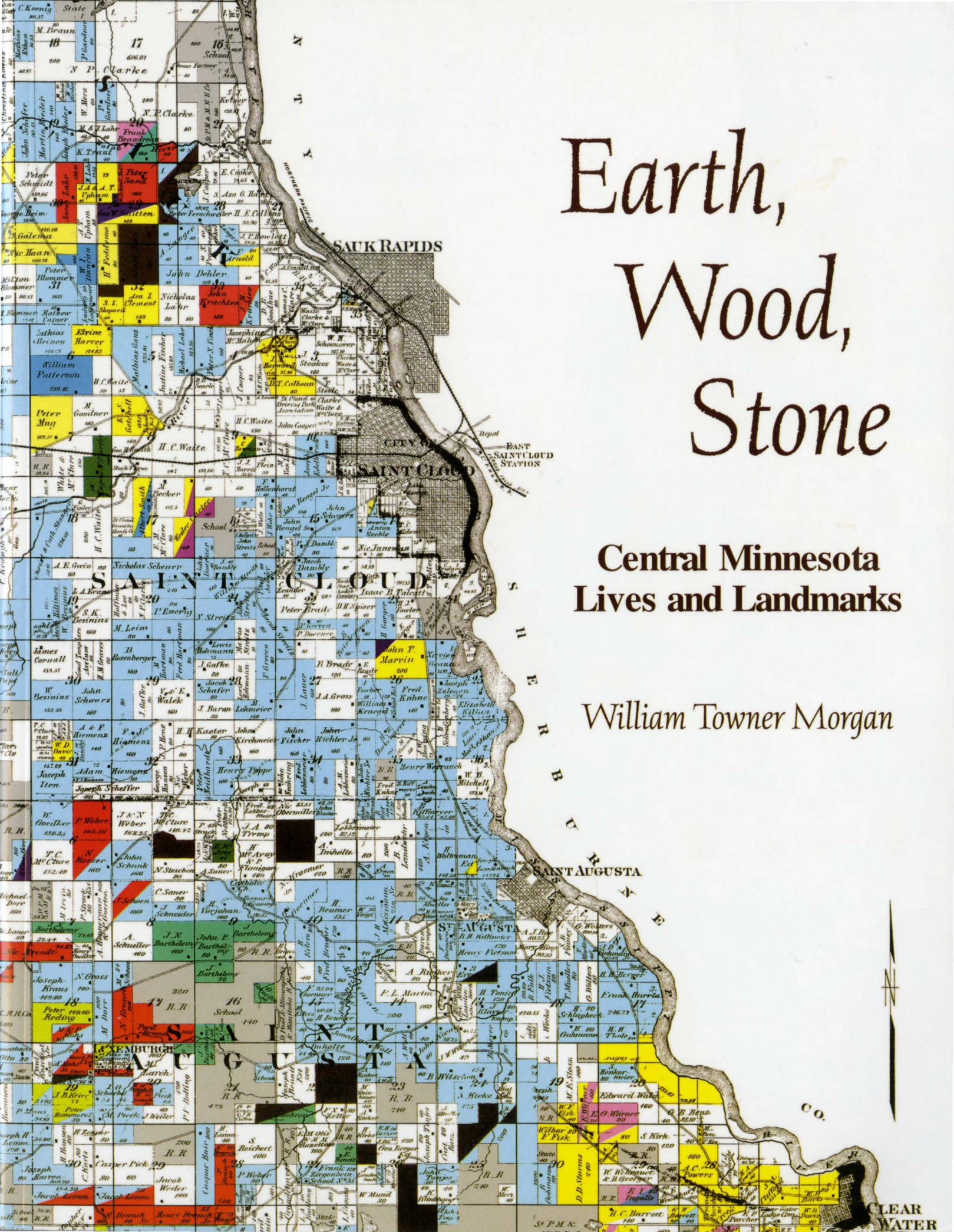
2008

Earth, Wood, Stone: Central Minnesota Lives and Landmarks (Volume 1)

William T. Morgan


Earth,
Wood,
Stone
Central Minnesota
Lives and Landmarks
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SAINT AUGUSTA
CLEAR WATER
MISSISSIPPI RIVER
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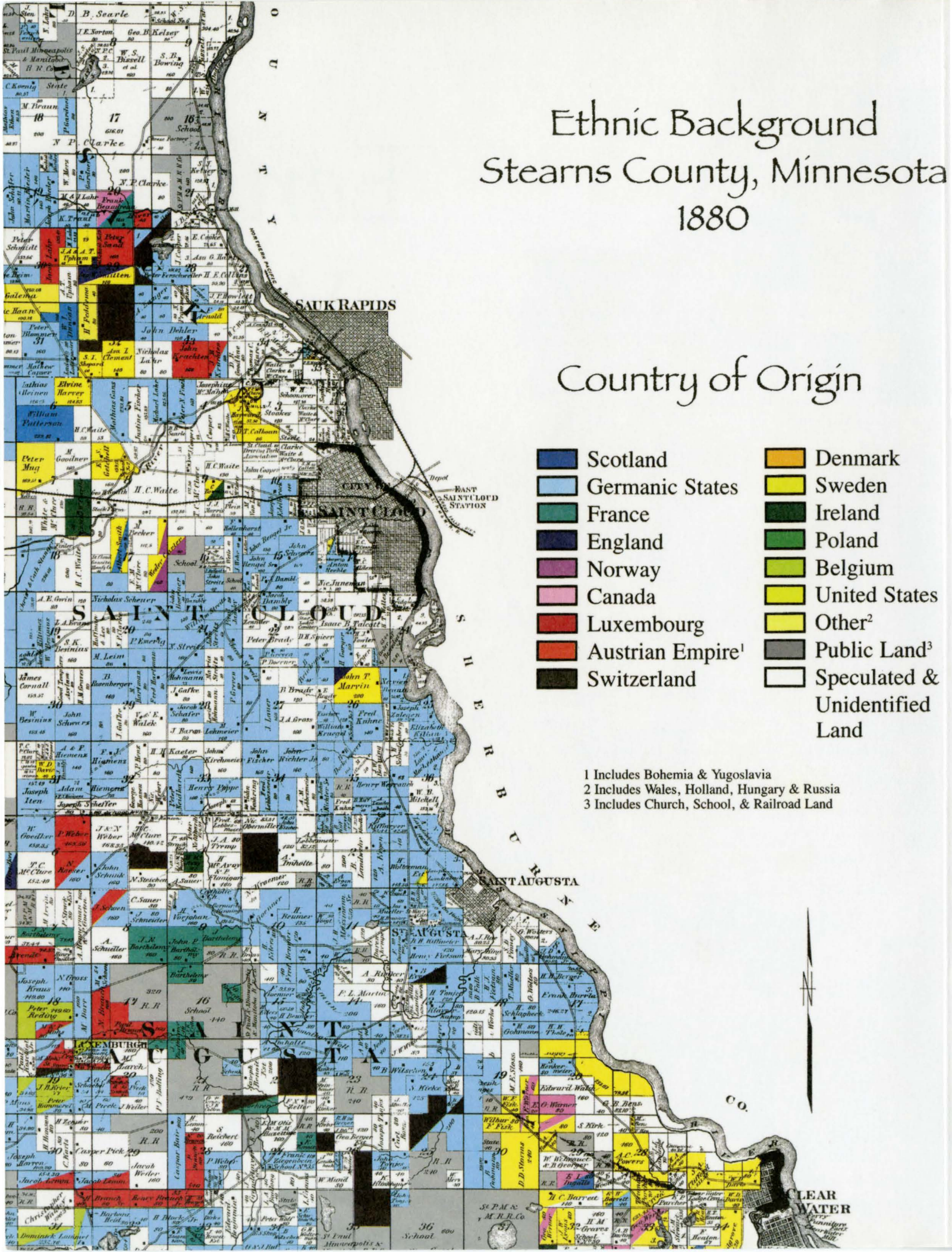
Ethnic Background
Stearns County, Minnesota
1880
Country of Origin
Scotland
Germanic States
France
England
Norway
Canada
Luxembourg
Austrian Empire[1]
Switzerland
Denmark
Sweden
Ireland
Poland
Belgium
United States
Other[2]
Public Land[3]
Speculated & Unidentified Land
1 Includes Bohemia & Yugoslavia
2 Includes Wales, Holland, Hungary & Russia
3 Includes Church, School, & Railroad Land
SAUK RAPIDS
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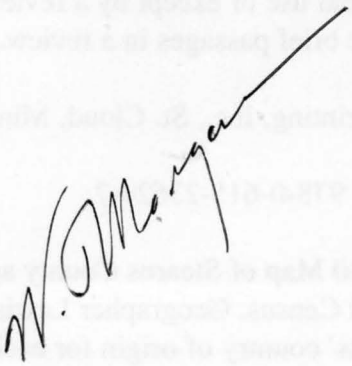
Earth, Wood, Stone

Central Minnesota Lives & Landmarks



By

William Towner Morgan

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A portion of Warner & Foote's 1880 Map of Stearns County appears on the cover.
Using data from the 1880 Federal Census, Geographer Lewis G. Wixon, Ph.D.,
color-coded the map to represent parents' country of origin for each landholder and spouse.
The variety of colors reflects the ethnic complexity of Stearns County
at the end of the 19th century.

The color-code legend is recorded on the inside front cover.

All photographs are by Bill Morgan, unless noted otherwise.

Dedication

Loran Brown Morgan, M.D.
and
Judith Lynn Morgan

Contents

Acknowledgments

Much of what I have learned about the history of Stearns County stems from talks with John Decker and Bob Lommel, archivists at the Stearns History Museum. Staff members Sarah LaVine and Ann Meline have also been generous with their time and expertise.

I am grateful to journalists at the *St. Cloud Times* who have supported my work, including John Bodette, Dana Drazenovich, Gena Hiemenz, Susan Ihne, Rene Kaluza, Frank Lee, and Lisa McClintick. I am especially indebted to Linda Taylor, my longtime editor at the *Times*, for story suggestions and editing skills. Kay Grossman, editor of the *Chokio* (Minnesota) *Review*, also edited my manuscript.

I am indebted to Dr. Lewis George Wixon, professor of geography at St. Cloud State University, for his knowledge of the brick industry, use of his map for the book cover, and for sharing mutual interests in local history over the past 25 years.

Tammy Campion, Community Development/Senior Planner, St. Cloud Planning and Zoning, and Pegg Gustafson, Executive Director of the St. Cloud Downtown Council, have been most helpful for my research. I also wish to thank Dave Hinman of Sentinel Printing, Inc., St. Cloud, for initiating publication of this book, and to Lynette Brannan, LB Productions, Becker, for designing the layout. Special thanks to Marilyn Salzl Brinkman, my fellow columnist, for her continuing interest in my work. This work could not have been completed without the assistance of Pat Bettenberg who has made innumerable trips to my house to tackle computer problems.

Finally, I am indebted to my wife, Judith, and to my brother, Loran Brown Morgan, M.D., for their support during the past year. *Earth, Wood, Stone* is dedicated to them for their continuing faith in my work.

Preface

As an architectural historian, I believe that buildings and other material sites constitute an integral part of America's heritage, a history expressed in earth, wood, and stone. As a preservationist, I am appalled when a local landmark is razed in the name of progress. Sometimes, however, the loss of a treasured building brings about a positive change. When the Saffron House was torn down in 1981, public outrage helped lay the groundwork for the formation of several preservation groups and in 1990 the creation of St. Cloud's Heritage Preservation Commission.

In my search for landmarks I have also learned a great deal about the history of St. Cloud, Stearns County and Central Minnesota. The first nine columns in this book concern people and events prior to and from the time when St. Cloud was a community made up of three villages: Upper Town, Middle Town, and Lower Town. The triplet-village founders, John Wilson, Sylvanus Lowry, George Brott, Charles T. Stearns, and Jane Grey Swisshelm, left an indelible imprint upon Central Minnesota's history.

This book contains selected columns that I wrote for the *St. Cloud Times* between 1998 and 2008. I am publishing this collection because folks have e-mailed or called me to ask if my columns could be brought together under a single cover. Strangers and friends have helped keep my writing endeavors alive.

Introduction

For thousands of years, hardwood forest, oak savannah, and rolling prairie defined the landscape of Stearns County, Minnesota. When settlers began to arrive in the 1850s, timber and stone for building materials were abundant and free, as were fish and game. Under the provisions of the Homestead Act of 1862, a man or a woman with a small nest egg and the perseverance to make improvements over a five-year period could buy 160 acres of government land for $1.25 an acre.

As early as 1854, Fr. Francis X. Pierz, a Slovenian-born missionary priest, was writing glowing letters from Minnesota to German newspapers, advertising the benefits of settling in Central Minnesota. August Wedl and his spouse, Rosina Schwegel Wedl, were representative of European immigrants who responded to Fr. Pierz's call. Both born in Bavaria, the couple met and married in Wisconsin and moved to Stearns County in 1858. August helped defend settlers during the 1862 Dakota War and, like other pioneers, he and Rosina fought grasshoppers and drought as they tried to wrest a living from the soil.

Like the Wedls, other Germans discovered a region that resembled their homeland - a terrain filled with usable timber for fuel, fences, and logs for raising houses and barns. The abundance of deep black topsoil also provided ideal land for farming.

Central Minnesota's natural environment shaped the emerging built environment. The first shelters were constructed from materials at hand - earth, grass, wood, and fieldstone. Until time was found to fell trees and fashion log houses the pioneers lived in tents made from covered wagon canvas, the wagon box itself, or hastily erected huts of grass, straw, or sod. Often, the grass hut was recycled for use as an animal shelter, like the one the Gogala brothers were using to house pigs on their St. Augusta farm as late as the 1980s.

In places where timber was found in abundance, log construction soon became the standard method for building shelters. A form brought to America by Swedish settlers in Delaware in the 17th century and by German immigrants in Pennsylvania during the following century, the log house became the predominant shelter type in the American wilderness.

Working without a blueprint, ax-wielding pioneers followed oral patterns passed down through the generations from the distant European past. This knowledge included the arts of timber-cutting, seasoning, and corner-notching. The notching found on the few log structures that stand today shows that many pioneers were expert craftsmen. Until fairly recent times, hundreds of log houses, barns, granaries, and other outbuildings could still be found in Central Minnesota. Today, metal pole barns have taken the place of most of these wooden structures.

Beginning in the 1870s, the balloon-frame replaced log-wall construction. Invented in Chicago in the 1830s, the frame is named for its light weight. Coupled with the use of standard-size boards and cheap nails - products readily available from local lumberyards - the balloon frame revolutionized building practices throughout the Midwest and the West.

The balloon-framed L- or T-shaped farmhouse is still a common sight on the Central Minnesota landscape. These houses combine the original one- or two-room log house with an added-on, story-and-a-half framed upright wing. To hide the log section, farmers often covered both wings with clapboard siding that they painted white. Greek Revival in style, the "L" or "T" is a unique American architectural form.

As early as 1857, brick-production was emerging as a major St. Cloud industry. Although both red and yellow brick were manufactured in Stearns County, the less expensive yellow brick - often called cream or Milwaukee brick - became the more popular of the two. Between the mid-1880s and 1930, 271 yellow-brick houses were built within a one-mile radius of the Stearns County Courthouse. (Of these, about 169 still stand today.) This utilitarian brick was used to erect workers' cottages, middle-class homes, and commercial facades.

When upper-middle-class clients erected their large-scale Victorian homes, red pressed-brick became the preferred material. Nehemiah C. Clarke's 1892 Queen Anne house is built of red brick, transported upriver from St. Louis. Clarke hired Charles S. Sedgwick, a prominent Minneapolis architect, to design the three-story mansion at 356 Third Avenue South, one of five red-brick Victorians that still stands in St. Cloud today.[1]

Small towns throughout Central Minnesota offer striking examples of ecclesiastical architecture. "Stearns County Ethnic Hamlet Catholic Churches" is the National Register of Historic Places designation for churches in Freeport, Melrose, St. Anna, St. Augusta, St. Joseph, and St. Stephen. An internationally-recognized architectural landmark, Marcel Breuer's 1962 Saint John's Abbey, proudly stands on the campus of Saint John's University, Collegeville. Constructed of granite and poured concrete, the Abbey presents an interesting contrast to the handsome 19th-century, yellow- and red-brick buildings found elsewhere on the campus. Whether of wood, brick, or stone, Central Minnesota churches testify to the willingness of pioneers to provide time, money, and muscle to erect imposing houses of worship.

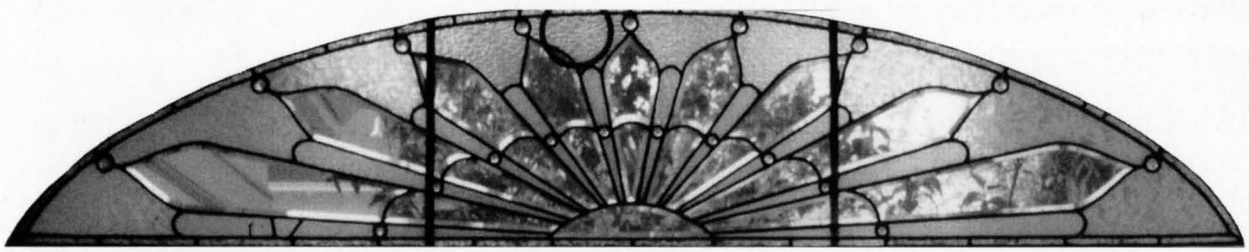
While many outstanding landmarks still stand, the loss of countless other buildings reveals a shameful record of destruction. In the past few decades in St. Cloud alone, many landmarks have been razed, including the following buildings torn down in the 1980s:

- The 1888 Shingle Style Unity Church
- The 1898 Georgian Revival Saffron House
- The 1902 Beaux-Arts Carnegie Library
- The 1902 Renaissance Revival City Hall/Post Office
- The 1922 Prairie Style Jail
- The 1928 Renaissance Revival Fire Station

The loss of the Saffron House in 1981 prompted citizens to form a number of preservation organizations. Concerned citizens from these groups joined with the city of St. Cloud to create a Heritage Preservation Commission, chartered in 1990. Over the past 18 years the Commission

has helped to designate individual historic buildings as well as to establish four historic districts throughout the city.[2] St. Cloud's Downtown Council is working to remove inappropriate covers from the rich array of historic facades along Saint Germain Street in downtown St. Cloud. Beginning in 2007, thirty facades have been restored. A good example is the recent elimination of a metal cover from the red-brick face of the Romanesque Revival Kerr Block, 518 St. Germain West, designed in 1888 by Cass Gilbert and James Knox Taylor.

No one has, as of yet, recorded the history of the built environment in St. Cloud and Central Minnesota. I hope that this book and my columns will help fill in this gap.



[1]Other Victorian houses in St. Cloud are: The 1904 Bensen House, now Heritage House, 402 Sixth Avenue South; The 1889 Ramsay/Adams House, 230 Sixth Avenue North; The 1891 Majerus/Foote House, now Victorian Oaks B&B, 404 Ninth Avenue South; and the 1889 Foley/Larson House, 385 Third Avenue South. A disastrous fire severely damaged The Foley/Larson House in June 2002. A new owner is remodeling the house. The Ramsay/Adams House is presently undergoing a major restoration.

[2]The historic districts are: The Southside Neighborhood Historic District; Barden Park Historic District; St. Cloud Commercial Historic District; and the Pantown Neighborhood Historic District.

