 1930 was devoted to local history and commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the discovery of St. Anthony Falls. The objective of the association was to “tell the world the facts that make our city a desirable place in which to live.” The editors noted, “many names and incidents will not be found in these pages that have been important in the development of the city. Rather have we selected those characters and incidents that are directly related to our present work.”\textsuperscript{161} The issue offered an article about the early settlers, who,

under the spell of St. Anthony Falls ... became press agents, propagandists for the site of a city in the remote Northwest beside a water fall whose discoverer had said, “It indeed, is terrible and hath something very astonishing.”\textsuperscript{162}

\\textsuperscript{158} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{160} Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce, \textit{Minneapolis Golden Jubilee} (Minneapolis: The Chamber, 1917).
\textsuperscript{161} “Why An Historical Issue?” \textit{Minneapolis-A Quarterly Magazine} (May 1930), title page.
\textsuperscript{162} “When St. Anthony was News,” \textit{Minneapolis-A Quarterly Magazine} (May 1930), 18.
Celebrations and Parades

Suspension Bridge Celebration (1855)

The January 23, 1855 celebration of the opening of the Suspension Bridge foreshadowed the festivity and scale of future commemorative events around St. Anthony Falls and in Bridge Square. As was standard in American mid-19th century communities, most parades were held to honor holidays such as the 4th of July or Decoration Day, or had other military or Masonic themes. Masonic and other organizations such as the Grand Army of the Republic were especially fond of erecting temporary ceremonial arches and columns.

Fig. 41. First suspension bridge (1855) in ca. 1865, looking northwest.

The celebration to mark the opening of the bridge held on January 23 included a mile- long procession and a banquet at the St. Charles Hotel at Marshall Street and 6th Avenue S.E. in St. Anthony. Two days later, the Minnesota Republican reported that the event occurred on a day that had been “frosty,” but was accompanied by the “jingling of innumerable bells.”

At 1 o’clock, a long procession, formed at the Charles House . . . proceeded, amid the firing of cannon, the flaunting of banners, and strains of martial music from Lawrence’s Brass Band, to Nicollet Island, and thence over the new Suspension Bridge. That superb structure was decorated with evergreens for the occasion, some of which were brought from Lake Superior by W. Q. Allen, and reached here the day before. Each of the four towers was surmounted by the “stars and Stripes,” which were also attached in a miniature form, to the heads of the leading horses, and waved in simple folds from the tall flagstaff horse in the procession. To one standing on the island, shore, or bridge, this was indeed magnificent . . . The procession was long in passing, and upwards of one hundred different teams were counted, most of which were double.

163 “Celebration at the Opening of the Mississippi Wire Suspension Bridge,” Minnesota Republican 23 Jan. 1855, 2.
164 Ibid.
Many speeches were offered at the dinner. The Republican reported that one speaker reminded guests, “there is more in that Bridge than you imagine. It will be an incentive to a branch Railroad to the Pacific. It will at least remove one great obstacle. It will show that the river can here be bridged. But you must use this event aright, and give the proper notoriety to it.”\textsuperscript{165}

\textit{Nicollet Island Statehood Celebration (1858)}

This event reportedly “surpassed all former efforts” in St. Anthony and Minneapolis. Minnesota was admitted into the Union on May 11, 1858 and “a new star was added to the flag on the 4th of July.”\textsuperscript{166} Invitations were sent to St. Paul and outlying cities and towns, and “at an early hour the roads leading to Minneapolis were thronged with vehicles carrying patriotic citizens to the great celebration.”\textsuperscript{167} The event was held on Monday, July 5, because the 4th fell on a Sunday.