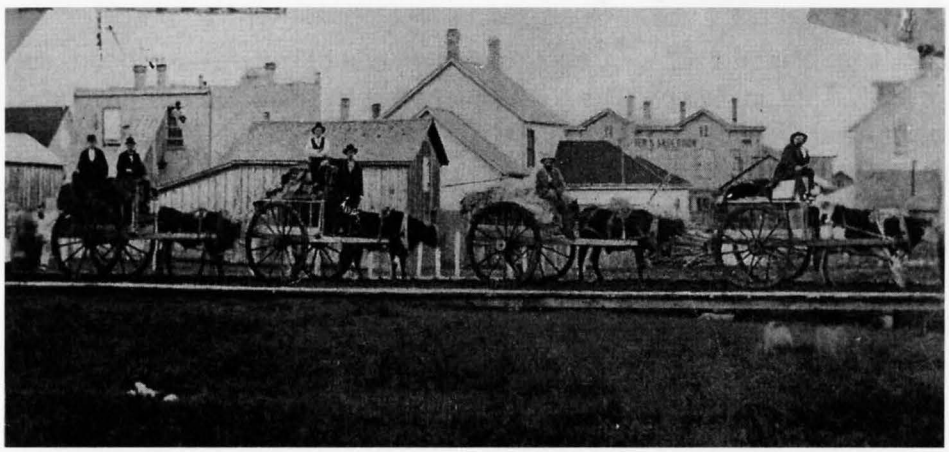
Central Minnesota's Beginnings
1845-1908

The sound of greaseless axles on hundreds of wooden oxcarts was one of the earliest sounds settlers heard on the Central Minnesota landscape. The sound emanated from a form of transportation that carried goods to and from Winnipeg, Canada, and St. Paul, Minnesota. The carts were driven by one of the most interesting ethnic groups in early Minnesota, the metis, men and women of mixed Indian and French-Canadian ancestry. Founders of Watab hoped the village would become a major commercial center. Today, its remnants rest beneath the waters of the Mississippi River. The Big Woods of eastern Stearns County provided an abundant supply of building material, a resource that early pioneers used for houses, barns, and outbuildings.

Oxcarts Plied Minnesota Prairies, 1845-1870

A poet called the sound "simply hellish - like no sound you ever heard in your life, and it makes your blood run cold." A mid-century visitor from France wrote, "A den of wild beasts cannot be compared to its hideousness." A writer called the sound, "a continual creak, squeak, groan and moan from 120 pairs of wooden wheels innocent of grease."

The sound these writers heard came from a famous early form of transportation - the Red River oxcart. The screech of hundreds of oxcarts plying Minnesota's prairies was the result of greaseless, hard-maple axles rubbing against wheel hubs carved from elm trees. (Unlubricated axles prevented dust from collecting in the joints and freezing the wheels.) Due to continual rubbing, drivers had to carry five or six axles as replacements during a single journey. During their heyday - 1845 to 1870 - oxcart caravans carried goods between Winnipeg, Canada, Pembina, North Dakota, and St. Paul, Minnesota.



Red River oxcarts came from Pembina, North Dakota, on the Canadian border, through St. Cloud enroute to St. Paul for the Hudson Bay Company.

(Photo courtesy of Stearns History Museum)

Over the years, a vast network of trails evolved, including the Woods Trail that ran through East St. Cloud, Sauk Rapids, and Sartell. The Middle Trail connected St. Cloud to Canada by way of Rockville, Cold Spring, Richmond, and points northwest.

In oxcart caravans that numbered 200 to 300 carts, Canadian traders loaded dried buffalo meat, moccasins, and beaded garments for markets in St. Paul. They later returned north with groceries, tobacco, liquor, dry goods, tools, hardware, guns and ammunition, farm implements, and window glass to sell on the Canadian market. A one-way journey took about one month.

Oxcart drivers and their families constituted one of the most colorful communities in 19th-century America - the French-Canadian metis (may-TEZ) who lived at the mouth of the Pembina

River. The offspring of local American Indian women and European fur traders, the metis hunted buffalo to supply the fur traders with hides. The drivers also transported pemmican - food made from dried lean meat pounded fine and mixed with berries and melted fat.

The metis drivers wore brightly colored sashes, flannel shirts, buckskin trousers, beaded moccasins, and spoke a language formed from a broad mixed heritage, including the British Isles, France, and American-Indian. A contemporary journalist wrote that the metis language was a "rapidly uttered French patois that would drive a Parisian mad."

The oxcart journey across Minnesota was also a family affair. Jane Grey Swisshelm, editor of the *St. Cloud Visite*r, observed, "the carts of the women are painted; and have a cover with other appearances of greater attention to comfort than is displayed in the carts appropriated to the men."

The oxcart itself is one of America's most intriguing artifacts. Prior to 1800, fur traders used dog sledges that resembled a modern toboggan. A sledge pulled by three dogs could haul 400 pounds. Traveling in caravans of 25, sledge drivers averaged 40 to 50 miles a day. In 1801, Scotsman Alex Henry taught Canadians how to build an oxcart, a popular means of transportation Henry knew from his native Scotland.

The oxcart was ideally constructed for travel through a roadless wilderness inundated with rain-filled sloughs and a hilly terrain. Making use of on-site materials, the oxcart could be built on the spot with an ax, a saw, an auger, and a drawknife. In place of iron, the wooden parts were held together with pegs and rawhide. Prior to crossing a river, the five-foot wheels were removed and strapped to the floor beneath so the cart could be used as a raft.

During the 1850s, St. Cloud and Sauk Rapids stood at the junction of the Middle Trail and the Woods Trail. Caravans crossed the Mississippi on the three ferries that operated where local bridges stand today. Waite's Crossing was a popular campsite for the oxcart drivers - a marker in River Park in Waite Park next to the Sauk River designates the spot today.

10/06/2001

Watab Lives on in Memories, 1854-1908

Where is Watab? Not the township, river, or lake by that name, but the town of Watab? An 1873 atlas shows Watab as a 15-square-block hamlet tucked up against the east shore of the Mississippi River in the northwest corner of Section 31, Watab Township, in Benton County. During Minnesota's territorial period, Watab was touted as the most important commercial site northwest of St. Paul. Although Watab still appears on recent Minnesota highway maps, what was left of the village lies beneath the Mississippi since 1906, the year the Sartell dam was constructed.

In the hope of finding vestiges of the lost community, I enlisted the help of 60-year, Watab-area resident Leroy Blanchard, his neighbor Jim Nessen, and Nessen's seven-year-old grandson, Nathan Nessen. The four of us recently walked through the area south of Pirates Cove on River Road Northeast where the bustling, 19th-century village once stood.

The Watab area is near Peace Rock, the giant granite outcrop that marked the 1825 treaty line dividing the Ojibwe and Dakota tribes. In those days, people in Watab could see the Watab prairie across the river, a place where, before 1855, the displaced Winnebagos gathered to receive their government payments. "Watab" is the Ojibwe word for the long slender roots of the tamarack and jack pine, used as threads for stitching birchbark canoes and wigwams.

Blanchard told me that his great-grandfather, Allen, left Maine in 1855 to settle in Little Falls where he made a living as a "market hunter," a provider of venison for local restaurants. Allen Blanchard, for whom the Morrison County dam is named, moved his family in 1930 to the Watab area where his son and grandson established a turkey farm. Great-grandson Leroy attended school in the yellow-brick building in Watab Township that now houses the township hall. The school was closed in 1946 when class size fell to eight, Leroy said.

Across the road from Blanchard's home stands a wooded area, site of a wide depression made by wagons that more than a century ago carried goods across the Mississippi. Before the building of the Sartell dam, Blanchard said the shallow river and its stony bed provided a natural wagon crossing. Blanchard doubts that the ruts were made by the famous oxcarts that plied the trail from St. Paul to the Red River settlement during the mid-19th century. However, a Minnesota Historical Society map shows that the Red River Woods Trail (near today's U.S. Highway 10) circumvented Watab roughly at the point where ruts appear in Nessen's woods. Another source says traces of the Red River Trail still can be seen near the river along Benton County Road 55.

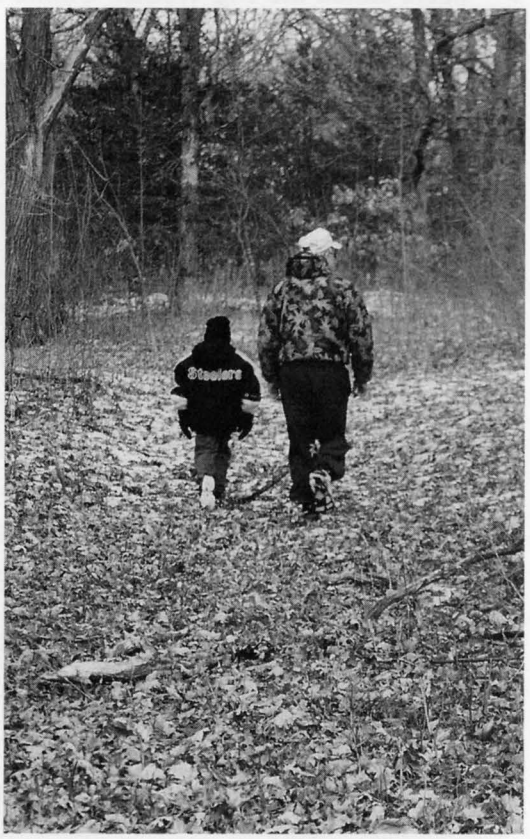
As early as 1848, a trading post stood at the site of what six years later would become the village of Watab. Surveyed and platted in 1854, the village soon boasted a population of 150. Early settlers included Asa White, proprietor of the trading post, and David Gilman, owner of the local hotel. A bridge, the first built upriver from St. Anthony, was erected in 1856 but collapsed

into the river shortly after, a victim of winds. Between 1855 and 1858, Watab held the county seat until it was moved back to Sauk Rapids. Foley became the permanent seat in 1900.

A fascinating view of life in Watab during its boomtown years appears in the *Watab Reveille*, a newspaper published in St. Paul in 1851 Although the *Reveille* closed shop after its third edition, it has the distinction of being Minnesota's seventh oldest newspaper. Edited by J W. Charkarak (perhaps a fictional name), the *Reveille* is filled with tidbits - some of questionable authenticity - that provide rare glimpses into Watab's history. Watab's prosperity in the pre-1857 Panic era is mirrored in the *Reveille's* advertisements. Besides Gilman's hotel, Watab supported a variety store, a dry goods establishment, a store that sold "clothing and Indian goods," and even a bank.

A more reliable source stems from a WPA interview with an early Watab resident, Willard F. McCrea. McCrea recalled that as a child he played in the cellar foundations of Watab's trading post, millsite, bakeries, hotel, post office, livery, and the school ground. Another tantalizing item is McCrea's reference to the "Watab Gold and Silver Mine," which Leroy Blanchard told me produced only enough gold to make a single ring.

What eventually happened to Watab? According to Minnesota historian N H. Winchell, Watab prospered only during the brief time it served as the county seat. After the courthouse was moved to Sauk Rapids, Winchell said, "The proprietors broke down and left, and business came to a standstill."



Nathan Nessen and his grandfather, Jim Nessen, follow a wagon rut through the woods.

Leroy Blanchard believes that only building foundations were standing before erection of the Sartell dam. When the water level rose after construction, what was left of the village ended up in the Mississippi, he said. Once a dream in the minds of townsite planners and entrepreneurs, Watab now exists solely on maps and in the memories of a handful of local residents.

02/28/2000

Early Settlers Found Building Materials at Hand, 1850s-1880s

"So they continued their way and after crossing a bad swamp, came to a desirable location containing a small prairie. There they settled and erected a log cabin." - Biographies of Joseph and Anna Mayer in William Bell Mitchell's *History of Stearns County, Minnesota.*

For centuries, vast areas of Stearns County were covered with hardwood trees, a region pioneers called the Big Woods. Unlike later immigrants who settled on the prairies of southwestern Minnesota, Stearns County farmers were able to tap unlimited wood supplies to build log houses, barns, and outbuildings. In a 1980 interview, Anna (Poglajen) Petrich, Brockway Township, said that when her father emigrated from Slovenia to St. Stephen in the 1880s, he recalled, "All you could see was the sky up between the trees."

European immigrants were adept at building hewn-log houses and barns. The fine dovetailing shown here appeared on a barn on the John and Anna Petrich farm, St. Stephen. Built in 1883, the barn was recently torn down.

From among the hundreds of biographies collected by William Bell Mitchell in 1915, only a handful mention Stearns County pioneers who built their houses out of dirt - the dugouts and free-standing soddies more commonly found on the woodless prairies and the Great Plains. In 1854, Nicolas and Mary Keppers built a combination log cabin and dugout covered with basswood bark in St. Joseph Township. A hole in the ground covered by a wagon box was the first home for

Ferdinand and Amelia Mielke, who settled in Maine Prairie Township in 1869. The couple later erected a log cabin, spending 35 cents for window glass.

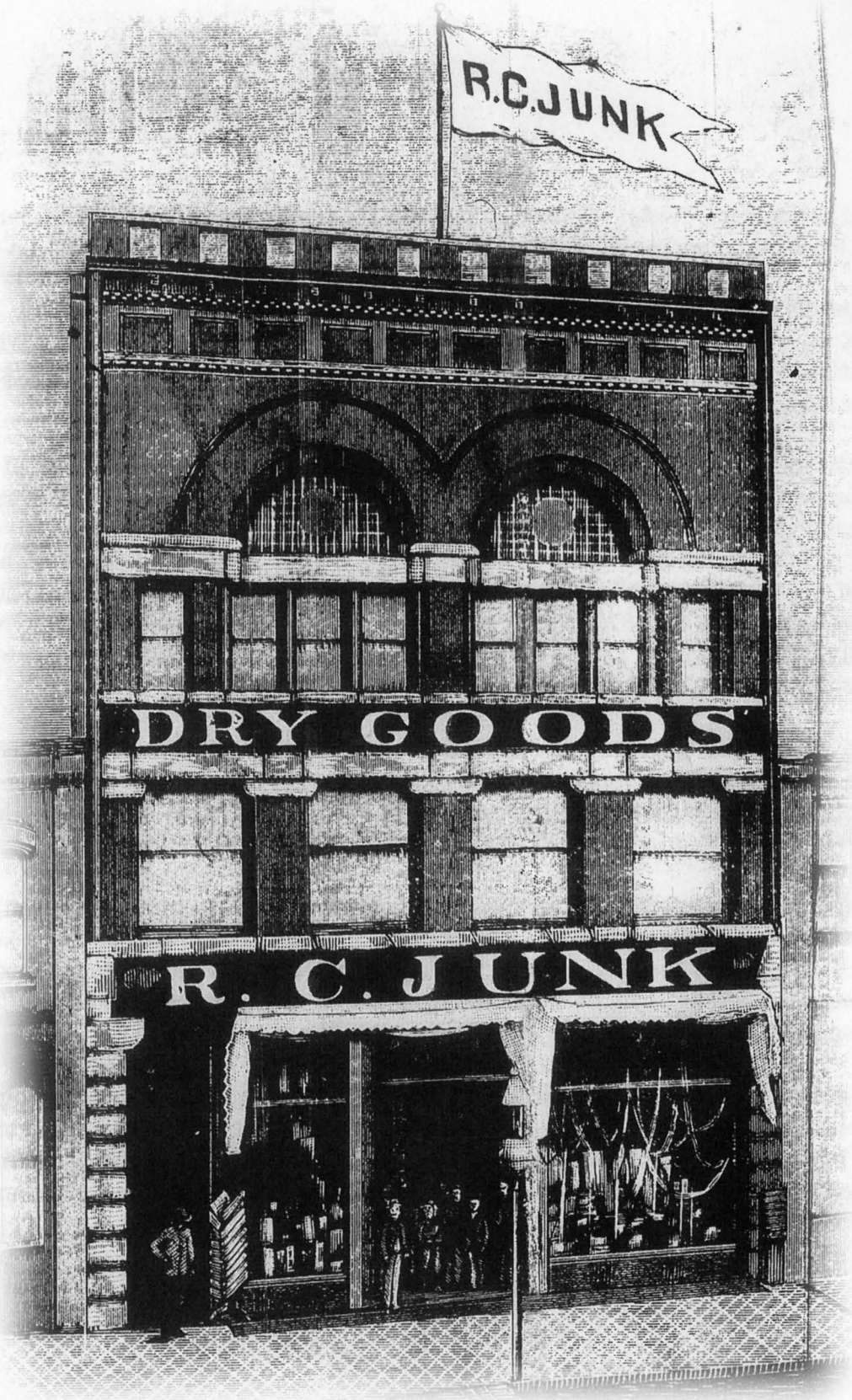
Another primitive type of construction was the use of straw and hay. In 1862, John U Anderson, an early settler of North Fork Township, built a pole shack and covered it with marsh hay. Anderson told Mitchell that water came through the roof and the sides of the shack. "The occupants many a night waded in water ankle deep," he said.

In 1862, Gotfried Voss, Eden Lake, built a stable of crotched sticks to support a roof of clay, hay, and straw. On this site he and his spouse, Amelia, raised a family of eleven. That same year, Joseph Primus built a windowless log cabin in Myer's Grove (later Meire Grove) with a dirt floor. At one time the family and their oxen "slept in a row on the hard floor with nothing in the way of a bed but some course grass cut from the river bottoms." Only the kitchen stove provided light," he said. In the 1870s, Christ and Anna (Nehring) Frank built a log shanty with a straw roof in Zion Township. During a terrible blizzard, the family shared their home with a cow and a calf for three days.

Log cabin construction began to wane in the latter decades of the 19th century. Greater prosperity among settlers now made it possible to buy lumber to erect frame houses and barns. In some cases, a two-story frame addition was joined to a one-story log building. Some log buildings are still standing, though their walls are hidden behind layers of clapboard siding.

At the end of the pioneer era, a few wealthy farmers built their homes of brick. George Ehresmann, Zion Township, erected his farmhouse of red brick sometime after 1900. According to Mitchell, the site had "unusual features," including a ten-room house with indoor hot running water. Ehresmann and his wife, Elizabeth Blonigen, raised 12 children in a household "known for its hospitality and good cheer."

Today, it is difficult to imagine the hardships pioneers had to face. Joseph Mayer's biography is an example of the rigors faced by the early settlers. One night Mayer was detained in town. When he returned home at daybreak, he found his wife, Anna Katarina, sitting on the roof of the cabin where she had spent the night ringing a bell to protect their home from wolves and "night fowls."



Kerr Block, St. Germain Street, St. Cloud. (Photo courtesy of Stearns History Museum)

St. Cloud's Founders
1850s

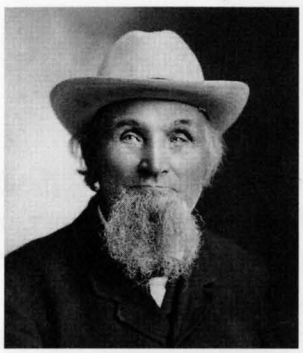
From 1853 to 1856, the future city of St. Cloud was made up of three villages - Upper Town (Acadia), Middle Town, and Lower Town (St. Cloud City) - each with a unique culture. Two ravines separated the three hamlets. Upper Town drew settlers from an elite class of slave-holding Southerners, led by a Tennessean, Sylvanus B. Lowry, whose plantation-style home stood where the St. Cloud Hospital is today. Lower Town attracted settlers from New England, many of whom were, in the words of historian John J Dominik, "Protestant, temperance-loving, anti-slavery Yankee merchants." Lower Town's elegant Stearns House served travelers who arrived by steamboat or stagecoach to spend cool evenings on the hotel's front porch. Middle Town became a German merchants' market, and a place where brewers could make and sell beer legally. Joseph Edelbrock's Store on the corner of St. Germain and Sixth Avenue drew farmers from the outlying villages of Stearns County. In 1856 the three villages merged.

Jane Grey Swisshelm is my favorite St. Cloud character. After Swisshelm's marriage failed, she and her daughter, Mary Henrietta, left Pennsylvania and came to Minnesota to live with relatives. As the editor of the *St. Cloud Visiter*,[1] Swisshelm wrote anti-slavery editorials and other writings in defense of women's property rights. When Upper Town's slave-holding residents broke into her office and destroyed her press, townspeople donated funds to replace it. After Swisshelm left St. Cloud, she served as a nurse in the hospitals of Washington, D.C., during the Civil War. Even today, Native Americans despise Swisshelm's memory because of her racist articles during the Dakota War of 1862.

[1] The newspaper title is correct. "Visiter" was a common spelling in the 19th century.

Founding Fathers: John Wilson and John Tenvoorde

Two pioneers, John Lyman Wilson and John W Tenvoorde, are among the early settlers who helped make the transition from triplet villages to the town of St. Cloud. Wilson, a descendant of French Huguenots, loved to read about Napoleon Bonaparte. Wilson, a millwright from Maine, came to Minnesota in 1851 to build sawmills. In 1853, he purchased 297 acres in Middle Town for $250 from Ole Bergeson, a Norwegian squatter. When Upper Town, Middle Town, and Lower Town merged in 1856 to become St. Cloud, the generous Yankee gave away parcels of land in what is now downtown St. Cloud to induce settlers to erect buildings and to establish businesses. Wilson provided free land for the first Stearns County courthouse and donated space for Barden Park. He also built the first frame house in Stearns County, a structure that stood on the present site of Empire Park.



John Lyman Wilson (top) and John W. Tenvoorde helped make St. Cloud into a city.

(Photos courtesy of Stearns History Museum)

Wilson was responsible for naming St. Cloud. The story goes that at the time Wilson filed the plat for the newly-merged town, he was reading a biography of Napoleon. The biography noted that Empress Josephine lived in the royal palace in St. Cloud, a Paris suburb, at the time her husband was engaged in the Russian campaign. When a messenger arrived in Russia with news from home, the lonely Emperor asked: "And how are things in St. Cloud?" Wilson also named the new town's central business district after St. Germain, a boulevard that connects Paris to St. Cloud. Interestingly, no local landmark is named for John L. Wilson. (Wilson Avenue and Wilson Park are named for his brother, Joseph, a Lower Town pioneer.)

While John L. Wilson is known as the city's founding father, several other Middle Town founders deserve equal recognition. An important local figure among these early pioneers is John W Tenvoorde. Tenvoorde was born in Holland in 1823 and immigrated to America when he was 20. After working as a teamster in St. Louis, he moved to Evansville, Indiana, a German-Catholic settlement organized in 1836. In 1852, Tenvoorde married Elizabeth Lansing who came to America from Germany when she was 15.

In 1854, members of the Evansville community hired Tenvoorde to search for fertile farmland in the West. The pioneer traveled first to Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska before arriving in Central

Minnesota, where he ventured up the Sauk Valley scouting for land along the Red River Trail. Tenvoorde later recalled that he had to sleep in trees at night to avoid the ravages of marauding wolves.

According to historian Kathleen Neils Conzen, Tenvoorde discovered "a rolling, lake-dotted landscape - crowned by hardwood forests, dense thickets, and patches of natural meadow and prairie that finally yielded in the west to the endless vistas of the true prairie and oak-dotted savannah parkland."

The pioneer was struck by the fact that Central Minnesota - a region rich in soil, wood, water, and accessible markets - was an ideal place for a new settlement. During this initial journey, Tenvoorde also met John L. Wilson who promised to give away free lots along St. Germain to promising tradesmen and shopkeepers from the Indiana colony. The following spring, Tenvoorde returned to St. Cloud with his family and a supply of goods with which to set up a general store. Upon his return, Tenvoorde discovered that 50 German-Catholic families, many of whom he had met on his way back to Indiana, had preceded him to St. Cloud.

By 1860, St. Germain had become a predominately German-speaking market center, patronized by Sauk Valley German settlers and Yankee farmers from the surrounding prairies. According to the census of that year, almost 70 percent of the 1,000 householders in Stearns County could trace their roots back to Germany.

While their log house was being built, the Tenvoorde family lived in rooms above a blacksmith shop in Sauk Rapids. Tenvoorde's general store stood on the corner of St. Germain and Ninth Avenue. Years later, the family erected an ornate Victorian house crowned with a widow's walk where Granite Bowl stands today.

In 1886, the tornado that destroyed Sauk Rapids tore off the back porch of the Tenvoorde home and leveled a grove of trees. In 1888, two muggers armed with slingshots and brass knuckles attacked John Tenvoorde while he was walking home on West St.Germain. While he bravely defended himself, an approaching stranger scared away the robbers, but not before Tenvoorde suffered a broken arm and a lacerated scalp.

When the pioneer died in 1894, the *St. Cloud Daily Times* wrote: "An honorable citizen, straightforward in all his dealings and kindly in his manner, there is not one of the host who knew 'Uncle John' who has not a good word for him."

11/28/2000

Female Journalist Broke Ground: Jane Grey Swisshelm

When I moved to Central Minnesota, the name Jane Grey Swisshelm was unfamiliar. The more I learned about the feisty journalist who ran two St. Cloud newspapers from 1858 to 1863, the more I came to admire her multiple talents.

Swisshelm's journey began in 1815 in Pittsburgh. The daughter of Scotch-Irish Calvinists, Jane Grey Cannon was poor from birth. At age eight she taught lace-making to the daughters of wealthy neighbors and at 15 began teaching school. She married a local farmer, James Swisshelm, when she was 20, after they met at a quilting bee. In 1838 the couple moved to Louisville, Kentucky, where Jane Swisshelm saw at firsthand the evils of slavery.

Swisshelm was forced to close a school she organized for blacks after locals threatened to burn down her home. According to a biographer, "Her whole nature revolted against the wrong and injustice done to an entire race, and one of the great purposes of her life was then and there formed."

Swisshelm's marriage was stormy from the outset. A mother-in-law who was overly protective of her son and a husband who resented his wife's career forced a separation and, in 1861, a divorce. After her separation, Swisshelm started the *Pittsburgh Saturday Visiter*, a publication that advocated a woman's right to hold property. Swisshelm's labors resulted in the passage of a bill in the Pennsylvania Legislature that allowed women to hold property in their own name.

In 1857, Swisshelm and her daughter, Mary Henrietta, moved to St. Cloud to live with Swisshelm's sister and a brother-in-law. In December 1857, Swisshelm founded the *St. Cloud Visiter* in Lower Town. The *Visiter's* office stood above the steamboat landing near the present-day Tenth Street Bridge on a site where St. Cloud State University's Shoemaker Hall stands today.

As an advocate of the emerging Republican Party and its abolitionist views, Swisshelm soon aggravated powerful Upper Town slaveholders. On the night of March 24, 1858, three pro-slavery men broke into the *Visiter's* office, where they smashed the press and threw the type into the street and the river. As news of the break-in spread, outraged local citizens helped finance a new press and type. Swisshelm started the *St. Cloud Democrat* after moving to another location in 1859.

When members of the Dakota nation took up arms against Minnesota River Valley pioneers in 1862, Swisshelm began writing vitriolic editorials against the attackers. In 1863, she toured the country to argue punishment for a larger number of Indians involved in the uprising. (On December 26, 1862, thirty-eight Dakota had been hanged in Mankato.)

Jane Grey Swisshelm was a journalist, abolitionist, women's rights advocate, and a Civil War nurse.

(Photo courtesy of Stearns History Museum)

In 1863, Swisshelm moved to Washington, D.C., where she accepted a job as the first female clerk in the federal government. While waiting to begin her job Swisshelm volunteered to work as a nurse at Campbell Hospital, treating wounded Civil War soldiers. One newspaper said that Swisshelm was to the Washington hospitals "what Florence Nightingale was to the Crimea."

From 1866 to her death in 1884, Swisshelm revisited St. Cloud, spent a year in Europe, and lived in Chicago where she was a friend of Mary Todd Lincoln. Late in life she wrote her autobiography, *Half a Century*. Aside from her bitterness toward American Indians, Swisshelm's reputation today rests upon her stance against slavery, her defense of the rights of women, her career as a female journalist, and her service as a Civil War nurse.

05/01/2004

Feud on the Plains: Sylvanus Lowry and Jane Grey Swisshelm

If someone were to write a movie script about pioneer life in Central Minnesota, two figures - Sylvanus B. Lowry and Jane Grey Swisshelm - would make outstanding central characters.

The setting for the film would go like this: In the early 1850s, before it became a town in its own right, St. Cloud was divided into three villages - Upper Town (Acadia), Middle Town, and Lower Town. Each settlement had its own distinctive set of characters - New Englanders in Lower Town, German merchants in Middle Town, and slaveholding Southerners in Acadia. Each village also boasted a founding father - John Wilson in Middle Town, George Brott in Lower Town. and in Acadia, General Sylvanus B. Lowry.

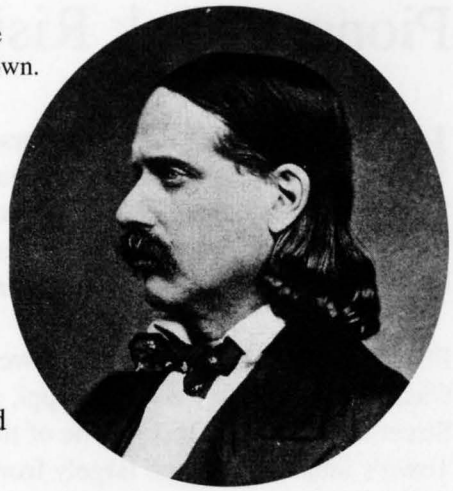
Of these three early pioneers, Lowry perhaps is the most interesting. Even St. Cloud journalist Jane Grey Swisshelm, Lowry's avowed enemy, said of him: "He was one of those who are born to command - of splendid physique and dignified bearing, superior intellect and mesmeric fascination - he felt his own superiority, and asserted it with the full force of honest conviction."

Lowry was born in 1827 in Tennessee (some records say Kentucky), the son of the Rev. David Lowry, a Presbyterian minister and a missionary to the Iowa tribe of Winnebagos. When the Rev. Lowry was appointed Indian agent at Long Prairie, Minnesota, his son, fluent in the Winnebago language from age seven, was hired as an interpreter.

In 1849, Minnesota Gov. Henry M. Rice chose Lowry to establish an Indian trading post at the village of Watab with a branch across the Mississippi at Winnebago Prairie. For a short period, Lowry was Minnesota's Adjutant General, a post that gained him the title "General." In 1853, Lowry disassembled his log house at Winnebago Prairie and floated it down the Mississippi where he reassembled it on the riverbank near the present site of St. Cloud Hospital. Soon after, he obtained a postal contract that awarded him 640 acres of federal land upon which to organize a mail route.

Lowry's Southern ties soon attracted a settlement of Tennesseans who came to Acadia between 1855 and 1858 where they built one-story houses with wide verandas - an architectural form transplanted from the temperate South. Black slaves, forcibly brought north by their masters, performed the Southerners' household duties. With Acadia as a political base, Lowry rose to become what writer Abigail McCarthy called "the Democratic 'dictator' of Central Minnesota."

In 1857, Jane Grey Swisshelm, a nationally known feminist and abolitionist, arrived in St. Cloud where she launched the *St. Cloud Visite*r, an aggressive anti-slavery newspaper. "The Constitution," she once wrote, "had become the Magna Carta of a Southern gentleman's right to whip women, rob mothers of their children, and sell upon the auction block the souls for whom the Lord of Glory assumed humanity and laid down his life upon the cross."



Sylvanus B. Lowry (1827-1865) was the founder of Acadia, St. Cloud's Upper Town.

(Photo courtesy of Stearns History Museum)

Angered by Swisshelm's anti-slavery editorials, Lowry hired attorney James C. Shepley to deliver a lecture that he hoped would help crush this new threat. Shepley chastised "women's rights' women" who had the effrontery to speak in public, to run newspapers, or to mingle in politics. Shepley divided women into four classes: the coquette, the flirt, the old maid, and the strong-minded woman who dabbled in politics, commending the first three but scorning the latter.

In the next *Visiter* issue, Swisshelm pointed out that Shepley had neglected a fifth class of women: "The large, thick-skinned, course, sensual-featured, loud-mouthed double-fisted dames - whose guffahs resound across a mile wide river, and who talk with an energy which makes the saliva fly like showers of melted pearls - Her triumphs consist in card-table successes, displays of cheap finery, and in catching marriageable husbands for herself and her poor relations." Although Swisshelm denied that her caricature represented a real person, Shepley, whose wife, Mary, resembled the editor's description, took offense.

Sometime after midnight on the morning of March 24, 1858, Lowry, Shepley, and Dr. Benjamin Palmer broke into the *Visiter's* office in Lower Town where they destroyed the press and scattered the type into the street and the river. A note they left was signed: "Committee of Vigilance." Appalled by this affront to free speech and an independent press, St. Cloud citizens the following night rallied to raise money to provide Swisshelm with a new press, type, and capital to continue publication.

Swisshelm resumed her editorial stance, whereupon Shepley filed a $10,000 libel suit against the editor and her financial supporters. Realizing she could not alone afford the cost of a libel suit, Swisshelm agreed to never again mention the controversy in the columns of the *Visiter.*

Several weeks later, the fiery editor "buried" the *Visiter* in a black-bordered "obituary," published under the banner of the *St. Cloud Democrat*, and continued her assault against the slaveholders. Newspapers all across the country covered the story of the break-in, bolstering the editor's national reputation.

Public furor about the actions of the vandals, however, helped to end the career of Sylvanus Lowry. In 1859, Lowry was defeated for the office of lieutenant governor. He later suffered a mental breakdown as a result of a property dispute, and in 1864 was arrested after threatening his sister with a pistol. On December 21, 1865, Lowry died in St. Cloud. Attorney Shepley eventually made his way to California where he established a sheep ranch. In the spring of 1874, one of his shepherds murdered the former Upper Town citizen.

10/31/2000

Pioneer Took Risks: George Brott

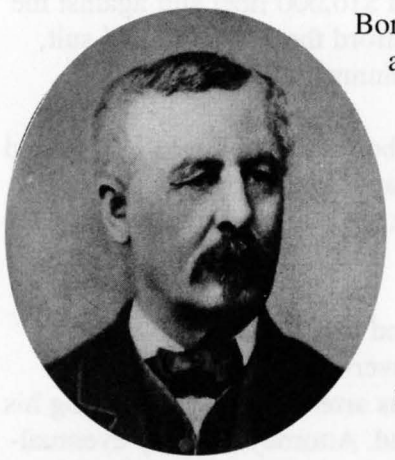
If a time machine could send a person back to St. Cloud's Lower Town in the 1850s, he or she would walk along muddy, horse-and-wagon-choked First Avenue South - where St. Cloud State University stands today - next to a row of white frame buildings crowned by the elegant Stearns House hotel. Along the bustling riverfront below, the visitor would observe steamboat passengers from St. Paul and points south making their way up the hill to the village above.

Platted as a rigid grid in 1854, Lower Town contained 39 square blocks tucked into an area from Clearwater Road to the Mississippi, and from the Third Avenue ravine to the place where the Tenth Street Bridge stands today. One of three villages that later merged to become St. Cloud, Lower Town's inhabitants came largely from New England and the Middle Atlantic states, drawn to the region for its cool summers and pristine beauty.

From her Lower Town newspaper office, Jane Grey Swisshelm, eminent editor of the *St. Cloud Visiter*, cited the progress the village had made in its short, three-year existence:

"Lower St. Cloud has all the machinery - a grist mill, a sawmill, a planing mill, a sash and blind factory, two churches, the Everett school and library, a large temperance hotel, and over a hundred dwellings and stores and a fine lyceum." (Named for the Boston educator, Edward Everett, who contributed 125 books, the Everett school formed the nucleus of the St. Cloud school system.)

Lower Town was founded by a company of townsite speculators, including George F. Brott, C. T. Stearns, J P Wilson, and H. T. Welles. The prime mover behind Lower Town was Brott, a man described by a contemporary as "all vigor and push and optimism." Of St. Cloud's three city founders, Brott takes his place alongside Upper Town's Sylvanus B. Lowry and Middle Town's John L. Wilson.



Born of Dutch ancestry in Connecticut in 1825, Brott learned the wagon and carriage trade from his father. During a trip to Syracuse in 1850, Brott was inspired to head west after viewing a panoramic painting of the Mississippi River Valley. Leaving home with his tools, a rifle, and $80, Brott landed in St. Anthony Falls with only $5 in his pocket. Soon after his arrival, he began manufacturing wagons and sleighs, a business that soon prospered. After his plant burned to the ground, Brott crossed the river to Minneapolis where he established a flour mill. From 1851 to 1854, Brott was Ramsey County Sheriff, a job that involved covering a territory that embraced Northern Minnesota and all of present day North

George F. Brott was a pioneer who opened the way for Midwestern settlement during a period of risk-taking entrepreneurship. As a city founder, Brott deserves a high place in St. Cloud's history.

(Photo courtesy of Stearns History Museum)

Dakota and South Dakota. During his years in St. Anthony Falls, Brott established his career in real estate, a venture that brought him to St. Cloud where he helped form the company that platted Lower Town.

After settling in Lower Town, Brott in 1857 launched the *Minnesota Advertiser*, a newspaper geared toward townsite development. On a full-page map published in the *Advertiser*, Brott drew sites he hoped would draw settlers. Brott called his paper towns Fortuna, Hanover, Geneva, Perseverance City - and Brottsburg. A writer at the time said, "no matter where Brott decided to plant a town, all he had to do was to step out into the surrounding hazel brush to find tools to do it with."

Acting as a government mail contractor, Brott's contract allowed him to select at intervals of ten miles 640 acres of land for mail stations, including Lower Town. Soon after, the St. Paul & Pacific Railroad claimed the site where Lower Town stood, and it took ten years of litigation before Brott was granted clear title. While the court case dragged on, many of Lower Town's business buildings were moved to Middle Town where German settlers already had established a booming commercial center along St. Germain.

In 1862, Brott left St. Cloud and moved to New Orleans. An entrepreneur who always took advantage of a promising situation, Brott shipped merchandise into the city after its capture by Union troops, and within one year amassed - and lost - $6 million.

Brott's entrepreneurial spirit continued long after his short stay in St. Cloud. By 1874, he was president of the New Orleans and Ship Island Canal. In 1876, Brott left the South and made his home in Washington, D.C. During this period, Brott turned his talents to invention. In 1882, after observing that sawmill sawdust chokes navigation, he patented a process that combined sawdust with peat and sold the product in brick-like form for use as fuel.

In 1893, Brott patented a second invention, "a single-track electric railway designed to operate at a speed between 120 and 180 miles per hour. Proposed for use by passenger, mail, and express service, the track was described by the *St. Cloud Journal-Press* as resting on "a single line of posts, having rail and side rails, the whole forming a U or trough shaped structure in which the cars run." Although similar to the Enos Electric Railway, tested in New Jersey in 1887, Brott's invention earned a place among a number of attempts to create a serviceable monorail train.

In 1908, six years after Brott's death, the *St. Cloud Journal-Press* published his autobiography under the catching title, "The Life, Adventures and Mistakes of a Business Man: Why His Career Has Been Like a Vessel at Sea Without Rudder or Compass." There, Brott described himself as a "farmer, wagon and carriage maker, sheriff, postmaster, real estate dealer, editor, townsite promoter, owner of flour mills, steamboats, steamships and sailing craft, wholesale and retail merchant, member of the constitutional convention, colonel of engineers, canal and railroad president and inventor."

10/03/2000

Walking Into Success: Nehemiah P. Clarke

Nehemiah Parker Clarke literally walked into a successful career in Central Minnesota. Clarke, the son of a medical doctor, was born in Massachusetts in 1836. At age 14 he traveled to Kentucky where he worked as a book salesman. Clarke was so successful at this business that his firm tried, 30 years later, to hire him back.

After living in Kentucky for two years, Clarke moved back to New England where for a short period he attended school. Drawn again to the West, Clarke, now 17, found work in a wholesale grocery in Detroit, and in 1855 moved on to Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, where he was employed in a hardware store. In Fond du Lac, Clarke became friends with John Proctor, a fellow New Englander.

In 1856, inspired by the spirit of adventure, the companions, both 20, boarded a steamboat for St. Paul where they heard about opportunities upriver in St. Cloud. When the men reached Minneapolis, where they hoped to catch a stagecoach bound for St. Cloud, they learned that the stage would not be leaving for several days. Undeterred, the two set off on foot, walking along the west bank of the Mississippi. By the time they reached Monticello, the footsore Proctor begged Clarke to stop and await the next stage, whereupon Clarke hoisted Proctor on his back and carried him the rest of the way.

The young adventurers arrived in St. Cloud at the time when the village was a mere scattering of houses spread out along the riverbank. The time and the place were ripe, however, for young enterprising risk-takers. After forming a partnership with Proctor, Clarke returned east to purchase a stock of general merchandise. On the site where the Radisson Hotel stands today, the partners erected a building where they sold hardware and farming implements.

When the Dakota War broke out in 1862, Proctor sold his interest in the store and returned to New England, leaving Clarke the sole owner of the business. In 1860, Clarke returned to Boston where he married Caroline E. Field. The couple raised three daughters, Charlotte, Mary, and Ellen.

Clarke's fortunes soared following securement of a government contract to build a stage route between St. Cloud and the Black Hills. For several years, Clarke's transportation business supplied goods, carried by mule and oxen, to government posts throughout Dakota Territory. Clarke also was one of the first local men to drive cattle from the Lower Missouri to the upper reaches of the Black Hills.