A grand procession formed in front of the Nicollet House in Bridge Square and began the march to Nicollet Island, where it met another procession from St. Anthony. Many members of the Legislature and prominent citizens from all parts of the new state were present. There were five tables, each 200 feet long, with seating in the area for several thousand people. A dinner was held after a reading of the Declaration of Independence. Toasts were offered, including those to “Our Dual City,” and the “The Broad Mississippi that Flows by Our Side.”\textsuperscript{168} One observer noted that “for several years afterward the number of people at a public gathering was estimated by the size of the crowd” assembled at this event.\textsuperscript{169}

\textit{Hennepin Bi-Centenary (1880)}

The city of Minneapolis never saw such as day as yesterday. It almost appeared as though the inanimate earth on which the city is built—her magnificent blocks of buildings, her immense mills and even the grand Falls themselves, were aware that something more than ordinary was taking place.\textsuperscript{170}

The Minnesota Historical Society organized this event to commemorate Louis Hennepin’s arrival at St. Anthony Falls in 1680. A procession on July 3, 1880 was led by General William T. Sherman, Secretary of War Alexander Ramsey, Governor John S. Pillsbury, and former Governor C. C. Washburn, and included the Minneapolis City Council and Hennepin County Board, the Fort Snelling Military Band, members of various Masonic organizations, the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, and citizens. The procession began at the Nicollet House at the foot of Bridge Square, and proceeded across the newly built, second suspension bridge en route to the University of Minnesota.

\textsuperscript{165} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{166} Shutter, \textit{History of Minneapolis}, 660.
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{168} Shutter, \textit{History of Minneapolis}, 661.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{170} “The Hennepin Bicentenary,” \textit{Minnesota Historical Collections} (vol. 6; 1894), 29-30.
Words were inadequate to describe the appearance of the procession and streets along the line of the march. The sidewalks and the streets also were a complete moving mass of humanity of ages and both sexes,” noted an observer. Some people were concerned about the load on the new bridge, but it was reported, “the suspension bridge never before was put to such a test, and hereafter may be considered safe.” On the campus, the procession was greeted by a salute fired by an artillery company from Fort Snelling, and ended at an area filled with tents and canopies, and tables “loaded with substantial food, enough to feed thousands.” Addresses included those by Sherman, Ramsey and Bishop John Ireland. Sherman noted that he had come a long distance to honor the memory of the discoverer of St. Anthony Falls, and to recognize the “worth of the Historical Society, and to do what I can in my humble sphere, to encourage them in collecting the data” about Hennepin and those who had settled the area.

Northern Pacific Railroad Parade (1883)

The national celebration of the linking of the Northern Pacific Railroad to the west coast reached Minneapolis on September 3 and included an elaborate parade along Washington Avenue. Tens of thousands of spectators came to see Northern Pacific Railway President Henry Villard, President Chester Arthur, and General Ulysses S. Grant. Villard noted that “twenty-six years before he had walked over the site and found only a single

Fig. 42. Parade for the Opening of the Northern Pacific Railroad, September 3, 1883.

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171 "The Hennepin Bicentenary, “ Minnesota Historical Collections (vol. 6, 1894), 33.
172 Ibid, 33.
173 Ibid, 33.
174 Ibid, 63.
175 Lucile M. Kane and Alan Ominsky, Twin Cities, 90.

177 *Minneapolis Journal*, 6 September 1883.
Annual expositions were held until 1890, when enthusiasm and the economy waned. Following several years of poor crop yields, however, Minnesota’s bountiful crop harvest of 1891 was celebrated with a Harvest Festival organized by the Industrial Exposition. This event was planned in less than two weeks, with George A. Brackett as general chairman.\textsuperscript{178} The Harvest Festival Parade was held on September 23, 1891, and set a new standard for Minneapolis celebrations. Pronounced “the most magnificent affair of its kind in the history of America,” the parade celebrating the bountiful harvest was led by a committee numbering 50, including the “best business men of the city.”\textsuperscript{179} Intended to “outstrip the much vaunted Villard demonstration,” it was to be a “mine of useful and instructive information telling the world of the growth of Minneapolis and of this great Northwest.”\textsuperscript{180}

![Image of Harvest Festival procession](image_url)

\textit{Fig. 45. Harvest Festival procession, corner of Nicollet Avenue and 6th Street.}

The Harvest Festival parade lasted four hours (some accounts described five) and showed the industrial progress as well as the history and growth of the City of Minneapolis “from its Col. Stevensian days to the present . . . when Minneapolis stands alone the Queen of the great Northwest.”\textsuperscript{181} An estimated 1,000 floats were enrolled and 300,000 spectators were reported. The starting signal for the parade was the firing of a 24-pound bomb, and the procession passed through a triumphal arch at 5th and Nicollet. By this time, Bridge Square and Nicollet Avenue were the central focus of parade routes. While industry and agriculture were the dominant themes, history and architecture were featured on a

\textsuperscript{178} Shutter, \textit{History of Minneapolis}, 673.
\textsuperscript{179} “Harvest Festival 91,” \textit{Minneapolis Journal} 23 Sept 1891, 1.
\textsuperscript{180} “The Last Call,” \textit{Minneapolis Journal}, 22 Sept. 1891, 1.
\textsuperscript{181} Shutter, \textit{History of Minneapolis}, 672-673.
number of floats, including the one by Minneapolis architects that displayed an Indian in a birch wigwam, representing architecture of 1852.  

Fig. 46. Illustration from Harvest Festival feature, Minneapolis Journal, September 19, 1891, 1.

The New York Times covered the event, and Minneapolis Journal coverage included features with historical information, including the observation that the John Stevens house, once near the foot of the Hennepin Avenue Bridge, was then “standing unoccupied on 18th Avenue S. between 3rd and 4th Streets.” The event was planned as an annual observance, but the Exposition Building closed in 1895 and was not revived.  

Interspersed with such celebrations were special publications and guidebooks authored by trade associations. Not tied to a specific celebration, they intermixed promotion of business with local history and civic boosterism. They relied on extensive illustrations to show the city’s progress from its birth at St. Anthony Falls.

Minneapolis After Fifty Years (1911)

The Publicity Club of Minneapolis was founded in 1907 with the objective to “make Minneapolis a better city.” Arthur Warnock, passenger agent for Minneapolis Rapid Transit Company, was the first president. A history of the organization claimed that the Publicity Club “played a large part in turning Minneapolis from a ‘hick’ town to a metropolitan city.” Although Minneapolis was a successful city of 200,000 when the club was founded, a member explained:

. . . when one turned into Nicollet avenue, for example, at that time and walked from Third street to Tenth street under a succession of hanging signs, many of them rusty and one-hinged, some of which had been up for years, that swing in the wind and creaked and groaned and were unsightly. When a committee from the Publicity Club first went up and down the street telling the merchants the plan was to take down all such signs, and also the signs across the fronts of the Nicollet avenue buildings, the change seemed so radical that there was much hesitation. When the plan was explained in full, however . . . the merchants were

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182 Ibid.
183 “Harvest Festival 91,” Minneapolis Journal 23 Sept 1891, 2.
184 Ibid; Millett, Lost Twin Cities, 179.
185 “Publicity Club is Recalled,” Minneapolis Journal 25 April 1926, 2.
for it and the beautiful Nicollet avenue of today was the result. This was the first thing that the Publicity Club did for Minneapolis.186

Between 1906 and 1911, when it was absorbed by the Civic and Commerce Association, the Publicity Club worked on various campaigns, including the improvement of the city water supply and promotion of the linking of Calhoun, Isles, and Cedar Lakes. In 1911, the Publicity Club produced *Minneapolis After Fifty Years*, a handsome, compact book that extolled the city’s progress as “no boom-bust, just steadily growing.” This 24-page publication apparently accompanied the Minneapolis Civic Celebration held in July 1911. The volume traced the progress of the city between 1856 and 1911, illustrated with photographs of the changing St. Anthony Falls:

Fifty-five years ago the site of Minneapolis was an Indian Reservation in the Territory of Minnesota whose total population was not more than one hundred thousand souls. In those days transcontinental railroads were unknown. The word “west” stood for the wilderness and the fear of Indian outbreaks . . . . In 1860 the government census enrolled 5,849 Minneapolitans. The census of 1910 shows 301,408. All that Minneapolis has accomplished may be told in the history of a short half-century. What will have developed after another fifty years can only be judged by a glance at the accomplishments of the first half-century and the solid foundation for further progress.

*Minneapolis After Fifty Years* visited the highlights of grain, wholesale, retail, banking, transportation industries, and a well-managed city government. The city’s art and music, entertainment, religious and educational institutions were also reviewed, along with its parks and parkways and residential districts. The rise of its population, from 5,849 to 301, 408 in 50 years (1860-1910), and the fact that more cash wheat was sold at the Chamber of Commerce Buildings [Grain Exchange] than at any other place in the world were highlighted. In addition to illustrating the above, the volume also reassured readers that “squirrels and song birds are not molested in the parks.”187 This was an important period for the involvement of business leaders in city improvement activities, and coincided with the City Beautiful Movement and the development of modern city planning.