In the 1880s Clarke was a corporate director of several Red River Valley railroads, and between 1881 and 1895 he and T.C. McClure owned the Clarke & McClure Bank. In the 1890s, Clarke began buying blooded stock, a sideline that grew into a major operation. His stock included shorthorn and Jersey cattle, Hambletonian and Clydesdale horses, Berkshire hogs, Cotswold

sheep, and other assorted stock. At the Columbian Exposition of 1893, Clarke's Clydesdales garnered the world's championship prize.

N.P. Clarke was a self-made man who fulfilled the image of the American Dream.

(Photo courtesy of the Stearns History Museum)

The Clarke/Thienes House is one of the finest Victorian houses in St. Cloud.

To house his farms, a cheese factory, and a creamery, the entrepreneur obtained 3000 acres in Le Sauk Township which he divided into three holdings: Meadow Lawn, Clyde Mains, and Nether Hall. (Meadow Lawn today is a housing subdivision in Sartell.) As president of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society, Clarke was largely responsible for procuring land for the state fairgrounds. When the Minnesota Legislature appropriated $100,000 to equip the grounds, and another $110,000 was needed, Clarke wrote a personal check without waiting for legislative reimbursement.

A Unitarian, Clarke was responsible for building Unity Church, which stood on the site of the downtown Wells Fargo Bank. In 1892, Clarke hired Minneapolis architect Charles S. Sedgwick to design a home for his family. The three-story mansion at 356 Third Avenue South, now the Dr. Lawrence Thienes home, still stands as a St. Cloud landmark. Constructed of red-pressed brick, shipped upriver from St. Louis, the Queen Anne house is graced by an octagonal corner tower topped by a witches hat dome. A decorative carriage porch allowed passengers to leave their coaches and enter the wooden veranda without getting wet. The double-bay carriage house serves today as a garage.

At the turn of the century, the Clarke house was a center of social activity for St. Cloud's aristocracy. In the winter of 1894, the *St. Cloud Journal-Press* reported a party hosted by Caroline Clarke and her daughters that included nearly 100 guests. The newspaper said that the "ideal home was brilliantly lighted and tastily decorated with running vines, when at nine o'clock the spacious parlors were well filled by a company of handsomely dressed women and men." Guests danced to the music of Whipple's Orchestra in the third-floor ballroom until well past midnight.

When Clarke died in the summer of 1912, historian William Bell Mitchell wrote: "The work which he began and so successfully carried forward will continue to be of advantage to the people of Minnesota and its neighboring states for decades to come."

02/12/2000

The Stearns House: Charles T. Stearns

Standing on a bluff high above the Mississippi, the elegant Gothic Revival building must have been an awe-inspiring sight for travelers making their way up river by steamboat. Built in 1857 by Charles T. Stearns, the Stearns House stood in Lower Town, a village that merged with Middle Town and Upper Town to become St. Cloud. Lower Town was platted in 1855 by George F. Brott, a townsite developer from New York, who named Lower Town St. Cloud City. Today, this area stretches from the ravine under Third Avenue South near Highbanks Place to the Tenth Street Bridge.

In *St. Cloud, The Triplet City*, author John J Dominik says Lower Town drew "mostly Protestant, temperance-loving, anti-slavery Yankee merchants." On the other hand, Middle Town, the area between the Third Avenue ravine and the present site of Cathedral High School, attracted German merchants who established businesses (including saloons) along St. Germain Street.

An 1880s photograph shows well-dressed Normal School women and a handful of professors at Normal House, formerly Stearns House, on the Normal School Campus, St. Cloud. The building in the background is Old Main.

(Photo courtesy of Stearns History Museum)

As manager, Stearns set up his luxury hotel as a refuge for teetotalers. According to Dominik, Sauk Rapids had become a vacation site for tippling Southern sportsmen; hence, the ideals underlying the Stearns House "may have been somewhat compromised by its guests' propensity

for cool mint juleps on hot afternoons." A front-page advertisement in the *St. Cloud Visiter* noted: "The proprietor assures all who may visit this place shall find it cleanly; and that his table shall contain every bounty and luxury which can be obtained both at home and places below."

Stearns also advertised his hotel in newspapers in Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri, praising its food, excellent beds, and fine view of the Mississippi. Stearns promoted his establishment as the "best hotel west of Chicago," a common boast used by boosters throughout the Western states. In his *Centennial History of St. Cloud State College,* Edwin Cates quotes contemporary guests who told of the "deep carpets, the red velvet drapes, the beautiful ornamental lamps, the heavy imported furniture, the large comfortable beds, and the excellent food, which was placed on centrally located tables for every meal."

In the mid-19th century, local travelers had access to St. Cloud by way of steamboat, a 24-hour journey from St. Paul. One of two landings stood on the western edge of the present-day Tenth Street Bridge. Visitors merely walked up the hill from the landing to Stearns' hotel. Other hotel guests arrived by stagecoach. A contemporary writer recorded the daily excitement surrounding the arrival of the coach:

"When the old Burbank & Co. stages drawn by four big horses would each evening dash down the road on the gallop, the driver cracking his long whip, and when the warning toot of the horn was heard, every man, woman and child who could get there saw the grand entry and watched the passengers dismount."

Charles Stearns spent only eight years in St. Cloud. Born in 1807 in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, Stearns was trained as a machinist. In 1829, he married Cornelia Burbank, and after her death in 1868, he married Lucy C. Loomis in 1873. Like many western-moving pioneers, Charles and Cornelia immigrated first to Michigan and later to Iowa before arriving in Minnesota, where, in 1847, he helped to construct Fort Ripley. In 1848, Stearns made his home at St. Anthony Falls (later Minneapolis) where he established a machine shop and a planing mill.

As a member of the Minnesota Territorial Legislature, 1853-54, Stearns was the sole member of the Whig Party, although he voted with the Democrats. During his tenure, only six organized counties existed in the Territory. When Stearns County was organized, the area was named for the Minnesota pioneer.

Stearns arrived in St. Cloud in 1856. After an eight-year stint as a land developer and hotel manager, Stearns moved to New Orleans where he joined George Brott (who had married Stearns' daughter Mary) in the hardware business. Stearns died in 1898 at 92.

The Stearns House is a fine example of Gothic Revival, an early Victorian style popular in the United States in the 1840s and 1850s. Gothic Revival is characterized by pointed gables, large verandas, and lacy gingerbread trim hung beneath the cornices of roofs and porches. On the Stearns House, the eave line is graced by elaborate bargeboards, a motif reminiscent of steamboat decks and an appropriate symbol of Mississippi commerce at that time. An abundance of timber and the invention of the scroll saw made it possible for builders to shape wood and mount it in such a way that a structure literally dripped with ornamentation.

The tourist trade along the Mississippi began to decline after the Civil War. In 1869, when the Legislature approved the formation of the Third Normal School for St. Cloud, the State Normal Board, with the support of St. Cloud residents, purchased the Stearns House for $3,000.

After a $3,500 renovation, the hotel became the new college's first building. The ground floor was used for an assembly hall and classrooms. The second level was set aside for the Model School, a teachers' training department. The third floor was left intact but used for a light-housekeeping dormitory for 24 young female students.

The 1883 Normal School catalog noted: "By working one half-hour a day under the direction of the Matron, young ladies are able to reduce their expenses without interfering in the least with their studies, and may enjoy a pleasant home, with wholesome diet and agreeable society." The catalog said that for 25 cents students could wash a dozen pieces of clothing. For $1 per quarter, cordwood was available for dormitory stoves.

In 1895, the Stearns House was razed to make way for the north wing of a classroom building erected in 1891 Its wood was used to build a number of cottages. While construction workers were excavating the basement for the new structure, they unearthed two bodies. After checking early records, it was discovered that the single unmarked grave contained the remains of George Clinton Brott, eight-year-old son of George F. and Mary Brott, and the body of Carrie Stearns, 13, daughter of Charles T. and Cornelia Stearns. Records from 1861 reveal that Charles and Cornelia Stearns lost both a daughter and a granddaughter within days of one another - victims of diphtheria.

08/21/2000

Samuel Pandolfo's Dream
1917-1922

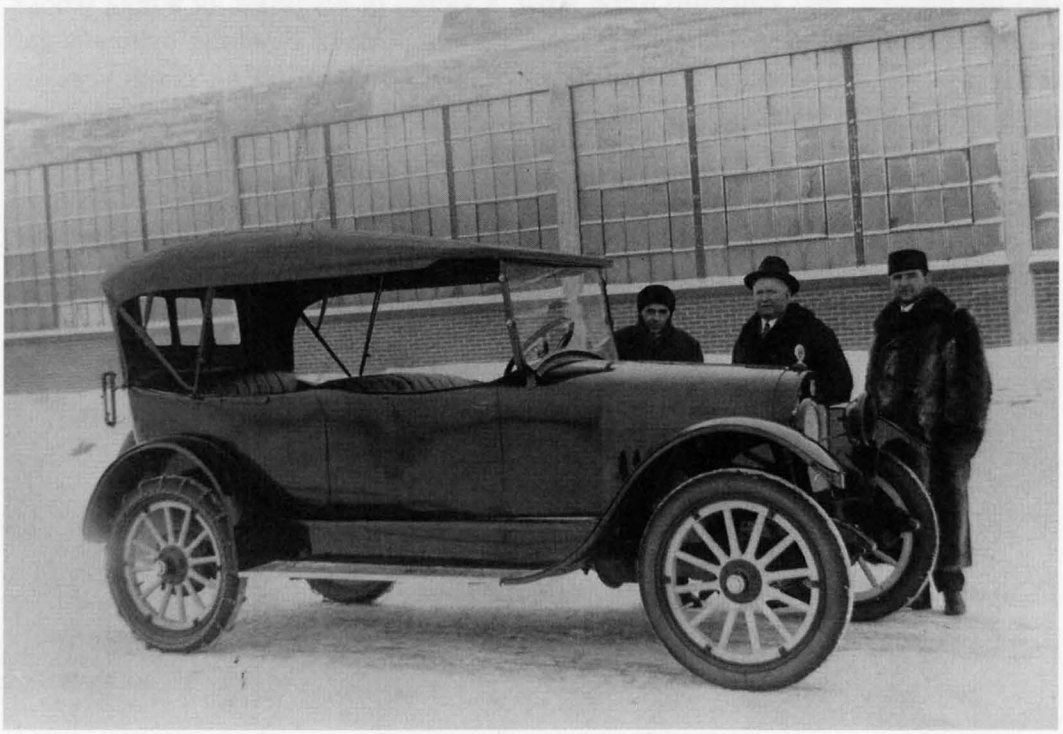
Had Samuel Pandolfo had his way, St. Cloud might have become a major industrial center for the production of the Pan Automobile, the dream car the Mississippi-born insurance salesman and auto manufacturer created. Was Pandolfo a con artist, a victim of his times, or a man whose dream exceeded his grasp of reality? To this day, no one knows. One of Pandolfo's dreams did come true: Pan-Town-on-the-Mississippi, a company town Pandolfo built for his employees. Now a six-square-block historic district, Pantown contains 58 individually-designed Craftsman-style houses.

The Pandolfo Motor Company

Some people in St. Cloud would argue that Samuel Pandolfo was a crook; others think he was an ambitious entrepreneur; both parties would agree that Pandolfo, the salesman, inventor, and promoter, was a man with grandiose dreams.

Samuel Pandolfo was working in Chicago in 1916 when he began to search for a city willing to help him bankroll and build a factory for the production of his dream car - the Pan automobile. According to historian John J. Dominik, the American infatuation with the automobile "brought to St. Cloud what was to be either its grandest experiment or its great swindle, depending upon whom you talked to."

In January 1917, following the St. Cloud Commercial Club's promise to help promote his business by gathering stockholders, the Chicago entrepreneur sponsored a huge barbecue in St. Cloud to be held the following Fourth of July. At that affair, 150 Pandolfo salesmen circulated among the 70,000 attendants (a city record) and garnered enough cash for stock to lay the foundation for Pandolfo's automobile factory. Ten, hastily-assembled "Model 10" cars - painted red, white, and blue - were shipped north for the occasion. The "10" was the inventor's first automobile, though not the dream Pan car that Pandolfo had promised to have ready for stockholders.



The Pan Car was manufactured in St. Cloud from 1917 to 1922.

(Photo Courtesy of Stearns History Museum)

By the fall of 1918, charmed by Pandolfo's salesmanship, 1,159 stockholders had pledged enough capital (at $10 a share) to help build a complex of buildings on a 47-acre site along 33rd Avenue North where Frigidaire Company Freezer Products stands today.

How many Pan automobiles were actually built? According to Roy Bernick, St. Cloud businessman and car collector, about 756 cars left Pandolfo's St. Cloud plant, though much of the assembly process took place elsewhere. A "Model 250" and a "Model A" (as well as the "Model 10") are included in this number. Production of the Pan automobile lasted only from 1917 to 1922.

Two "Model A" Pan automobiles, one owned by Bernick, the other by the St. Cloud Antique Auto Club, can be seen in St. Cloud today. At the Stearns History Museum stands the club's "A," a pristine example of a restored Pan and a favorite exhibit at the museum. Bernick said he believes there may be as many as a dozen Pans in the United States awaiting restoration.

In his *St. Cloud, The Triplet City*, author Dominik says that although the Pan lacked a radical design, it had many ingenious features, including a front seat that folded down to make a bed, a compartment tank for emergency supplies, and even an ice container to store food.

11/03/1998

Pandolfo's Dream Crumbles

By the fall of 1918, Samuel Conner Pandolfo, the St. Cloud automobile manufacturer, had reached the summit of his business career. Born in 1874 in Mississippi (his father was an Italian immigrant and a Confederate army veteran), Pandolfo grew up on a farm, earned a college degree, taught school, and began his business career by selling insurance. Representing several companies throughout Texas and the Southwest, Pandolfo was soon writing policies worth $1 million dollars a month.

Samuel Pandolfo, photographed in 1950, was a dreamer who envisioned the Pan Motor Company in St. Cloud.

(Photo courtesy of the Stearns History Museum)

Although he enjoyed the fruits of a successful career, a greater dream was forming in Pandolfo's head. Even before his business was incorporated, Pandolfo began selling stock in 1916 for a proposed automobile business: the Pan Motor Co. According to author Michael G. Lahr, Pandolfo sought out his insurance clients as potential stockholders. This money was set aside to promote the Pan automobile and to assemble a stable of salesmen, a number that eventually reached 500.

There were several reasons why Pandolfo chose to build his factory in St. Cloud. He envisioned that as population moved west that St. Cloud would become a commercial hub. He also believed that regional farmers with their strong work ethic would provide a ready supply of labor for use in his machine shops. Pandolfo also foresaw Minnesota's Iron Range as a source for raw materials.

On July 4, 1917, the salesman/promoter threw a huge barbecue picnic in St. Cloud that drew an estimated crowd of 70,000, nearly ten times the city's population. The picnic was both a bust and a boom. Although Pandolfo's Texas chefs undercooked 15,000 pounds of beef (meat that had become coated with a fine layer of sand), his salesmen, circulating among the crowd, sold thousands of dollars of Pan Motor stock.

Initially, many city leaders and citizens were skeptical of Pandolfo's dream of making St. Cloud another Detroit. The entrepreneur pushed ahead, however, doubling the number of stockholders, hiring a technical staff, erecting both a hotel and 58 homes for his executives and workers and, most important, building structures for a large automobile manufacturing complex at 33rd Avenue and Eighth Street North. According to historian Bob Lommel, the only Pan Motor building still standing is the heat treatment plant, now Brock White Company, on Highway 15. The steel roof of the die shop was recycled for use as roofing on Holy Angels Church.

Pandolfo's troubles began when the Minnesota State Securities Commission questioned the legitimacy of his automobile venture. The Better Business Bureau of Minneapolis sent investigators to New Mexico, where Pandolfo had initiated sale of Pan Motor stock, to question former associates. Because of these early inquiries, some St. Cloud businessmen began to lose faith in Pandolfo's dream.

Undaunted by criticism, Pandolfo's staff put together a remarkable 270-page book (now a collectors' item) titled *Pictorial Proof of Progress*. After a run of 5,000 copies, Pandolfo sent additional gold-embossed editions to all state governors and to every United States Congressman. This handsome piece of public relations literature proclaimed in words and photographs the wonders of the Pan Motor Co.

Public relations alone could not sustain Pandolfo's dream of making St. Cloud the Detroit of the West. Five days after the Armistice, a federal grand jury in Fergus Falls indicted Pandolfo and his company secretary, John Barritt, for "using the mails to defraud in the sale of stock in the (Pan Motor) company." When federal authorities asked for more time to gather evidence, Pandolfo's lawyers insisted the case be dismissed. Two months later, charges were dropped.

Before Pandolfo had a chance to enjoy a respite from his legal problems, the government brought in a new indictment, this time in Chicago. Charges were brought against Pandolfo, all thirteen of his directors, and because mail fraud was involved, St. Cloud's postmaster, Fred Schilplin, was also named. Ironically, this new indictment coincided with the successful release of Pandolfo's Model A, a project that had been in the works for more than two years.

Pandolfo's troubles were soon compounded when he learned he would appear before Federal Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, a man with a wonderful name but known as a ferocious

courtroom opponent. Landis, who in 1921, would become the nation's first baseball commissioner was, according to one authority, "meagerly educated, narrow in vision, and simplistic in his judicial decisions, many of which were overturned on appeal." Pandolfo's biographer, John J Dominik, calls Landis "a high-handed, brisk, opinionated jurist."

In the Stearns History Museum's documentary film "Pan's Song," Landis is quoted as saying that a Pandolfo company public relations film was inadmissible in court because an ad man had been present at the time the film was made. "An advertising manager's job is to lie," Landis argued. When the defense introduced an illustrated brochure called an "Aeroplane View of the Pan Motor Plant," Landis asked if the picture had indeed been taken from the air. Pandolfo responded: "Of course not; no more than if a bird's-eye view were taken from a bird." Because the airview brochure had been sent through the mail, Landis cited Pandolfo on an additional charge of fraud.

Another mail fraud charge resulted from Pandolfo's public claim that 60 automobiles a week were ready to roll off Pan Motor's assembly line. Unfortunately for the manufacturer, a few days after the mailing the government froze 75 percent of raw materials used for automobile production for use in the war effort.

Ten months later, all of Pandolfo's board members were found innocent. Pandolfo himself was fined $4,000 and sentenced to a ten-year term in Leavenworth Penitentiary. The *St. Cloud Journal-Press* noted that "the verdict was secured, presumably upon the too enthusiastic promises of (Pandolfo's) advertising matter."

While his appeal was pending, Pandolfo, undaunted by the charges leveled against him, returned to St. Cloud where he formed a second firm: The Pandolfo Manufacturing Company. During this period, several ingenious inventions were turned out under the name: "Handy Pandy." These products included a coffee maker, a washing machine, a folded metal chair for an extra seat in the back of an automobile, and fenders for Ford tractors. This venture also failed, and the business was soon foreclosed.

In March 1923, Pandolfo's appeal was denied by the U.S. Supreme Court, which refused to hear his case. Dominik quotes Pandolfo as saying at the time: "There are 75,000 stockholders in the Pan Motor Co. - the very people I am supposed to have defrauded - that say I am not guilty."

After serving a two-and-a-half-year sentence, Pandolfo was released from prison for good behavior and again returned to St. Cloud. A crowd of well-wishers met Pandolfo at the depot with a brass band and escorted him to the Davidson Opera House on Fifth Avenue where he was presented with a large cash gift. Until his death, Pandolfo claimed innocence. "You don't meet a crook with a brass band," he was quoted as saying at the time.

Once again, Pandolfo tried to start a business in St. Cloud. Forming the Pan Health Food Company, the entrepreneur produced "Whole Wheat, Raisin, Chocolated, Greaseless Do-Nuts." After closing his two stores in the city, Pandolfo moved to Denver where he returned to selling insurance. Again he was tried for mail fraud, sentenced to ten years, and served a second two-and-a-half-year term before being released. Moving to Alaska in 1956, Pandolfo tried to establish another insurance empire. On January 27, 1960, at age 85, death caught up with Samuel Conner Pandolfo - salesman, entrepreneur, dreamer, and one of St. Cloud's most illustrious citizens.