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186 Ibid.
187 Publicity Club of Minneapolis, *Minneapolis After Fifty Years* (Minneapolis: the Club, 1911), n. p.
Civic Pageants, Centennials, and Organizing for Improvement

At the turn of the 20th century, and with a population that had reached more than 200,000, Minneapolis needed to modernize its infrastructure and reform its educational and governmental structure. Many Progressive-Era politicians embraced these concerns. By 1910 there were hundreds of organizations in Minneapolis, including business and commercial associations, fraternal lodges, church auxiliaries, trade unions, and many local and neighborhood groups. Although the objective of the trade associations was business promotion, many were also involved in civic improvement, most notably the Board of Trade (founded in 1867), Chamber of Commerce (1881), Minneapolis Business Union (1890), Commercial Club (1892) and Civic and Commerce Association (1911). The Committee on Civic Improvement, later the Civic Commission, was founded in 1909 as an unofficial body organized to create a city plan. Following the tenets of City Beautiful Movement, their goals included the beautification of the city and the reclamation of river frontage. Projects such as the Gateway Park and Pavillion (1908-1915; razed), and the Plan of Minneapolis (1917) resulted. In Minneapolis and other cities, modern city planning grew out of the sponsorship of these and other activities focused on parks, downtown improvement, and transportation.

![Image of Gateway Park, ca. 1916.](image)

In an era of transcontinental rail travel, a mushrooming number of national conventions served to boost professional organizations and to generate a national perspective on many topics. Minneapolis leaders, especially those involved with the Civic and Commerce Association, observed the national popularity of the historical pageant format promoted

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189 The Minneapolis Civic and Commerce Association had a membership of more than 5,000 business and industrial leaders. The group’s civic and industrial mission was similar to its offspring, the Greater Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce. For its role in labor, see William Millikan, “Defenders of Business: the Minneapolis Civic and Commerce Association Versus Labor During W.W. I,” *Minnesota History* (Spring 1986), 3.
190 Edward Bennett, with Andrew Wright Crawford, *Plan of Minneapolis* (Minneapolis: Civic Commission, 1917).
by the American Pageant Association (APA) and other organizations. They, like community leaders in other cities, surmised that a celebration centered on a pageant drawn largely from local themes—in this case the story of St. Anthony Falls and the ingenuity and sacrifice represented by its early settlers—offered many benefits. One historian suggested,

The pageant form, and the historical themes, abstract symbolism, and ritual actions embedded within it, appealed to the desire of men and women in the Progressive Era to make tangible in public their ideals, their position in a succession of past and future generations, and the emotional basis of their modern community life.191

The Minneapolis Civic Celebration held in 1911 is evidence of Minneapolis’ participation in activities promoted by the American Pageant Association, and coincides with the organization of the Civic and Commerce Association in 1911.192 The retelling of the history of the city’s birth and the pageants were key in maintaining awareness of the importance of the riverfront, even as it was fading. Historians have studied the pageants for the way in which they solidified a common history, handed information from one generation to another, and created local symbols.193 In Minneapolis as elsewhere, they often reflected a program of urban political reform and civic boosterism, and were a tool to reform the use of leisure.194

![Fig. 49. Minneapolis Civic Celebration, July 2-8, 1911 Celebration Program (Hennepin History Museum)](image)

194 Ibid, 2-3.
In the early 20th century, pageants combined the interests of civic improvers with those of dramatists. In 1910,

The American Pageant Association sought to guide the course of pageantry through conferences, publications, and training programs. . . . Pageant directors shared their expertise in drama, social work and historical research with local schoolteachers, recreation workers, and civic boosters seeking “proper instruction” in the new way of celebrating holidays.195

For civic leaders, the pageant was a way to promote the city’s economic vitality, and also, “explain the city to itself.”196 Advice about elaborate staging and performances was provided by national expertise. A group of specialists, primarily artists, educators, and social workers, were at the heart of the APA, and they “banded together to attempt to assert technical and aesthetic standards in a wide-open field and to distinguish themselves as pageant ‘experts’ amid the growing crowd of amateur and commercial directors.”197 Guides to “casting, financing, and organizing” local productions were published. Suggestions for the selection of historical themes emphasized the local, but the pageant plans and frameworks developed by the APA “tended to standardize historical action and imagery nationwide.”198 Large cities such as Minneapolis might use APA materials directly, but the information was widely disseminated through newspapers and magazines with mass circulation, through women’s clubs and patriotic associations, and even through courses offered at colleges.

All of this brought some standardization to the undertaking, and “community historical pageants typically depicted past generations as religious, temperature, hard-working, and patriotic.”199 Past generations were “bound together in times of peace and joy,” emphasizing hard work, idealism, and sacrifice.”200 Despite the similar backgrounds of civic organizers, diverse groups were represented. This could be accomplished as follows:

While the casting recommendations emphasized the inclusion of a wide variety of local groups, they also tended to reinforce the distinctions between those groups. Rather than suggesting that pageant roles be cast in ways that crossed ethnic, vocational and organizational lines, pageant-masters recommended that the casting and rehearsal of each pageant episode be placed under the direction of a different group, whose members already knew one another and had experience working together.201

The APA’s casting recommendation that townspeople “impersonate their ancestors had the effect of accentuating, rather than submerging, local social distinctions. The practice

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198 Ibid, 113, 123.
199 Ibid, 124.
200 Ibid, 126.
201 Glassberg, 113-14.
of casting descendants in the roles of their ancestors followed the custom evident in historical reenactments of the late 19th century that displayed descendants, especially elderly ones, as living links with the past.”

Nationally, organizers of historical pageants “used history to present an idealized portrait of local social relations.” This is evident in Minneapolis, where through historical imagery, civic groups outlined how local residents were to “envision the nature of their community, the position of various groups within the community, and their place as a community in a succession of past, present, and future generations.”

In 1919, Minneapolis was ranked by one source as the “leading pageant city of the world.” Despite this title, Minneapolis’ truly elaborate historical pageants proved to be limited in number, but pageants devoted to various dramatic topics were standard fare at public school and Minneapolis Park board events. A notable event was the Minneapolis Art Institute’s 1918 patriotic production, “The Torchbearers,” which involved 1,500 actors from the Civic Players of Minneapolis and was staged on the steps of the museum.

Minneapolis Civic Celebration (1911)

The program of the Minneapolis 1911 Civic Celebration includes features that are educational and inspiring, as well as entertaining. It is to be, not a mere jollification designed solely to amuse and divert, but is intended to emphasize the prosperity of the Northwest and to illustrate some of its notable achievements.

Led by Arthur N. Warnock, President of the Minneapolis Civic Celebration, this week-long celebration of “civic festivities and processional splendor” was a professionally produced event that was anchored in part on the story of Minneapolis, but also showcased the Park Board and its parkways, and marked the July 5 opening of the channel between Lake of the Isles and Calhoun. Events on the lakes included “aquatic fireworks, illuminated craft, and beautiful floating tableaux” including Cleopatra’s barge, Leif Ericksen’s ship, a Venetian gondola, and a Chinese junk.