01/05/1999

Pandolfo's Legacy Lives on in Pantown

With a factory in place and stockholders at hand, automobile manufacturer Samuel Pandolfo began to plan a model town to house his employees. The area Pandolfo called Pan-Town-on-the-Mississippi is his major legacy to St. Cloud, Minnesota. The fact that Pantown is closer to the Sauk River is a prime example of the promoter's tendency toward grandiosity.

Pantown covers six blocks - from 30th to 33rd Avenues North between Eighth and Tenth Streets - in Northwest St. Cloud. Originally Cooper's Addition, Pantown at the time of its formation stood on uninhabited prairie. Although the original Pantown plan called for 100 dwellings, 58 were eventually built. Pandolfo did not like company towns like Pullman, Illinois, where housing units are joined wall-to-wall in drab, monotonous order. He strove to provide his employees with a more humane setting. Historian John Dominik quotes Pandolfo as saying: "Tenement surroundings do not go far toward making happy home circles, and dissatisfied men do not produce the best results."

To avoid the mistakes made by other company town designers, Pandolfo instructed Arthur C. Clausen, his architect and supervisor of construction, to draw up 25 different house plans, working from three specific models: modest bungalows with simple rectangular plans and sparse detailing; more stylish plans with bow windows and ample porches; and larger, more elaborate houses - one-and-one-half to two-stories high. Designed for executives, these latter houses lie along Eighth Street North.

Fortunately for the visual landscape of St. Cloud, Clausen was well versed in the Craftsman-style, one of America's finest architectural forms. Prominently found between 1905 and 1930, common Craftsman features include multiple roof planes, overhanging eaves with exposed rafter tails, open porches with squat pillars, and, in many homes, walls sheathed with naturally-stained shingles. Designed to mirror natural surroundings, a Craftsman dwelling is closely related to Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie houses built between 1900 and 1910. The term "bungalow" generally refers to one-story houses in the Craftsman style.

Many Craftsman-style homes were prefabricated by Sears, Roebuck & Company and other mass producers who shipped their products by rail to sites across the country. Although these houses were well-designed, well-constructed, and reasonable in price, Pandolfo's houses were built individually by local contractors.

Pandolfo's dream company town included other amenities besides adherence to architectural aesthetics. As part of his plan, Pandolfo called for a system of advanced street lighting, a volunteer fire department, police protection, graded streets, sidewalks, and curbs. Even a school was planned. To accommodate his unmarried employees, Pandolfo also erected at the northeast corner of Third Street and 33rd Avenue North a $20,000, 23-room building complete with a dining room, a modern kitchen, and a lunch counter.

The Hendrickson home, 3201 Eighth Street North, has had ten owners, but few changes since the Craftsman-style home was built for Pantown in the 1920s.

Following Pandolfo's downfall in the early 1920s, all 58 Pantown houses stood vacant. Financed by 10-year bonds valued collectively at $350,000, bondholders realized only 17 percent of their investment when the houses went up at public auction in 1926. According to the *St. Cloud Journal-Press*, it was a "bargain day for buyers" when all 58 houses sold for $103,000.

What is it like to live in a Pantown house? To address this question I interviewed Susan Hendrickson, a nurse at Central Minnesota Group Health, and her husband, Tom, a gunsmith who works in Becker, Minnesota. The Hendricksons are the tenth owners of the house at 3201 Eighth Street North. It once belonged to a Pandolfo executive. The house has gone through very few changes since it was built. "It is an incredibly 'cool' house. We were blessed to find a house that had not been changed," Susan told me.

The Hendrickson's house reveals Craftsman-style at its best: a full two-story structure with a large shingle-sided dormer gable facing the street, a stuccoed first story, and a unique octagonal porch, originally open but enclosed in the 1940s. Large, elegant bow windows appear in the living and dining rooms.

The interior has oak floors, a large living room with a fireplace, and a handsome circular staircase to the second floor. Susan showed me two openings she calls "dumb windows" in the upper-story bedrooms. She thinks these were designed more for exterior symmetry than indoor use. People who like older houses are reminded that a Craftsman house has old-fashioned screens and storm windows. In the Hendrickson's house there are 38 to take down and put up twice a year.

When I asked Tom if there is a downside to living in an 80-year-old house, he said that Pantown houses were "built well, but on deadline." As an example, when basements were excavated, the removed soil was used to mix mortar for the foundations. The presence of clay in the sand has produced crumbly foundations that give Pantown houses problems to this day.

Over the past few years, St. Cloud has experienced a resurgence of interest in the community's built environment - witness the ongoing renovation and restoration of downtown St. Germain. As the suburbs continue to spread, spawning look-alike houses and streets without sidewalks or trees, it is refreshing to walk through (and live in) a neighborhood that has an identifiable character and aesthetic appeal.

12/01/1998

Door. Gogala Farm, St. Anthony, Stearns County.

Ethnic Groups 1856-1905

Using Warner & Foote's 1880 map of Stearns County and data from the Federal Census of 1880, Geographer Dr. Lewis G. Wixon has color-coded the map to show the ethnic mix of settlers in the county at that time. Using a different color for each ethnic group, Wixon matched an individual landholder's parents' nation of origin with the landholder's section of land. Wixon's map resembles a colorful quilt that brings alive the unique diversity of Stearns County. The predominance of German settlement often obscures the fact that Irish, Norwegian, Yankee, Slovenian and immigrants from Luxemburg also found Central Minnesota hospitable to their needs. One group, on the other hand, was met with armed resistance - the Gypsies, who criss-crossed the region between 1888 and 1934.

Yankees: Winnebago Dream Became Brockway Township, 1855

New England settlers in Central Minnesota are not always as well documented as the German and Middle Europeans who arrived in Stearns County in greater numbers. The 1860 Census shows that 542 people born in New England had settled in St. Cloud; according to the 1880 Census, 724 Yankees resided in the city.

Pioneers from Maine came to Minnesota in the wake of the lumbering industry, but stayed to farm when the great forests disappeared toward the beginning of the 20th century. According to one author, Yankees and Yorkers (settlers from New York State) "built and managed towns, founded industries, and established important institutions. They were acutely aware of their role as builders of a civilization in the wilderness and confident that Minnesota would become the New England of the West."

On a midsummer day, the wind rustles through the dry grass in the tiny cemetery on 390th Street in Sartell. All afternoon, the sun has tried to peek through rain-laden clouds. The silence is broken only by the sounds of crickets, tree frogs, and an occasional distant train. In this well-groomed place someone has carefully bolted together several broken gravestones. The unsettled land surrounding the cemetery resembles the natural prairie as it must have appeared to the pioneers when first they settled here.

The Winnebago Prairie Cemetery, platted in 1880, stands in Brockway Township, two miles southeast of St. Stephen, Minnesota. The Anglo-Saxon names show those buried here came from New England. In 1856, William Dwelly surveyed an area north of Sartell for a town called Winnebago - a dream town that never became a reality. When Stearns County was divided into townships in 1858, the area was named Winnebago Township, later Calais, and now Brockway. At that time, Sauk Rapids was a trading post and St. Cloud a mere scattering of houses.

Winnebago Prairie's early settlers included Asa and Winslow Libby, William Gordon, Winslow Getchell and his son Nathaniel, George Day, and Milo Young. Nathaniel Getchell was appointed postmaster in 1857 A private school was established in 1860 at Winslow Getchell's home with Irene Carrick of Elk River as the first teacher. The first public school was built in 1861

The pioneer experiences of James Y. Demeritt and Henry B. Smart symbolize the hardships faced by the early settlers. Born in New Hampshire, Demeritt, 33, arrived in Minnesota in 1855 and claimed land in a wild and unsettled section in what was to become Brockway Township. According to historian William Bell Mitchell, Demeritt's wife and two children crossed the river in a borrowed canoe while their oxen and a cow waded across.

During the 1862 Dakota War, the female settlers fortified themselves in the Demeritt home after

the men were summoned to Fort Ripley to guard the military post. "The women passed the anxious days, scarcely daring to cook for fear the smoke would betray them or to light at night lest it might attract the attention of the Indians," Mitchell wrote.

Henry B. Smart was born in Frankfort, Maine, in 1819. In 1855, Smart arrived in Minnesota after walking from Chicago to the Mississippi River. As an expert carpenter, Smart built many of the houses and business blocks in Sauk Rapids and St. Cloud. After building a wagon road along the Mississippi, Smart erected a ferry landing at the present site of River's Edge Restaurant (the old Portside) where he served passengers crossing over into Benton County. The ferry was a raft operated by a set of cables attached to a winch and was dependent upon the river's current to carry passengers and freight across the river. When the Rice Bridge opened in 1900, the ferry was no longer needed. Smart lived until 1914, dying at age 95.

The words on Sarah C. Morrill's Winnebago Cemetery gravestone are as clear as the day they were etched in 1882.

09/01/2001

Many Irish Called Minnesota Their Home, 1856

The nutritious potato was a standard staple of the Irish diet for generations, but when a fungus destroyed potato crops from 1845 to 1851, more than a million people died from starvation, exposure, and typhus. By 1855, 2.1 million Irish had left their homeland - three-quarters to the United States. It was the "greatest proportional population movement of the 19th century," according to historian Ann Regan.

Although the largest number of Irish immigrants stayed in cities along the Atlantic coast, a trickle of settlers made their way to Minnesota. The 1850 Federal Census recorded 263 Irish-born people in Minnesota Territory, of which one-third were soldiers at Fort Snelling and Fort Gaines (later called Fort Ripley). In the 1850s, Irish people founded Darwin in Meeker County and Maple Lake in Wright County. After the Dakota War of 1862, Irish farmers began arriving in St. Wendel Township, Stearns County. Regan said that by 1880 Stearns and Meeker counties each had about 400 Irish-born residents, and Wright County had more than 500.

In 1862, the St. Paul & Pacific Railroad advertised overseas for laborers, paying nine shillings a day. Historian Bucky O'Connor wrote that Irish workers in Melrose were well-fitted for brakeman, conductor, fireman, engineer, section, and roundhouse jobs. O'Connor said James J Hill, the Irish-Canadian founder of the Great Northern Railroad, had a "special fondness" for Irish engineers, one of whom was O'Connor's father.

St. Wendel attracted Irish settlers as early as 1856. This sign shows pride of community in the small Stearns County village.

Although most of Central Minnesota's Irish settlers were Roman Catholic, a small group of Scotch-Irish Presbyterians made their homes in Todd County. Calling themselves Covenanters, these Protestants in 1866 sold their land in Indiana and moved to Long Prairie, Round Prairie, and Reynolds townships in Todd County. By the 1940s, only a few of their descendants remained in Central Minnesota.

Beginning in 1856, a handful of Irish-born Catholics with such names as Barrett, McLaughlin, Meagher, Joyce, Toomey, and Callahan moved into St. Wendel Township on a site near German settlers. In 1867, Irish residents formed St. Columbkille parish, named after a 6th-century Irish saint. Before a church was built in 1877, people met in private homes, a log schoolhouse, or in Pat Callahan's store. In 1903, a steeple and bell were added. Today, the bell sits on a granite monument next to the church building.

The name Columbkille is special to me. In 1867, twenty-two-year-old Susan Maxwell left the village of Columbkille, County Donegal, Ireland, for America. Like many 19th-century immigrants, Susan made her way west, first to Illinois and then to Iowa where she married a widower, Joseph Homer Morgan. Later, Susan and Joseph built a farm near Pipestone, Minnesota, where the couple remained for the rest of their lives. At one time, I visited the still-inhabited, thatched-roof house where Susan Maxwell Morgan - my grandmother - said her final good-byes before leaving Ireland forever.

03/01/2003

Czechs Settle in Stearns County, 1860

I am sitting in the Bohemian Cemetery in Getty Township, nine miles southwest of Sauk Centre. A dry wind tempers the heat of the noonday sun on this late summer day. Although the sky is bright blue, distant thunderheads promise rain. No moisture has fallen for several days. From my spot on the hard earth I hear crickets and watch a hawk as it circles above the surrounding cornfields. Barn swallows, startled by a human visitor, swoop down to warn me away.

A wandering butterfly, a yellow weed, and a small veteran's flag are the only colors dotting the dry, brown grass. A bold-lettered wooden sign identifies the nationality of those buried in this square plot fenced with chain-link and barbed wire. Were it not for the sound of an occasional car and the sight of distant powerlines, this could be 1883, the date on the earliest headstone. As I walk among the stones, I discover fascinating and unfamiliar names - Zuzba, Jenc, Taresh, Doubrava, Ceynar, Volc, Klar and Weeddeck.

Who is the caretaker of this place, so well maintained? At the nearest farm, I am greeted by Alvin and Merle Gritzmacher, bachelor brothers who reside on their 100-year-old ancestral homeplace. Because the farmyard and the house are so impeccably neat, I am not surprised to learn that Merle is responsible for the graveyard's upkeep "The cemetery is my hobby," he proudly tells me.

Merle remembers that as a boy of 12 he watched gravediggers dig holes and lower pine box coffins into the ground. In the 1920s, diggers often spent the night at the Gritzmacher farm before sealing the grave after the following day's funeral. The Gritzmacher brothers are fifth-generation descendants of a Gerry Township Bohemian community founded in the mid-19th century.

In the summer of 1855 the *Borgstede*, sailing out of Bremerhaven, docked in New York City. Among the passengers were Franz Kuzba, 42, his spouse, Anna, 40, and their five daughters and four sons, ranging in age from three to 16. Two of the children, Frank and Maria Kuzba, lie buried in the Bohemian Cemetery. (Family members Americanized the name by changing the "z" to an "s".)

Bohemia is a region in western Czechoslovakia. Driven by political and social upheaval, Bohemian immigrants began arriving in the United States as early as 1848. Although slavery was outlawed in Czechoslovakia in 1848, it was not until 1867 that a peasant could, without permission, legally leave his master's estate.

Between 1860 and 1930, about 1,000 Czechs made their way to Stearns County. Those arriving between 1867 and 1900 were pushed from Europe because of mounting debts, agricultural depression, and political repression. In 1867, the Czech government instituted a draft, requiring men to serve three years in the army, a law that drove even more families from their homeland.

The Bohemian settlement in Stearns County formed around Getty's Grove, a now non-existent village in Getty Township. Founded in 1857 by John J Getty, a native of New York State, the hamlet boasted a post office, school, and a cluster of houses.

Six years earlier, John Peschek, a Bohemian immigrant, age 11, arrived in Getty Township by way of St. Paul. According to an interview conducted in the 1930s, Peschek said his father erected a clapboard-roofed log cabin. Furniture consisted of boxes, benches, and a bed pegged to the wall. Wadded cotton rags soaked in a dish filled with bear grease provided interior light. The cabin had a dirt floor. Peschek recalled that the family picked wild berries and planted vegetables, corn, and potatoes. Ample supplies of deer, duck, and geese produced a steady diet.

Perpetual cemetery maintenance began with the formation of the Bohemian Cemetery Association in 1878. Annual records in the Bohemian language were kept until 1938. For several decades, the cemetery was neglected. Descendants cleared the site in 1980, and a group has gathered thereafter on Memorial Day to ensure perpetual care. Sauk Centre resident Lois Ceynar, association secretary and treasurer, told me that when the group originally met, "sweet clover had grown up over our heads."

Few people choose to long pause in cemeteries. For family historians, however, a graveyard is a valuable resource for names, dates, and in some cases, stone-etched expressions of hope and grief that help reveal the personality of the person there interred.

The Getty Township cemetery reminds us of our European roots - a legacy that grows more distant with each passing generation. A message written in Czech is etched in the Kuzba gravestone.

10/04/1999

Norwegians Joined Germans Settling in Stearns County, 1865

By 1905, almost 6,000 German-born immigrants had settled Stearns County, but the same census also recorded 1,573 Norwegian-born immigrants who had made their homes in Central Minnesota.

In 1865, a group of Norwegian pioneers left Spring Grove, Houston County, Minnesota, by covered wagon to seek land in North Fork Township, Stearns County. The party included Ellen Baalson, who laid claim to land before her family arrived. Another Norwegian immigrant, Hans P Heieie, built a log cabin in the burgeoning settlement of Elk Grove near Brooten. Brynhild Heieie hauled the logs while her husband hewed and placed them. Heieie later recalled tying twigs to her oxen's tails to swat swarms of mosquitoes. Nels Strandemoen, a fur trader, built a two-story log house on his homestead, using the second story for his mercantile business.

Six Civil War veterans made up a contingent of Norwegian pioneers whom locals called "the soldiers." After mustering out of the service in Madison, Wisconsin, the men traveled by rail and steamboat to St. Paul and by oxteam to Renville County and later Paynesville. From there they walked to Elk Grove. During the winter of 1865-66 the veterans - Hans Kittilson, Hans Halvorson, Hans S. Skaardahl, Halvor Halvorson, Syvert C. Larson, and Kittel Halvorson - shared Kittilson's log house.

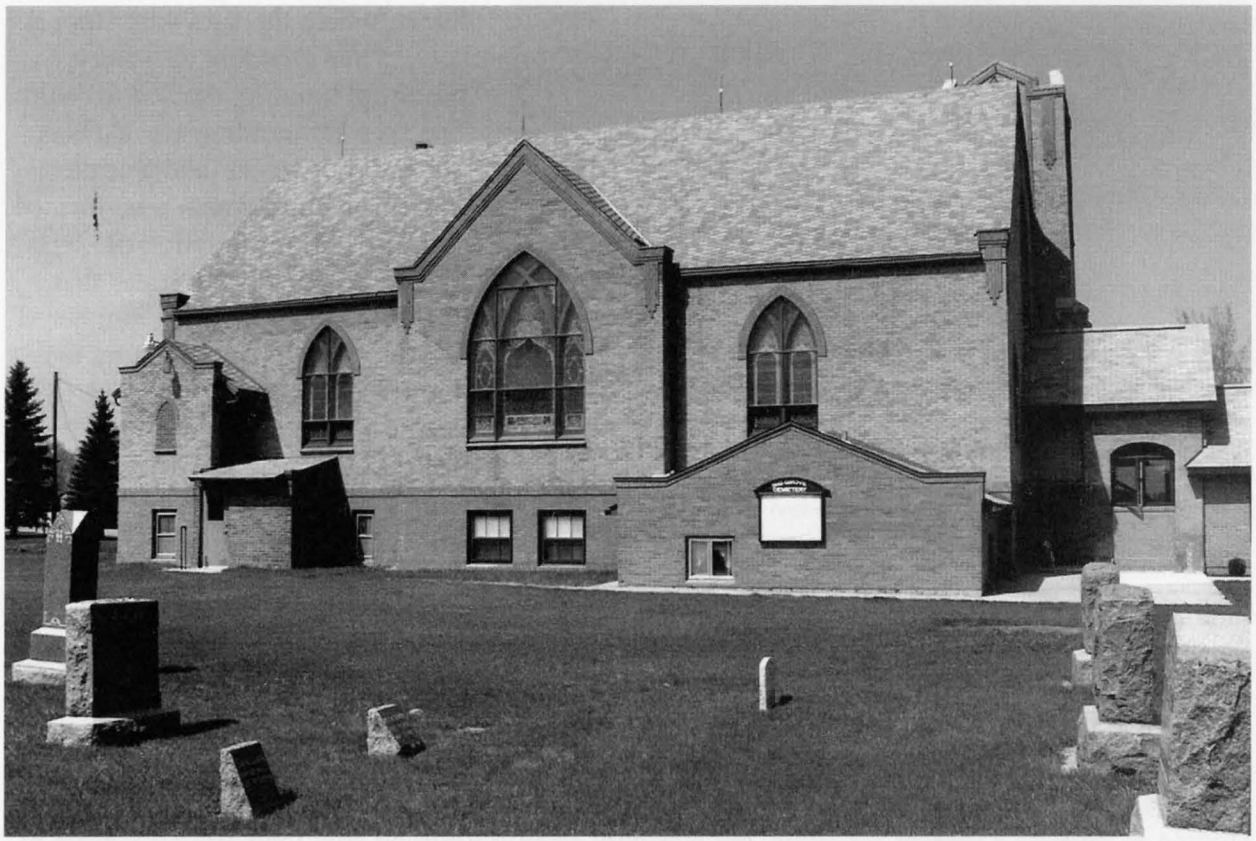
According to William Bell Mitchell, the Norwegian pioneers lived in virtual isolation. Groceries could be bought in Sauk Centre, but the closest produce market was St. Cloud, a five- to six-day journey by oxteam. The nearest railroad was some 60 roadless miles away in Elk River.