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202 Ibid, 114.
203 Ibid, 126.
205 The Torchbearers: an Historic Pageant Presented by the Civic Players of Minneapolis on the Steps of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (Minneapolis: Civic Players Co., 1918). The pageant was performed for the Women’s Committee of the Jewish War Sufferers Relief Fund.
206 “Greeting to Minneapolis Visitors,” Official Program, Minneapolis 1911 Civic Celebration (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Civic Celebration, 1911).
207 “Minneapolis Great 1911 Civic Celebration,” Program Brochure, (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Civic Celebration, 1911); “Ancient Vessels Pass in Review,” Minneapolis Journal, 6 July 1911, 2; “Greeting to Minneapolis Visitors,” Official Program (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Civic Celebration, 1911). The official program noted that Minneapolis was one of the “very first cities to establish a safe and sane celebration of the Fourth of July.”
The celebration was held July 2 to 8, and was advertised to attract 500,000 at a cost of $100,000. Following an inaugural Sunday celebration that included church services, the schedule included Minneapolis Day, Citizen’s Day (on the 4th of July), Aquatic Day, Historic Pageant Day, Industrial Day, and Homecoming Day. A downtown parade featured a festooned and colonnaded Nicollet Avenue. The Pageant Day used a “peerless parade of splendid floats” to “tell graphically the thrilling history . . . of events in Minneapolis and State history.”208 The historic pageant presented in Loring Park included appearances by state pioneers, including George A. Brackett, Caleb D. Dorr, and J. B. Gilfillan. More than 150 amateur actors participated in the depiction of the arrival of Father Hennepin at St. Anthony Falls, the Hiawatha story, and the early settlement at the falls. The narrative was summarized as “the struggle of the various nationalities against the odds of nature and the Indian in the earliest days; the problem of state making and state saving; the entrance of the “national problem” in 1861 and the gradual process of welding people of many counties into an integral whole.”209

![Image of parade](image.jpg)

Fig. 50. Minneapolis Civic Celebration parade on Nicollet Avenue, 1911.

**Minneapolis Golden Jubilee (1917)**

The publishing of this Golden Jubilee history of Minneapolis, marking the city’s fiftieth birthday, sincere efforts have been put forth to present in concise form, not only the story of outstanding features in the city’s life, but to record achievements of men and institutions directly responsible for the growth of our city. Minneapolis has no hoary history. In its rise is found a remarkable instance of

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208 “Greeting to Minneapolis Visitors,” *Official Program* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Civic Celebration, 1911).
city building. In less than the ordinary span of life the city has advanced from the obscure frontier village of 1867 to a conspicuous position among metropolitan giants of the nation—a city of more than 380,000, with well established social and commercial institutions worthily noted for their progressive attitude in many lines of endeavor.\textsuperscript{210}

Apparently not attached to a civic event, the handsome 194-page volume detailed the industrial progress of the city and relied on business pioneers as well as those currently heading the city’s leading firms. For example, William Henry Eustis, an attorney who was mayor in 1892, contributed “Minneapolis, the Metropolis, Grows on Foundation Laid by Plucky Pioneers,” which explained the business and political life of the 1880s and 1890s.\textsuperscript{211}

Local commercial organizations also employed the pageant form. A “pageant of progress” parade was held on Lake Street between Lake Calhoun and the Mississippi River on June 21, 1923. The parade “represented the growth of Minneapolis and the advance of its economic life.”\textsuperscript{212} Historical exhibits and events were a standard part of the growing number of trade expositions, including the Industrial Exposition and Home Appliance Show at the Minneapolis Auditorium in June 1936. Here, “a pageant presented daily during the exposition reviewed the history of Minneapolis during the past hundred years.”\textsuperscript{213}

\textit{Diamond Jubilee Pageant (1928)}

Diamond Jubilee Pageant Program: “The Largest for its Age in the World”

The Seventy-fifth anniversary of the naming of Minneapolis is being celebrated in 1928 in a series of events calculated to call to the attention of Minneapolis and the entire Nation the fact that this metropolitan city, boasting a population approximating a half million is the largest city for its age in the world.\textsuperscript{214}

The Diamond Jubilee Pageant was a full local exercise of the objectives of the American Pageant Association. Called a “massive, colorful, and historically accurate pageant,” it involved the production of 13 scenes of Minneapolis and area history, and relied on 1,000 amateur actors from 13 Minneapolis wards. The pageant was presented at the Minneapolis Auditorium on June 25-27, 1928. Welles Eastman, the grandson of Henry T. Welles, the first Mayor of St. Anthony, was the chairman, with Mayor George E. Leach, honorary chairman. Willard Dillman of Excelsior wrote the play.\textsuperscript{215}

\textsuperscript{210} Minneapolis Golden Jubilee, 1867-1917: a History of Fifty years of Civic and Commercial Progress (Minneapolis: Tribune Job Printing Co.), preface.
\textsuperscript{211} “Minneapolis, the Metropolis, Grows on Foundation Laid by Plucky Pioneers,” Minneapolis Golden Jubilee, 5.
\textsuperscript{212} “General Minnesota items,” Minnesota History (August 1923), 240.
\textsuperscript{213} “General Minnesota items, Minnesota History (September 1936), 348.
\textsuperscript{215} Diamond Jubilee Pageant Program, 1928.
Minneapolis’ colorful history, the men and women who founded the straggling little village beside the falls of St. Anthony, who helped to build the metropolis it is today, will pass in review before a modern Minneapolis...  

The elaborate scenes spanned Father Hennepin’s arrival in 1680 to the close of World War I and included topics such as the history of saw and flour milling, southern tourism at the falls and slavery, the 1869 tunnel collapse, the 1878 mill explosion, and Scandinavian immigration. The pageant opened with a living reproduction of the painting of Father Hennepin at the Falls (1905) by Douglas Volk. Most of the scenes were presented against a backdrop of St. Anthony Falls. The scenes were presented by various committees divided across the city by ward. The YMCA, Margaret Barry, and Pillsbury Settlement houses, South Side Neighborhood House, commercial clubs, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the St. Anthony Turnverein were represented.  

Pioneers and their descendants were invited to participate, although there was a greatly diminished number as compared to 1911. Harriet Godfrey, the daughter of Ard Godfrey, Samuel R. van Sant, former Governor of Minnesota, and Silas A. Fowler, Commandant

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217 “Thousands see History Pageant,” *Minneapolis Journal*, 26 June 1928, 1; *Diamond Jubilee Pageant Program*, 1928.
of the Soldiers’ Home, were recruited for pageant parts.\footnote{Minneapolis Journal, 29 June 1928.} A ball held on the floor of the auditorium concluded the event.

\footnote{Minneapolis Journal, 29 June 1928.}
Minneapolis Centennial Celebration (1939)

The story of Minneapolis is one to thrill its citizens.\(^\text{219}\)

The Depression ended expensive citywide pageants, but various types of pageants and dramatic performances remained an important part of many school, Park Board, and other celebrations. When a commemorative civic event resumed in 1939 with the Minneapolis Centennial Celebration, it was budget-conscious.

Intended to mark the founding of Minneapolis “100 years ago and to commemorate the arrival of the first white settlers,” the event (also called the Century Celebration) was sponsored by the Minneapolis Civic Council. Advertising executive J. C. Cornelius led the planning. The focus of the celebration was “morale building, and telling of the story of the city’s exploration, discovery, adventure, [and the] the trials of early pioneers . . . the vision of men and women who laid the foundations of the city, [who] all had their part in the story and contributed to its drama.”\(^\text{220}\)

The organizers of the Century Committee noted that they were trying to “utilize the activities and facilities which now exist in our community to promote, publicize and recognize the occasion both at home and elsewhere” and to “at little or no expense to the city or its people.”\(^\text{221}\)

In addition to events such as “Minneapolis nationality group celebrations,” barbershop quartets, and a variety of other special events, the Minneapolis Schools were encouraged to observe the Centennial with a “pageant production, musical concert or playlet.” There was a re-enactment of the first City Council meeting that was attended by all “government officials.”\(^\text{222}\) A century celebration parade included history-themed floats. The “largest map of the loop ever made” showed 100 landmarks of Minneapolis history around the riverfront and downtown, and visitors were encouraged to tour by car or bus.\(^\text{223}\)

Nicollet Avenue department store windows featured elaborate historical displays.

During the 1930s, Minneapolis and St. Paul suffered “adverse national publicity” because of labor unrest and organized crime. Creation of the Minneapolis Aquatennial Association was part of a response to improve national public relations, utilize the city parks, and attract visitors.\(^\text{224}\) When the first Minneapolis Aquatennial was held in 1940, it reflected themes already tested in 1911 at the Minneapolis Civic Celebration; most notably, the focus was on the city’s lakes and parks. The history of Minneapolis was deflected in favor of appearances by that of 92-year-old Chief One Bull, “last of the great

\(^{219}\) Minneapolis Centennial Celebration (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Century Celebration, 1939), 5.

\(^{220}\) Ibid.

\(^{221}\) Minneapolis Tribune 13 October 1939, 2.

\(^{222}\) Ibid.