In 1908, Ole O. Tangen, Jr., interviewed the North Fork Norwegians. Although some newly-arrived immigrants built log structures, a surprising number made use of dugouts - literally caves carved into hillsides. Narve Erickson, a native of Flaa, Hallingdal, Norway, lived in his dugout for five years before building a house made from precut lumber. Erickson used aspen branches and sod for the dugout's roof.

In 1866, Levor Olson Heiplads, another immigrant from Flaa, lived in a tent and in his covered wagon until he dug a cellar in a hillside. Heiplads made his roof of oak logs covered with dry hay and sod. With a single window and a door of fir, the dugout served the family for two years before Levor put up a log house.

Kittle Nilson Strande's log house had a "fairly good roof, but the floor, door and windows had not yet been installed." For protection from the cold, Strande hung fur robes in the door and window spaces. The family's wagonbox was used for a bed, Strande told Tangen.

Besides descriptions of their shelters, the immigrants left sad accounts of their children's deaths during the early days of settlement. Narve and Ragna Erickson had thirteen children, eight of whom died either at childbirth or during childhood. Their biographer noted that "it was common in those days that you did not count your children until they were adults. It also was common to believe in large families in case some of them died before reaching adulthood."

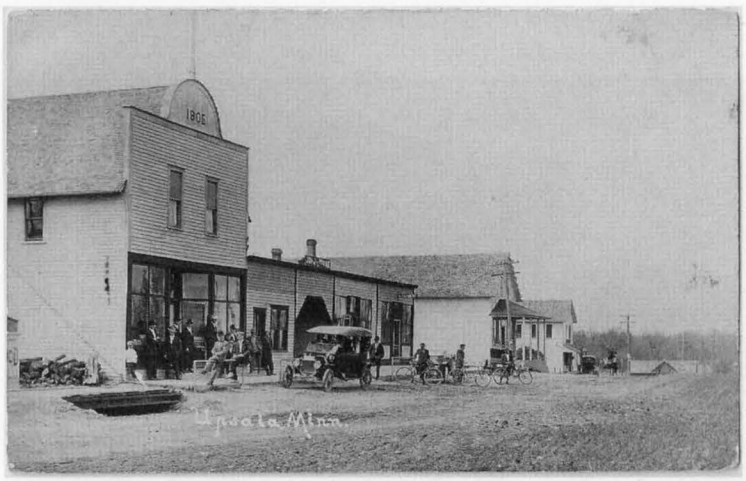


Norwegian settlers erected a log church in North Fork Township, Stearns County, in 1867 Each parishioner brought two hewn logs the day the building was raised. An 1880 frame church was hit by a tornado on July 4, 1913, and the brick church was erected in 1914. The pioneers who organized the Big Grove Lutheran Church are interred in this cemetery.

04/05/2003

Swedes: Upsala Has a History of Family Support, 1872

My interest in Upsala began twenty years ago when I met 90-year-old Ida Ryberg, whose parents, Johan and Anna Mari Ryberg, immigrated to Morrison County in 1890. Settling in Elmdale Township, the family, including three-month-old Ida, lived in a log house that had a birch bark and sod-covered roof. The logs had been cut so hurriedly that leaves sprouted in the warm airtight room, Ida said.



John S. Borgstrom sits with his family in their Maxwell automobile in Upsala's downtown in 1910.

(Photo courtesy of the Upsala Area Historical Society)

Upsala, population 400, still retains a bit of its pioneer past on Main Street, where the hardware store is housed in a wooden, two-story, falsefront building erected in 1906. The area surrounding Upsala was settled by Swedish (and a scattering of Danish) immigrants who formed part of a mass emigration of Swedes to the United States that, between 1880 and 1894, numbered 475,000. In Morrison County the number of Swedish settlers in 1895 totaled 1,457 Census records show that during the same period the county had 769 people from Poland and 1,773 people from Germany.

Founded in 1872, Upsala was originally named Swedback's Settlement after Charles and Erica Swedback, builders of the area's first creamery, sawmill, and general store. Settled predominantly by Swedish Protestant immigrants, the village was renamed in 1888 for the postmaster's hometown, Upsala, the university city in Sweden. The second 'p' in the town's name was later dropped.

Hoping to provide a market for crops, the Northern Pacific Railroad sold land around Upsala to newcomers beginning in 1880. In 1872 Swedish immigrant John Henry Peterson walked from St. Cloud to Upsala, where he built a log cabin for his family on a 160-acre site. August Johnson, another early settler, held the first clear title to the land upon which the village would stand.

By 1915 the town could boast a bank, a creamery, a telephone company, lumber and furniture dealers, dry goods stores, a meat market, and an implement and harness shop. During the 1920s,

the town gained a movie theater, a drug store, a billiard hall, and a medical doctor. In 1913 Johnson sold 60 acres to John S. Borgstrom, a photographer, who had arrived in Upsala in 1893 with his wife, Anna, and their five-year-old son, Axel. An ambitious entrepreneur, Borgstrom opened photography studios in Upsala, Swanville, Burtrum, Grey Eagle, Holdingford and Elmdale. In 1914, he helped organize the Farmers State Bank, hiding its safe under a horse blanket in a cornfield while the building was being erected. In 1931 a robber wounded a cashier and made away with $3,500 in gold that was never recovered. During his long career Borgstrom also established a confectionery shop, a hardware store, and an undertaking parlor.

For three-quarters of a century, Axel Borgstrom was Upsala's best-known citizen. In 1914 he entered his father's bank as a cashier and rose to become its president. Axel retired at age 88 and died in 1995 at 106. Although Axel Borgstrom and his wife, Carrie, had no children of their own, they adopted five children after the death of Axel's uncle and aunt.

The Upsala Area Historical Society is now housed in the home built in 1913 where the Borgstroms lived for 67 years. When they were in their 90s, Axel and Carrie donated their home and its surrounding 35 acres to the historical society and moved into a rambler they built on the corner of Elm and Main.

Dan Hovland, a special education teacher and head of the Upsala Area Historical Society, gave me a tour of the Borgstrom House Museum, and later showed me a sample of the more than 3,000 photographs from the work of the Swedish photographer. The Borgstrom Museum and the collection of photographs constitute Upsala's "root," Hovland said.

In a recent interview, Wanda Erickson, an elementary school librarian and Upsala's public librarian, said Upsala "has a good feeling of community and family." Erickson's maternal grandparents moved to Upsala in the 1920s because of the high quality of the local schools. After Erickson's parents moved away, she returned to Upsala to spend summers with her grandparents. Erickson said natives come home to retire and older folks encourage their children to return to Upsala to raise grandchildren. Erickson's husband, Craig, who owns a local cabinet and furniture-making company, is a fourth-generation resident.

On June 20, 2001, voters narrowly defeated a proposal to consolidate Upsala and Swanville school districts, a vote that also included a referendum for a new Upsala high school and remodeling of the Swanville school. Folks are prepared to take up the battle again, she said. Pride of place, citizen input, family support, and community spirit are values that define Upsala.

07/07/2001

Gypsies Faced Rocky Road in County's Early Days, 1888-1934

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, no ethnic group was treated with more hostility than the Gypsies. During several decades, the rootless and unwanted Gypsies crisscrossed Stearns County. Between 1888 and 1934, local newspapers declared Gypsies unwelcome, not only in Stearns County but throughout Central Minnesota and the state.

In summer 1888, Henry Lommel, a resident of Luxemburg, claimed that Gypsies had "cribbed his ticker," that is, stolen his watch. The morning after Gypsies had come to his door begging for food, Lommel awoke to find his watch missing. The *St. Cloud Times* reported that in the attempt to find the watch, Gypsies - described as a band of "swarthy, frowsy men and women, a number of loose horses and an army of snarling dogs" - were rounded up and searched by 400 local men and boys at the corner of St. Germain and Seventh Avenue.

In spring 1905, the *Times* noted that 20 wagonloads of Gypsies traveling between Chicago and South Dakota had been driven from Anoka and were camped along the Sauk River. Police Chief Quinlivan visited the camp with orders to stop the Gypsies from practicing fortune-telling in St. Cloud. Local law treated fortune-tellers as vagrants. In 1910, a caravan of Gypsies was driven from Eagle Lake near Mankato by "enraged citizens, armed with clubs, shotguns, and rifles." According to the *Times*, this westward-moving group was given 20 minutes to move on.

In spring 1915, Gypsies camping near Waite Park were met with a warrant and warned to keep moving. The *Journal-Press* reported the Gypsies were "too intimately neighborly to the detriment of their newly acquired friends' personal and unattached property." By 1926 the nomads abandoned their colorful wagons in favor of cars. The newspaper noted that Gypsies had arrived in a Cadillac, two Dodge touring cars, and a Buick touring car.

According to the *Journal-Press*, the Gypsies "found that St. Cloud is a bad place to loiter long as the police were on their trail a few minutes after they came here." During the Depression, Gypsies again found St. Cloud an inhospitable stopping place. In 1934 when a caravan of 15 automobiles set up a night camp on the edge of town, Sheriff A. B. Ellering and the St. Cloud police escorted the group out of the city. The next year another group was accompanied to the western boundary of the county.

Who are the Gypsies? Now properly called Roma, the nomads originally were thought to be Egyptians - hence, Gypsies - mistakenly identified by Europeans as Islamic invaders. Scholars now believe Gypsies originated in India.

Persecution came early to the wandering tribes. In the 18th century, the King of Prussia decreed that Gypsies older than 18 be put to death by hanging. In England, Henry VIII and Elizabeth I

ruthlessly repressed the Gypsies. Francis I ordered Gypsies out of France without trial and under the threat of the gallows.

In the 20th century, Hitler exterminated more than 500,000 Gypsies - almost 80 percent of the European population - along with Jews and other "undesirables." About 25 million Roma are found throughout the world today, including close to 200,000 in the United States. A lack of a shared nationality has made the Roma "an easy target," according to a modern scholar. Today, Romani professionals are striving to combat racism and media stereotyping, as well as seeking reparations for lives lost during the Holocaust.

05/03/2003

Slovenians: St. Stephen Has Flourished With Time, 1864

A mile east of the village of St. Stephen stands a two-story hewn log house built in 1888 by Mathew Justin, a Slovenian immigrant carpenter and Brockway Township, Stearns County, pioneer. Justin procured the logs by trading blackberries with neighbors and friends. Deep marks on the massive logs reveal where Justin stripped off the bark with his broadax. Later, the settler dug a root cellar behind the house and above it constructed a fieldstone kitchen. Etched in the doorframe are Justin's initials and the date, 1890.

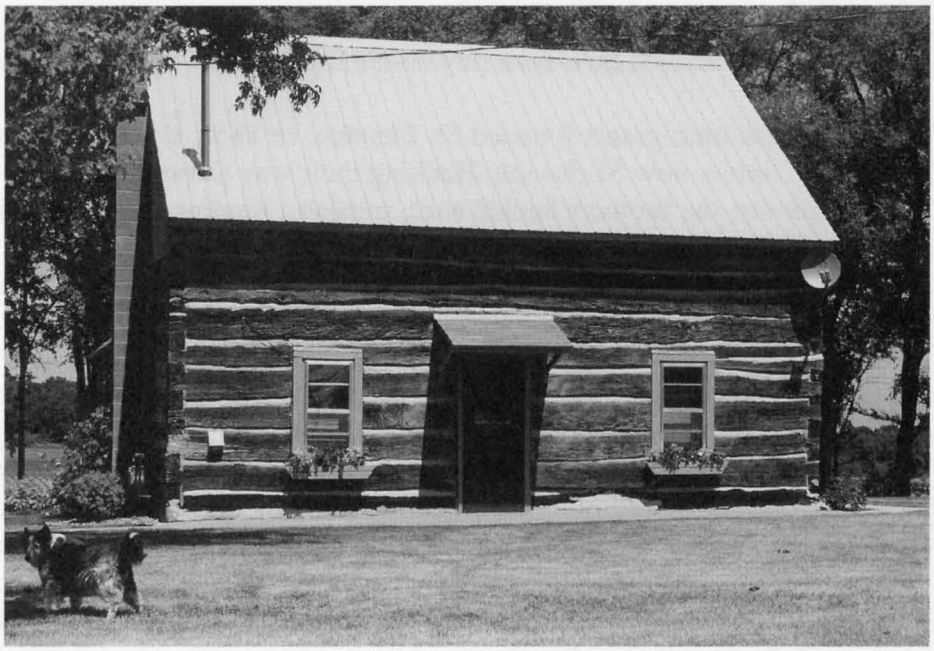
Slovenian immigrants Rosalia and Andrew Supan settled in St. Stephen in the late-19th century. (Once part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Slovenia is now a Yugoslavian province.) In 1909 the Supans and their 13-year-old son, Steve, moved into Mathew Justin's house, where Steve lived until his death at 91 in 1987 In 1934 Steve married Frances Schumer, who still lives in the log house today.

During their 53 years together, Steve and Francis raised seven children: Jerome, Lawrence, Edwin, Donald, Anna Mae, Doreen, and Lucetta. On June 30, 175 relatives and friends gathered on the front lawn of the log house to celebrate Frances Schumer Supan's 90th birthday. A week later Frances and I sat in her kitchen and talked about her experiences as a lifelong member of the St. Stephen community.

Francis Schumer Supan on her 90th birthday, 2001.

Born in 1911, Francis was the daughter of John and Mary (Smoley) Schumer. As a farm child, Frances was required to carry out multiple chores. She remembers hand-milking fourteen cows, picking potatoes, shocking corn, cleaning the barn, and carrying syrup cans to collect chokeberries and blackberries. The school where Frances completed the eighth grade stood where Howie's Bar in downtown St. Stephen stands today. Frances said the school had one teacher for the first four grades and a second one for the last four.

During the Great Depression, Frances was one of fourteen St. Stephen girls who worked as domestics at the St. Paul Seminary in St. Paul. Housed in a dormitory, each girl had her own bed and nightstand but shared a bathroom. Frances served for two years as a vegetable girl



The Supan log house was built in 1888 by Mathew Justin.

in the seminary's kitchen. Later, she worked for a Minneapolis medical doctor before returning to St. Stephen to care for a sick brother.

After her marriage to Steve Supan, the couple farmed 56 acres where they raised cattle and grew oats and corn. In 1952 the log house was wired for electricity, and in 1965 indoor plumbing was installed. In the 1970s, the Supan children insulated the house. Several years ago the clapboard siding was removed, exposing the perfectly preserved log facade.

Interviewed in 1982, Frances spoke of the changes that had taken place in the community during her lifetime. Before World War I, local priests gave their sermons in Slovenian or German. During the war, when German culture came under attack by self-proclaimed loyal Americans, public use of the German language was discouraged. Frances was quoted as saying: "I was quite small yet, but Father Trobec was our priest, and he said in church that before he was going to preach a sermon in English the river would have to run backwards!"

St. Stephen was the first Slovenian settlement in America. Fifty-one families settled in St. Stephen and in nearby St. Anthony following appeals by the Rev. Francis Xavier Pierz, a Slovenian priest who came to America to serve the native population. Pierz sent hundreds of letters to his fellow countrymen hoping to establish a "New Slovenia" in the Big Woods of

Minnesota. Many Slovenians initially settled in St. Paul where they worked in the sawmills to save enough money to begin farming. While the number of Slovenian immigrants remained small, Pierz's efforts found a wider audience among Bavarian Germans. By 1872, many German immigrants had formed their own tiny community a short distance northwest of St. Stephen.

Two Slovenian immigrants founded St. Stephen. In 1864, Gregor Pogacnik visited his brother, Anton, in Clinton, now St. Joseph. Hacking their way through the thick woods of northeast Stearns County, the brothers hauled axes, muskets, hunting knives, clothing, and provisions by oxcart until they reached the site that would become St. Stephen. There, Pogacnik built a log house for his wife, Agnes, and their year-old daughter, Mary. The town's second founder, Gregor Peternell, settled in St. Stephen the same year.

In 1871, the Slovenians and Germans gathered to erect a log church. Built without pews, the congregation stood throughout the service while the priest read by the light that entered the sanctuary through spaces between the logs. In 1904, John Jager, a Minneapolis architect completed the handsome yellow-brick church that stands in St. Stephen today. During construction, local farmers hauled huge fieldstones for the foundation and St. Cloud brick for the walls. In 1924, a Slovenian painter named Gosar completed 26 canvases that grace the ceiling of the Romanesque-inspired church. Standing on the corner of East Main and Central Avenue - the heart of St. Stephen's tiny downtown - a visitor hears only an occasional car or truck breaking the pervasive silence.

In the cool atmosphere of Trobec's Bar & Lounge, a single customer sips on a Coke before taking off on his motorcycle. Established as a grocery store in 1929, Trobec's started selling beer after Prohibition was repealed in 1933. Owner Ray Trobec said at present the town of 1,000 is protected from development by a natural barrier one mile in every direction, but that a proposal to bring in city water and sewer will undoubtedly have an impact on the village's serene character.

A short distance west of downtown on the 1880 Mensinger Century Farm stands a fieldstone barn built in 1895. According to owner David Mensinger, the structure may have to be razed if the road is widened to accommodate city improvements. Mensinger, whose herd of cattle is housed on the site, says he is "not against progress, but wishes it would go a bit slower." Mensinger is concerned that changes will endanger such natural features as a nearby pond, home to several sandhill cranes.

Between the church and a remnant of the forest that once gave the parish the name St. Stephen-in-the-Wood, stand neat rows of stones that commemorate Slovenian and German pioneers.

08/04/2001

Downtown St. Cloud
1850s-1992

Beginning in 2007, a renaissance occurred along St. Germain Street in St. Cloud when some 30 commercial fronts were returned to their original appearance. An elegant, red-brick façade was revealed after several decades when a metal cover was removed from the 1887 Kerr Block, designed by St. Paul architects Cass Gilbert and James Knox Taylor. Many of the late-19th century facades on St. Germain were designed by Allen E. Hussey, an architect that historian Paul Clifford Larson has called "the best storefront designer in the state during the 1880s and 90s."

St. Cloud Saloons, 1850s

In 1855, the future city of St. Cloud was divided into three towns: Lower, Middle and Upper (or Acadia). During the same period when New Englanders were settling Lower Town, a handful of slave-holding Southerners were filing claims in Acadia. Middle Town sat on land bought by a Yankee, John Lyman Wilson, who paid $100 for the 320-acre site.

According to historian John J Dominik, German settlers from Sauk City moved to Middle Town when they were told it was illegal to sell beer in their shanties. Drawn to Middle Town's German-speaking storekeepers, these immigrants soon helped make St. Germain a thriving central marketplace. The influx of beer-drinking Germans also made Middle Town a saloonkeeper's haven.

By 1889, nineteen saloons stood along St. Germain and the cross streets between Fifth and Ninth Avenues, a figure translating to one saloon per 380 citizens. During the following years, that number changed only slightly· 23 in 1892; 27 in 1894; 25 in 1896; 32 in 1908; 23 in 1918.

These men are lined up at the bar of the Mint Saloon in 1910. The Mint is now RumRunners, 102 Sixth Avenue South, St. Cloud.

In 1919, with the ratification of Prohibition, the number of saloons dropped dramatically to four, and a new label appeared in the 1928 *St. Cloud City Directo*ry - "Saloons-Soft Drinks."

The word "saloon" evolved from the French "salon," a large, elegant room used for public gatherings. At the time when St. Cloud was a struggling pioneer village, New York sported lavish drinking palaces featuring marble floors, brass spittoons, large mirrors, and mahogany bars. According to historian W.J Rorabaugh, "rougher establishments, including both seedy city bars run by and for poor immigrants and crude watering holes in the West, adopted the word "saloon."

The honor of being the oldest continuously-operating saloon on one site belongs to RumRunners, 102 Sixth Avenue South and First Street South, successor to First Street Station, Charlie's, and the Corner Bar. (Although Beaudreau's was established in 1885, that bar has moved at least twice.) Originally called the Hoyt Block, RumRunners was designed by Allen E. Hussey and erected in 1892-1893. About 14 different owners have used the site since Abner W McKusick and George Lindsay opened the first saloon there in 1894.