\(^{223}\) Minneapolis Centennial Celebration (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Century Celebration, 1939), 15.

\(^{224}\) Minneapolis: City of Opportunity: One Hundred Years of Progress in the Aquatennial City (Minneapolis, Minn.: T.S. Denison and Co., 1956).
Sioux warriors and famous for his defeat of General Custer,” along with Gene Autry who broadcast his "Melody Ranch" programs from WCCO Radio.225

Minneapolis Centennial  (1956)

“This is Your Life, Minneapolis”

The Centennial Commission appointed by Mayor Eric G. Hoyer in 1952 first set out to determine exactly which date should be celebrated. Because of two settlements with different “first” dates of platting and organization, there was confusion. One report stated that the city’s birth should be 1952, corresponding with the naming of the settlement (but in conflict with the date chosen by the 1928 Diamond Jubilee).226 In 1953, the Minnesota Attorney General advised the City of Minneapolis that March 1, 1956 (observing the incorporation of Minneapolis) or March 3, 1955 (observing the incorporation of St. Anthony) would be suitable.227

![Image of the Dayton Company window display for the Minneapolis Centennial, 1939.](image_url)

Dairy business owner Ray Ewald led the Centennial Commission. The focus was on the “boisterous lumber days and the development of the milling industry” over a six-day period.” The first television-era observation, it perhaps acknowledged the public’s shorter

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225 http://www.aquatennial.com/history.php
227 Minneapolis Star, 1 April 1953.
attention span. Features included development of an insignia and Centennial Pioneer Night, which was a “pageant type of spectacle depicting 100 years of Minneapolis life,” to be produced by a professional theatrical company with guest stars as feature attractions.” Plans for a centennial stamp were not realized although Senator Hubert Humphrey had introduced a bill to issue a stamp in honor of the 100th anniversary of the opening of the first suspension bridge over the Mississippi River. The city instead received a special postage stamp cancellation reading, “Minneapolis Centennial 1856-1956 City of Lakes.” The seal for the celebration showed the suspension bridge encircled with the title, “First Bridge Spanning Mississippi River 1856.”

![Fig. 55. Banquet program, Minneapolis Centennial, 1956.](image)

The Minneapolis Centennial Plaza at 6th Street and 2nd Avenue S. was sponsored by First National Bank, which donated the cleared site of its future building. The plaza included historical displays and a reconstruction of the first Minneapolis post office.

The Centennial Celebration was hailed as setting a pattern for the Minnesota State Centennial that followed in 1958. “Press, radio and television focused through the lens of 1956 on events which had built a frontier village to a metropolis of half a million in a

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228 *Minneapolis Tribune*, 26 Jan. 1956, 1.
229 Charles Bailey, “History May Block City Bid for U.S. Stamp,” (undated clipping), noted that part of the conflict over stamp issuance was the unresolved question if the St. Anthony Falls bridge was the first to span the Mississippi; boosters for the area around Davenport, Iowa and Rock Island Illinois claimed they had the first. It was also pointed out that the bridge was completed in 1855, not 1856, making 1956 “a poor year to mark a centennial.”
single century." The Centennial Committee printed 25,000 copies of *Minneapolis—City of Opportunity*. The 240-page volume described the history of the city and its commercial and industrial growth, and noted,

Our century. Minneapolis’ first 100 years, has been one of the great transforming times of man’s history. It has been a time of yeasty ferment, of startling growth and development . . . in this brief, crowded ten decades man has moved from the horse-drawn plow and the river steamboat to the jet airliner and the atom-powered engine. Minneapolis reflects the city of its birth in many ways . . . through all its 100 years Minneapolis has been a dynamic city. It never stood still. That’s one of the reasons its story is worth telling.

By 1956, Bridge Square was at the center of planning for what would become the city’s Gateway Renewal Project. Even as public entertainment shifted away from the river to other points in the city, however, the story of the 19th-century growth of the city around St. Anthony Falls remained the central feature of many celebrations and commemorations. This overview of commemorative events and celebrations provides insight into how early residents and city leaders valued the history of St. Anthony Falls and its cities, even as the urban landscape was undergoing great transformation.

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231 *Minneapolis: City of Opportunity*, 7.
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