One bit of notoriety marks the first year the saloon opened. Frank Lane, described by the local paper as "a Stillwater sport," and friend George Tyson rented a second-floor room above the saloon. The sheriff escorted both men out of town after arresting them for allegedly running a gambling operation and entertaining "women of ill repute."

What does the word "saloon" mean in contemporary downtown St. Cloud? I recently undertook an unscientific walking tour survey. I found twelve establishments I would call saloons - places where I would guess a patron wants a drink more than food. Today, I figure there is one downtown bar per 555 St. Cloud patrons. I was surprised to learn no downtown bar is called a saloon. Bars nowadays use individualistic names to set themselves apart from competitors: Rox Nightclub, Tavern on Germain, and Superstar's Sports Bar & Grill, to name a few.

One sign of progress: saloons have discarded those breeders of disease - the brass spittoons.

09/06/2003

Kerr Block and Masonic Lodge, 1887

Thanks to the recent removal of a downtown pigeon roost, a forgotten architectural masterpiece now graces St. Germain Street. Hidden for more than 40 years, the 1887 Romanesque Revival facade on the Masonic Temple, 518 St. Germain, can be seen in its original splendor. The metal screen was added to the facade during the 1960s, a period when business owners had tired of Victorian fussiness and turned to modern slipcovers of metal, glass, or wood.

Masonic member Dennis LacQuay is pleased with the aesthetic opportunities the original facade offers. Plans call for cleaning, re-tucking, and replacing broken brick, some of which was damaged when the metal screen was hung. All twelve sash windows will be replaced and the two, third-story elliptical windows, presently hidden behind wooden boards, will be uncovered. The Masons "want a building to leave for future generations," LacQuay said.

In summer 1887, Col. Charles Deal Kerr, a local attorney, hired St. Paul architectural firm Gilbert & Taylor to design a three-story commercial building in downtown St. Cloud. According to the *St. Cloud Journal-Press*, Kerr promised to build "the handsomest building in St. Cloud, no expense being spared in its construction."

Gilbert & Taylor's 1887 Kerr Block is built of red, pressed-brick. As one of the finest vintage structures along St. Germain, the building is in the process of restoration.

After laying out $7,500 for the lot, Kerr spent an additional $25,000 to build a red, pressed-brick structure trimmed in rough-faced pink granite. Victorian architects often chose the expensive pressed-brick, an imported smooth-faced material, for their elegant domestic and commercial buildings. According to the *Journal-Press,* the Kerr Block - a single large building was called a "block" in those days - was part of "a fine row of three-story buildings along the south side of the 500 block of St. Germain."

Kerr's architect, James Knox Taylor, later moved to Washington where he became Supervising Architect of the Treasury, a job that entailed overseeing the design and construction of government buildings nationwide. With the completion of his Minnesota State Capitol in 1905, Taylor's partner, Cass Gilbert, rose to national fame. In 1913, Gilbert built New York's Woolworth Building, until 1930 the tallest structure in the world. Gilbert also designed the 1899 Little Falls Northern Pacific Depot, which has been handsomely restored.

Through the years, the Kerr Block has served a number of businesses and organizations. The earliest tenants included the R. C. Junk Dry Goods Store on the ground floor, attorneys and medical doctors on the second floor, and the Germania Society on the top story. The Germania Society was founded in 1887 to promote German music, literature, drama, and language. In 1927, G.R. "Bob" Herberger bought out Junk and his partner, Robert Harrison. In 1912, the Masonic Temple Association bought the Kerr Block and Masonic meetings have been conducted there since. Herberger's Department Store rents the ground floor.

LacQuay said the screen removal was approved after members discovered it housed hundreds of pigeons - a virtual "bird highway." When the screen was removed, workers found 1,000 pounds of nests, carcasses, and feces left by the pigeon population.

St. Cloud Metropolitan Transit Center, 1992

Although downtown St. Cloud's Metropolitan Transit Center was built as recently as 1992, many people think the building is at least 50 years old. They make the mistake because the center resembles an architectural treasure from the past. During the planning stages in the late 1980s, members of the Metropolitan Transit Commission and their architects agreed that the building should respect the ambiance of its neighbors, the 1897 Davidson Opera House and the Fifth Avenue Historic District.

Another link with architectural history was joined when the architects chose an "industrial-age" design, reminiscent of the Victorian metal-and-glass train sheds that still dot the English and the European landscapes. A local transportation tie was achieved when it was discovered that a livery stable stood on the site in the 1890s.

Architects for the center were St. Cloud's Grooters Leapaldt Tideman. Pat Waddick designed the center, and Dan Tideman was the project architect. Gopher State Contractors of Rice handled the construction. Transportation specialists come from all across the United States to study the facility's merits, said Sharon Iees, who has managed the center since its opening.

Many elements make the transit center an architectural gem. The outward form of the building is a rectangle with two-tiered cantilevered roofs. Large Gothic-inspired windows allow natural light to permeate the interior. Windows on the second tier emit additional angled light into the central waiting room. Interior rolled-steel struts, terminating in a pineapple motif - a symbol of hospitality - exude a sense of strength, airiness, and movement. "We wanted a building where sun and artificial light create a continual 24-hour 'dance of light and shadow,'" Waddick told me.

The center's graceful, cathedral-like interior also provides a pleasant, smoke-free space for passengers and dispatchers. Unlike many public buildings, the waiting area feels comfortably domestic rather than an industrialized shelter. This "room" includes a dispatcher's booth and drivers' lounge at one end, restrooms and vending machines on the other, and tiers of wooden benches in the center. Tideman said he chose easily-cleaned or replaceable materials, although he has found that customers generally treat the waiting room with respect.

City Council President Sonja Hayden Berg told me that when she was an MTC commissioner, several people argued in favor of moving the transit center away from downtown St. Cloud. From 1980 to 1991, buses used a vacant lot where the Radisson Hotel now stands. Twenty-five other sites were considered before the MTC was given approval to build on its present location. The site "serves the community well, enhancing the appearance of downtown," Berg said.

The architects "deserve the accolades for the center's design," said David W Tripp, executive director of the MTC. From the outset, Tripp said, neither he nor the architects wanted a plain

box-shaped, oversized bus shelter. The handsome projecting roofs were a part of the original plan. A second feature called for an island that would allow drivers to maneuver their vehicles within a narrow space, a plan that has worked well, Tripp said.

The transit center acts both as the city's bus hub and the Greyhound Depot. The facility serves one million customers a year, including long-distance Greyhound passengers who merely disembark to use the restrooms, Tripp said. National travelers have noted the center is "one of the nicest depots anywhere, premier in the nation," Tripp said.

Ten Greyhound buses pass through the center each day. Fourteen local bus routes handle 281 daily runs. Of the 32 bus drivers, 19 are men and 13 are women. Fifty percent of the passengers are between the ages of 19 and 45, 11 percent are older than 65, and 76 percent of all passengers use a bus every day.

Passenger Laurie Wipper, St. Cloud, told me that she uses the bus every day. She said the dispatcher/agents, Carol Dombrovski and Marie Richardson, and the drivers are very helpful and she appreciates the center's well-maintained atmosphere.

The Metropolitan Transit Center in downtown St. Cloud is done in a style resembling the Victorian metal-and-glass train sheds found in England and in Europe.

(Photo courtesy of Grooters Leapaldt Tideman Architects)

Several times recently, I have sat in the transit center's waiting room just to watch people coming and going. At half-hour intervals, the area suddenly comes alive as bus drivers adroitly maneuver their vehicles into their designated places. Minutes after the buses leave the station, the waiting room and the surrounding island become silent until a half-hour later the whole place once again springs to life.

11/01/1999

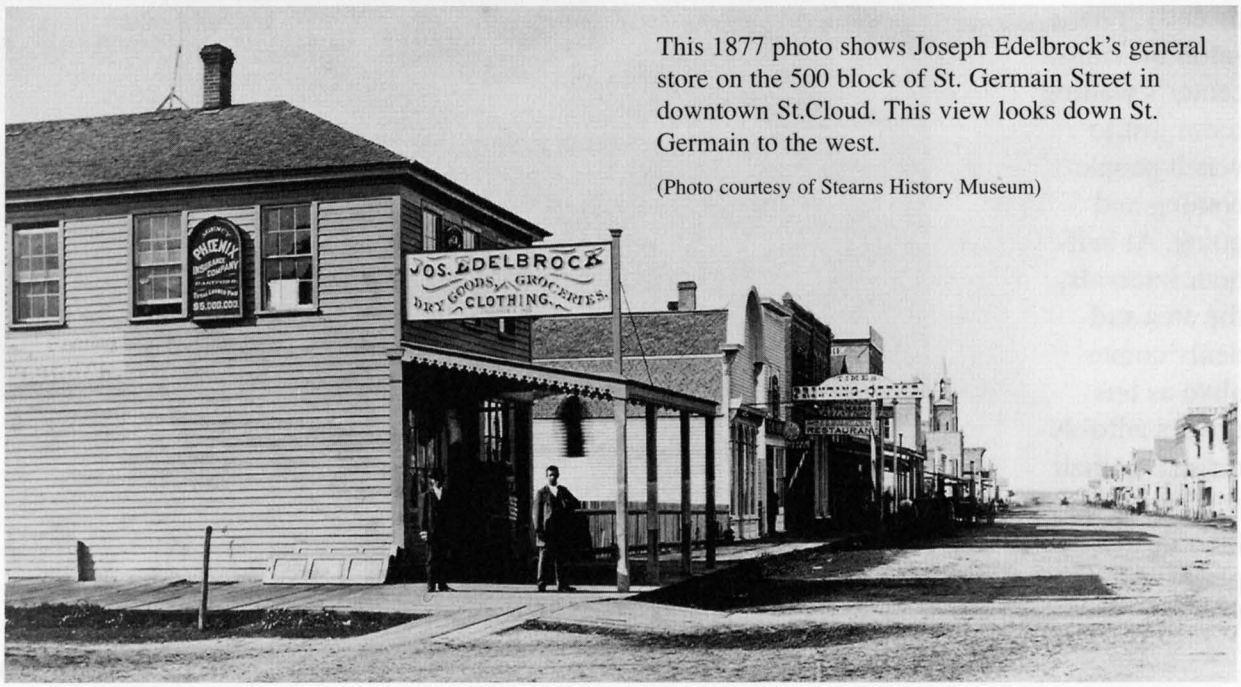
Edelbrock Buildings, 1881

It may not be the most elegant building along St. Germain, but the land upon which it stands is, arguably, the most significant historical site in town. The building is the Press Bar on the corner of St. Germain and Fifth Avenue. The Press site represents a large slice of St. Cloud's history.

The story begins with Joseph Edelbrock, born in Westphalia, Germany, who after living briefly in Chicago, moved to St. Cloud in 1855 with his wife, Eva Marthaler, and his children, Joseph and Anna. The couple would eventually raise ten children.

Joseph, a carpenter by trade, erected a wooden building and established a general store where the Press Bar stands today. The store provided the fledgling community with its initial stock of clothing, dry goods, boots and shoes. To the west of the store - on the site of the Rox Bar & Grille - Edelbrock built a two-story frame house. Both structures stood in "Middle Town," later the commercial hub of the newly-platted town named St. Cloud. The activities that took place within the walls of the Edelbrock store and home shaped St. Cloud's social, educational, business, and political heritage.

Edelbrock was postmaster of Acadia - also called "Upper Town." ("Upper Town," "Lower Town" and "Middle Town" were joined in March 1856 to form the city of St. Cloud.) As postmaster, Edelbrock was responsible for overseeing the North Star Mail Route, a service connecting Acadia to Fort Abercrombie in present-day North Dakota.



This 1877 photo shows Joseph Edelbrock's general store on the 500 block of St. Germain Street in downtown St.Cloud. This view looks down St. Germain to the west.

(Photo courtesy of Stearns History Museum)

In the spring of 1856, Edelbrock was appointed postmaster of St. Cloud, a position that paid $90 a year. As part of his job, he had to make a three-mile trip that involved crossing the Mississippi by ferry to pick up mail in Sauk Rapids. In the rear of his general store, Edelbrock built a wooden case that contained 24 slots - St. Cloud's first post office.

The site of the Edelbrock house is another piece of St. Cloud's heritage. Beginning in the fall of 1856, the home was the community's first school. The teacher, the Rev. Cornelius Wittman, provided a free education to ten pupils, including the Edelbrock's children. As part of St. Cloud's Roman Catholic heritage, the Edelbrock house site symbolizes two other significant historical events. On May 22, 1856, the first Benedictine Mass in St. Cloud was celebrated in a makeshift chapel housed in the attic of the family's home, where the year before, the Rev. Francis Xavier Pierz had said the first Mass. In the Rev. Colman J Barry's *Worship and Work,* a history of Saint John's Abbey and University, the author quotes from the memoirs of the Rev. Bruno Reiss, a Benedictine priest who officiated at the 1856 Mass:

" the altar was placed at one end under the apex of the gable to enable the celebrant to stand upright, but it was necessary, especially at the elevation, to look upward lest he strike the roof. The narrow space could not contain all who had come for the services and so many were compelled to remain on the lower floor and that was fortunate. In the course of the solemnities they noticed that the ceiling - our floor - was giving way and improvised supports [were used in the form of] fence rails. Otherwise we might have had a sad accident."

St. Cloud's governmental heritage also is tied to the Edelbrock store. Prior to building a courthouse, the store operated as a base for county offices. At various times in his career, Edelbrock was county sheriff, mayor, alderman, register of deeds, and a U.S. marshal. When Grover Cleveland was elected president, Edelbrock, a lifelong Democrat, was reappointed postmaster - now at a salary raised to $1,900.

By 1866, Edelbrock decided he could afford to build a more fashionable home. On the present site of the St. Cloud Civic Center, he erected an elegant house in the Italianate style for his growing family. In 1881, when he discovered he needed additional space and modern quarters, Edelbrock put up the structure that now houses the Press Bar. The new store was built of wood and veneered with sand-molded red-brick. In the early1970s the building was stuccoed and painted gray. Today, the Gothic drip moldings that echo the owner's German heritage are the only recognizable original architectural features. Because many local buildings at that time were made entirely of wood, and a few of yellow brick, Edelbrock's red-brick store must have made a bold statement on St. Germain.

The interior of the 1881 store also may have helped attract customers. Known features include a 14-foot pressed-metal ceiling on the main floor, a show window on Washington Street (now

Fifth Avenue), and an elevator that carried goods from the basement to the second floor. For many decades, the second floor provided office space for innumerable businesses, including D.B. Searle's law office - the site where Charles Lindbergh's father studied law under Searle's tutelage.

When Edelbrock was re-appointed postmaster in 1885, he built a solid masonry building next to the store for St. Cloud's post office. Several years ago the wall separating the buildings was removed - the bar at the Press runs roughly along the line where the wall once stood. Today, both facades are stuccoed to make them appear as a single structure.

When Joseph Edelbrock retired in 1893, Jeremiah and Joseph Howe purchased the store. In 1896, Nicholas Lambert moved his retail and wholesale liquor business, the California Wine House, into the Edelbrock store building. Lambert filed for bankruptcy in 1914, and Valentine Theisen and John C. May took over the building for the Corner Cigar Store. Fires in 1924 and 1928 heavily damaged the business, at that time called Theisen and May Pool Hall. In 1933, the famous athlete Babe Didriksen played billiards there prior to performing at an exhibition basketball game.

The Press Bar opened in 1947 Fritz "Fritzie" Frank, the original owner, was a popular St. Cloud businessman. Before the bar was moved to its present site, the Press was located at 22 Sixth Avenue North (now U.S. West Communications) in the *St. Cloud Times* Building - hence its present name.

Recently, Press co-owners Jim Gillespie and Greg Payne gave me separate top-to-bottom tours of the facility. The bar's main floor contains none of the original fabric from the Edelbrock or later periods. The second-floor rooms retain a bit of the ambiance of a vintage pool hall. Here, much of the wooden flooring from the 1880s remains in place, although the pressed-metal ceiling was removed during a recent renovation. Payne said he would like to see the Press restored to its earlier appearance, but maintenance costs make radical improvements financially difficult.

A sense of the past still pervades a space few people see today - the Press Bar basement. In 1864, Joseph Edelbrock raised the original wooden building and constructed a granite foundation beneath it - stones that can still be seen today.

One of the most interesting features of the 144-year-old site is a large tunnel-like opening, once used to store coal, which lies beneath the sidewalk level on the building's east side. The city has ordered the owners to fill in this space, a job that will be completed this summer. Only in this dark and private place, where wooden paving blocks cover the basement floor, can the visitor visualize those who populated this important place in St. Cloud's history.

05/04/1999

Disasters
1886, 1905 & 1909

On April 14, 1886, a tornado - called a cyclone at that time - swept through Central Minnesota. Emerging near St. Cloud's North Star Cemetery, the cyclone swept down on the Juenemann Farm, killing Nicolas Juenemann, injuring his wife, but sparing their nine children. After hovering over the Mississippi, the storm leapt across the river, leveling downtown Sauk Rapids and destroying 200 houses. From there, the cyclone roared on to Rice where it ripped into a wedding party, killing 11 people including the bride and groom, the minister and his wife, and the bride's mother. No one died in the 1905 fire at Lawrence Hall on the St. Cloud Normal School campus, but 100 girls lost their personal belongings. A sympathetic community donated clothes and shelter for the students. The dormitory was rebuilt the following year.

Sauk Rapids' Devastating 1886 Twister

It was the Wednesday before Easter - April 14, 1886. The grass was bright green and dandelions were in bloom. The local newspapers noted the weather was "surprisingly sultry" for spring, and that a "heavy, oppressive atmosphere" had hung over the city all day. A little after 4 p.m., a funnel cloud appeared near North Star Cemetery, a mile southwest of the St. Cloud city limit. According to William Bell Mitchell, the cloud "twisted and writhed as though it were the tail of some monster serpent reaching out to gather within its folds the things, animate and inanimate, destined to be crushed to death or into shapeless ruins."

After flattening stones in the graveyard, the cyclone whirled over Calvary Hill with the Nicolas Juenemann farm in its sights. When Juenemann heard the rising wind he went to his front door and was sucked out of the house. His body was found three days later hanging in a fir tree "like a bird in a nest." Nicolas' wife, Angeline, was carried several blocks, and suffered face lacerations and broken arms and legs. Huddled in the family dining room, all nine Juenemann children miraculously survived the storm. Angeline lived 22 more years, never fully recovering from her wounds.

When the cyclone hit St. Cloud, it struck John Tenvoorde's house, taking off the back porch and leveling a grove of trees. Leaping across St. Germain, the funnel cloud sliced off the roof and second story of John Schwartz's elegant brick home, exposing the rooms. Schwartz rebuilt his house after the cyclone and it still stands at 1705 West St. Germain. At the time of the cyclone, the western edge of St. Cloud was a prairie dotted with wooden dwellings housing two or more families. The cyclone destroyed more than 50 houses and killed 21 people.

The cyclone never touched the cathedral or downtown St. Cloud. It did hover over the Mississippi River where it seemed to hang motionless while it sucked up water before crossing the river to hit Sauk Rapids. Ramming into the town of 1,000, the cyclone crushed half of the wagon bridge before ripping into Stanton's flour mill, which rose a few feet into the air before collapsing into a heap of bricks.

Next, the funnel cloud hit the Northern Pacific Railroad Depot before sweeping through Sauk Rapids' business district, destroying every building along River Street. From there it leveled the courthouse, the school, the post office, newspaper offices, a three-story hotel, and 200 houses. (Out of money, the school had closed five days before the cyclone hit, thus saving the lives of countless children.)

With its shelter gone, the brick vault of the county courthouse stood naked among the ruins. Bundles of county records were later found, spread across 20 miles of prairie. Because the town lost all its churches, 38 coffins were placed on wagonbeds and last rites conducted among the ruins. A reporter for *Harper's Weekly* wrote: "It is not any one section of Sauk Rapids that is gone; it is not the North end or the South end; it is the whole town."

The 1886 cyclone destroyed downtown Sauk Rapids and 200 homes in the town of 1,000.

(Photo courtesy of Benton County Historical Society)

With Sauk Rapids lying in ruins, the cyclone moved northwest toward Rice, then called Rice's Station, 13 miles away. At the farmhouse of Charles Schultz, a party had gathered to celebrate his daughter's wedding. After the cyclone had spent its force, 11 people were dead, including the bride and groom, the minister and his wife, and the bride's mother.

Still unspent, the cyclone moved on to Buckman, where it killed two more people and then took a final life in the home of W H. Drake in Pierz. Finally, at Sullivan Lake in Morrison County, the cyclone lost its monstrous force. Three days later, a man heard a noise in the brush near Lt. Gov. C. A. Gilman's residence. There the man found the three-year-old son of Frank Zins. Suffering from a head wound, the boy was taken to the hospital where he shared a room with his injured twin brother.

Before the cyclone, Sauk Rapids led St. Cloud as a major commercial hub. The town never fully recovered from the calamity of April 14, 1886.

12/01/2001

Schwartz Home Survives Tragedy, 1886

The afternoon of April 14, 1886, was unusually humid for early spring. About 3 p.m., a funnel cloud was spotted three miles southwest of St. Cloud. Moving north, it passed over North Star Cemetery slamming into the John and Barbara Schwartz house before crossing the river where it obliterated the town of Sauk Rapids. The *St. Cloud Journal-Press* said the front of the Schwartz house was "sliced off as though by the keen edge of some monster machine." Huddling beneath their dining room table John, Barbara, and their twelve children survived the storm that almost destroyed their elegant home. The following spring Schwartz rebuilt the home, using walls that stood after the cyclone's passing. Still standing today, the rebuilt house at 1705 West St. Germain symbolizes the Schwartz family's enduring spirit.

The Gothic Revival Style Schwartz House was rebuilt after the devastating cyclone of 1886.

John Schwartz was born on Christmas Eve, 1822, in Cologne, Germany. In 1856, he immigrated to St. Paul where he established a harness business. In 1857 he walked to St. Cloud, a village a contemporary writer called, "an obscure and little known hamlet with but a little cluster of buildings and mere roadways through the brush." Schwartz returned to St. Cloud in 1858 where he erected a small frame building for his harness business, the first one of its kind northwest of St. Paul.

In 1861, the harness-maker married Barbara Streitz, daughter of Stephen and Anne Streitz, early Stearns County pioneers. Twelve children were born to the couple. In the early years of their marriage, John and Barbara lived on the harness shop's second floor.

When his business prospered following the Civil War, Schwartz hired A. E. Hussey to design a two-story, rough-faced brick house in the Italianate style. The Schwartz house mirrored the opulence of the village as it was evolving into a town. In 1871, the year of construction, the *St. Cloud Visiter* noted, "a half dozen pianos have been received by different parties in town. Not bad, that, for a new Western town."

Schwartz's choice of the Italianate style set a standard for St. Cloud's rising middle class, whose members began erecting mansions during the last three decades of the 19th century. These entrepreneurs spawned a new cultural awareness in the form of architecture, theater, sporting events, and dance parties.

By the 1890s, the newly-wealthy businessmen and their wives chose imported smooth, red-pressed brick as a sign of their success, erecting grand houses and commercial buildings, many that stand to this day.

The late Wanda Borgerding, a Schwartz granddaughter, recalled the house during the era 1900-1914. She said the lot once contained a woodshed, horse barn, chicken coop, and a buggy shed. A grove of apple trees provided a place for grandchildren to play. Borgerding said her grandfather was "a real aristocrat" who always wore a white shirt and tie. She said William, John's youngest son, would drive his father to work in "a little topless buggy," pulled by Nancy, the family's horse.

Today, the Schwartz home houses Mark R. Suess Interior Design. Suess told me the home atmosphere is a comfortable fit for a modern business. Suess and his employees share the house with two bats and a "friendly spirit," one that causes an occasional flickering of lights. Suess said that once in a while a Schwartz descendant drops in and tells stories about the history of the house. Viewing the Schwartz House today reminds us of the day when horse-drawn surreys paraded down West St. Germain, carrying members of St. Cloud's burgeoning upper-class society.

11/02/2002

Lawrence Hall Rises Time and Time Again, 1905

Phoenix Hall might be a more appropriate name for Lawrence Hall. Like the mythical bird, the venerable St. Cloud State University's women's dormitory has twice arisen from the ashes. The "Ladies Home," built in 1885 and renamed Lawrence Hall in 1899, burned to the ground in 1905. Rebuilt in 1906, the structure housed female students until 1974 when safety factors forced its closing as a residence hall. In the mid-1990s it narrowly escaped a date with the wrecking ball.

Now restored, Lawrence Hall is entering its third century. This fall it will house 100 students, the university's foreign language department, and the international studies program. According to Steve Ludwig, campus architect and vice president for administrative affairs, "People can expect to have Lawrence Hall around for another 100 years."

The 1885 Ladies Home was a handsome L-shaped structure built of local yellow brick and designed in Venetian Renaissance style. State Architect Clarence Johnston's plan used gaslights and a central coal-heating system in place of hazardous room fireplaces.

On a Saturday afternoon, January 14, 1905, a fire was discovered at the top of the elevator shaft in the dormitory's attic. Panic-stricken students abandoned the building, leaving behind most of their personal belongings. Firefighters John and William Donken and Ted Tenvoorde were injured after jumping 25 feet from a ladder to escape a falling cornice. St. Cloud citizens rushed to provide temporary housing for the 100 women, and later raised money to replace their clothing.

In March 1905, the state legislature raised $50,000 to rebuild Lawrence Hall. This time, Clarence Johnston used imported red, pressed-brick with gray-granite trim for the new dormitory, designed in restrained Georgian Revival style.

The 2002-03 restoration retains most of the 1906 exterior. The brick walls have been re-tucked and cleaned. Wooden window frames have been replaced with aluminum frames following the original pattern. Atop the building, the architect has placed a cupola similar to the one on the 1913 Johnston-designed Riverview Hall. The restoration of Lawrence Hall's interior is a skillful reinterpretation of the original. Although most of the interior had to be gutted, much of the original woodwork was reused. In the attic hallway, the exposed wooden beams capture the feeling of an older building's garret.

Lawrence Hall is a rare example of a college building named for a woman. Isabel Lawrence was born in 1853 in Maine, the youngest of eleven children. She graduated from high school at 14 and launched her teaching career after completing her normal school education in Oswego, New

York. From 1874 to 1921, Lawrence taught at St. Cloud State Normal School where she earned a national reputation. At the rededication of Lawrence Hall in 1906, Lawrence was lauded as "the most respected and best loved teacher in the state of Minnesota."

Lawrence Hall is one of four vintage buildings on the St. Cloud State University campus. The structure was rebuilt in one year after a disastrous 1905 fire.

Mystery Shrouds Avon Bank, 1909

The 102-year-old, yellow-brick and granite-trimmed building stands at Avon Avenue and Stratford Street in downtown Avon, Minnesota. Until a new structure was built across the street in 1971, the Renaissance-inspired building was home to the Avon State Bank. Organized in October 1905 as the Avon Bank, the institution became the Avon State Bank two years later. Early officers included Christopher Borgerding, president, and a son, Henry, vice president. Christopher Borgerding arrived in America from Germany in 1860. He died at 98 in 1898. Before he became a banker, Henry transported freight by oxcart from Central Minnesota to the Red River Valley.

At 1 a.m. October 21, 1909, residents of Avon awoke to the sound of an explosion and the sight of shattered glass from the bank's plate glass window. As dawn broke, citizens learned that three men had entered the bank through a side window, then cracked open the vault with dynamite. The culprits made away with $1,700. As the men fled the building, they stole a team of horses and headed toward Holdingford, 12 miles away. There, the men tied up the team and jumped aboard a train bound for Royalton.

The Avon State Bank was the scene of a 1909 robbery. The yellow-brick building still stands in downtown Avon.

(Photo courtesy of Stearns History Museum)

Brakeman George Turner saw three men enter one of the cars, one of whom Turner later identified as Joseph Chapman. Alerted by authorities, the Holdingford constable and a posse stopped the train and searched through the cars. No one was found. According to the *St. Cloud Journal-Press*, officials thought the men had reached Royalton, where they caught the local Northern Pacific headed for St. Cloud.

At 5:30 a.m., a man was seen jumping off the train and running to the Quinlivan saloon on East St. Germain where he pawned his watch for a drink. The newspaper said he wore short gray whiskers and resembled a person who had been hanging around Avon during the preceding weeks. On the same day, two other suspicious characters were spotted in St. Cloud, though no one was questioned.

A week later, Chapman was arrested in Minneapolis. He argued that he was a member of a threshing crew and that at the time of the robbery he was working for a farmer near Maynard. Chapman was cleared a day later when John Borden, a man who strongly resembled Chapman, was captured in Minneapolis. Borden, aka Dan Anderson or Texas Ding, was a known criminal. Jerry McCarty, whose aliases included Hatch, Moran, or Morgan, was arrested at the same time. McCarty pulled a revolver on a police officer. McCarty shot himself in the leg as the police officer knocked the gun out of McCarty's hand. Another officer hit McCarty over the head with his club. The *Journal-Press* said McCarty would probably never be tried in Stearns County because he was also wanted in Iowa for breaking out of jail where he was serving a 13-year sentence. The identity of the third man remains a mystery to this day.

The Renaissance Revival building graces downtown Avon.

Today, the former bank houses Sensational Styles & Spa.

01/06/2007

Farms
1856-1928

For 30 years, I have been documenting late-19th and early-20th century farm buildings. When I began my research, hundreds of log structures still stood in Stearns County. A log building is now a rare sight on the Central Minnesota landscape. Victims of so-called progress, many log buildings sat in the path of suburban development and are now replaced by look-alike houses. Some vintage buildings can still be found, as this chapter shows.

Lorenz Farm, Rockville, 1856

It's the best example of the old saying, "I wish the walls could talk." The walls belong to the Lorenz farmhouse, one of the oldest structures in the region. In 2006, the Rockville house will celebrate its 150th birthday.

Donald Lorenz, 75, still lives in the house where he was born, located on Rockville's Yankee Road. He shares the place with his spouse, Evelyn (Stapf) Lorenz. Donald is a member of the third generation to live in the handsome Georgian Revival dwelling that became a Stearns County Century Farm in 2003. North along Yankee Road live three more generations: Ronald Lorenz; his daughter, Melanie Froehle; and Melanie's three-year-old daughter, Brooke.

The history of the farm began in the mid-19th century. Cabinetmaker George Henry Brinkman came to the United States from Brunswick, Germany, in 1849 and built the farmhouse in 1856. After briefly settling in the East, Brinkman and wife Susan Taylor moved to Minneapolis and to Rockville one year later. During the Civil War, Brinkman served in the Minnesota Heavy Artillery Volunteers. In 1895 he and his wife moved to Southern California.

Built in 1856, the Georgian Revival Lorenz farmhouse faces Yankee Road in Rockville Township.

In the 1880s, John Michael Lorenz and his wife, Mary Mizer, lived in Iowa where their children - Tessie, Myrtle, Michael, Augusta and Russell - were born. In 1903, the family moved to the Rockville farm.

Protestant Easterners originally settled the site along Yankee Road. The founder of Rockville Granite Company, Henry Nair Alexander, held church services in the oak grove at the Lorenz Farm, using planks for seats and a platform for the organ. Presbyterian services also were conducted in the farmhouse's living room. Born in Scotland, Alexander was a skilled stone-craftsman who arrived in Portland, Maine, in 1880. Later, he went back to Scotland to marry Maggie Milne.

When Maggie's ship docked in Boston, workers unloaded 14 trunks and boxes "filled with dresses, linens, bedding, china and wedding gifts," historian William Bell Mitchell wrote. Alexander died in 1913 of silicosis, a lung disease caused by inhaling silica dust.

In her history of Rockville, Mary Ann Hermanutz said Russell Lorenz married St. Augusta native Florence Milz and the couple settled on the Lorenz farm. The farm supported families over several generations. Hermanutz wrote that Russell Lorenz had "a threshing crew, dairy cows, hogs, and Grandpa John (Lorenz) raised turkeys." Donald Lorenz told me his grandparents housed grain-hauling teamsters and their horses when the men made a three-day journey between Paynesville and Sauk Rapids. Donald Lorenz's parents had little money during the Great Depression, but with chickens, hogs, dairy cattle, and a garden they always had plenty to eat, he said.

The Lorenz farmsite is a Rockville Township showplace. The two-story structure has a hipped roof, large windows with shutters, yellow-brick chimneys, cornerboards, and a small Victorian porch. Wings stand on the north and south. Georgian-style houses of this type are more commonly found in the Tidewater region of Virginia rather than in the Midwest.

Across Yankee Road from the farmhouse stand two elegant barns that postdate the house by several generations. Donald said the older barn was constructed from rafters and beams recycled from an earlier barn. A tile silo, a granary, and a keystone corncrib share the well-maintained farmsite. An aesthetic feature that adds to the beauty of this historic place is the Sauk River that runs its course several yards west of the house's back door.

12/04/2004

Torborg Farm, Richmond, 1910

The handsome red-brick house, built in 1910, proudly stands adjacent to Minnesota Highway 23 in Wakefield Township near Richmond, Minnesota. It is the home where Edwin Torborg, 78, was born, and the house to which he brought his bride, Margaret Stommes, after their wedding in 1947 Edwin had recently returned from World War II after serving state-side as a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne Division.

Now semi-retired from farming, the Torborgs have time to reminisce about their experiences on a Stearns County Century Farm. One of Edwin's earliest memories is of June 19, 1934, when a cyclone leveled the Torborg barn and several outbuildings, but left standing the silo, pig barn, and granary. The seven Torborg siblings were asleep when their mother alerted them to the impending danger. Edwin remembers as a 12-year-old seeing the barn illuminated by flashes of lightning and later observing bits of flying glass embedded in the wooden clothesline pole.

Although the Great Depression had reduced farm income across the United States, the Torborgs never missed an insurance payment, and the company offered either to send out a crew to rebuild the barn or to mail a check for $1,470 - a small fortune during the depressed 30s. Torborg recalled that his father, Henry, opted for the money and put together a local crew to rebuild the farm. For 50 cents a day, crew members disassembled and rebuilt the leveled buildings at a tremendous savings to the family. "People wanted to work on the crew," Torborg said, "because it was the Depression." The family had money left over. "That year was the best Christmas in the 30s," Torborg said.

Edwin's grandfather, Herman, immigrated to the United States from Gehrde, Germany, in 1851 After several years in St. Louis where Herman met and married Elizabeth Wester, another German immigrant, the Torborgs moved to Stearns County, settling on land near the present Torborg farm where they raised nine children. During that time the family hauled its crops by horse and wagon to Minneapolis, a round-trip journey that took one month to complete. "Today," Edwin said with a chuckle, "we truck our grain to the Cities and back three times a day."

Besides the cyclone, the Torborg farm is unique in another way. In a field behind the farm buildings, a broad path connects a mobile home to a point in a nearby thicket. This smoothly worn path is one of the last well-defined remnants of the famous Red River Trail - a point where the Middle Trail once met the stageroad along the Sauk River. Torborg said that as a boy he saw deep ruts carved in the trail. Today, his son, Paul, protects this slice of history by keeping the trail neatly mowed.

After 52 years of raising dairy cattle, the Torborgs no longer keep a herd, although they still raise corn, soybeans, and a bit of alfalfa. The couple remembers when the Richmond area was dotted with dairy farms, but today perhaps only ten farms stand within a five-mile radius of

Richmond. Edwin said that the change from single-family farms to agribusiness began at a time when farmers bought combines, thus reducing the number of hands needed to run a farm.

"Threshing was a community enterprise," he said. "Now you see neighbors once a month." The Torborgs said that they are proud to live on a Century Farm and that their son, James, and grandson, Jon, are interested in maintaining the land as a designated historic property.

Archivist John Decker of the Stearns County Museum said 350 Stearns County farms have been named to the Century Farm list since 1978 - the largest number in Minnesota. Besides reaching the 100-year mark, a Century Farm must contain at least 50 acres and a lineage spanning 100 years through one family's bloodline. Once a farm has met these criteria, the museum mounts a rustic wooden plaque that lists the year the land was settled and the current family surname. The sign is placed near the farm's entrance along a public roadway.

"Lots of dynamics - like a family feud - prevent some people from seeking designation, but overall a pleasant relationship between the museum and farm owners exists," Decker said. Decker figures there are about 100 undesignated Stearns County farms that fulfill the Century Farm criteria.

The 1910 Century Farm Home belongs to Edwin and Margaret Torborg of Richmond.

Edwin and Margaret Torborg standing on the site of the Red River Oxcart Trail that still winds through their farmyard.

06/01/2002

Graves Farm, Watab Township, 1910

Standing on the Graves Farm on a quiet, late-fall afternoon, I can hear acorns dropping on dry leaves. Above the sound of wind in the trees, I also hear cawing crows and the occasional chatter of chickadees. I share Brenda Graves' feeling that the site produces a "sense of peace." Graves, who lived on the farm with her veterinarian husband, Carlton, was the last Graves' descendant to live on the Northeast River Road site. Carlton died in 1999.

In 1907, Willis A. and Emily (Carlton) Graves arrived in Watab Township from New York State. Graves, a machinist, tried to make a living building bobsleds, a venture he was forced to abandon after three snowless years. Soon after, Graves began farming on Rice Prairie, a sandy, treeless strip of land on a bluff above the Mississippi River. For two generations, Willis Graves' descendants worked the land. In 2002, the farm was sold to Benton County to form Bend in the River Regional Park. The 289 acres, including 3,300 feet of shoreline, make up a haunting natural site atop the eastern Mississippi shore.

The 1910 Graves farmhouse has been called "the showplace of the Rice Prairie."

Willis Graves' grandson, Larry, lived on the farm in the late 1940s. Graves, who now lives in the state of Virginia, told me the farm's history is "long and deep." During the 1930s and 1940s, eking out a living on sandy soil was hard, Larry said. The farm's beauty and the family reunions held there are among his fondest memories.

Within this natural setting stands a group of vacant farm buildings spanning the first half of the 20th century. Each unique building forms one part of the intact farmsite. The site also is a rare surviving example of Central Minnesota's folk architecture. (A folk building is an owner-built, non-architect-designed structure, utilitarian in nature, constructed from local materials.)

The Graves' farmsite is unique in another way. Many foundations were built of recycled granite blocks and reused sheets of boxcar tin. Rarely found today in pristine condition, "salvage architecture" makes a unique contribution to the local landscape.

A sampling of buildings and materials includes:

- Fertilizer shed - Sheathed in pressed-metal tin in a quarry-faced stone pattern
- Machine shed - Covered with tin from discarded Great Northern boxcars
- Hog house - Built of polished granite scrap from local quarries
- Well house - Foundation built from granite blocks from the William Bell Mitchell house, St. Cloud

The Graves' farmhouse was built about 1910. Designed in a transitional Victorian/Craftsman style, the house was the "showpiece of the Rice Prairie," Larry Graves said. Framed with bottomland timbers, it boasts leaded glass windows, hardwood floors, and its original clapboard siding.

Surrounding the farmsite are stands of trees, including Lombardy poplar, spruce, ash, oak, and red and jack pine. Many trees were planted to resist wind and drought erosion, natural forces that in the 1930s blew the topsoil into the Mississippi. In the 1940s and 50s, Larry Graves' father Stewart dry-farmed but later pumped water out of the Mississippi to irrigate soybeans. The farm's productivity improved in the late 1940s when the family began harvesting potatoes, a crop that once yielded 350 bushels to the acre.

Benton County authorities are discussing the fate of the unoccupied farm buildings. As a preservationist, I believe the Graves Farm would be an ideal place to study early-20th century agricultural history within a rich ecological setting. An intact farmsite with unique folk buildings is a rare sight on Minnesota's landscape.

Detail of the 1910 barn.

The metal siding on the Graves' barn is a fine example of salvage architecture.

11/06/2004

Fasen Round Barn, Le Sauk Township, 1928

According to American folklore, the reason a farmer builds a round barn is to keep the devil from hiding in the corners. Others believe tornados will twist around a circular barn and leave it standing. Round barns also have earned a place in religious history. As early as 1824 the Shakers, a Utopian sect, erected the first American round barn - a stone landmark that stands to this day - in Hancock, Massachusetts.

In *An Age of Barns*, historian Eric Sloane says that round barns were popular among Shakers, Quakers, and Holy Rollers who believed the circle symbolized spiritual perfection. In Shaker culture, Sloane writes, "Farmers made circular designs on their barns, and their wives sewed circular patterns on their quilts. They took delight in round hats, rugs, and boxes and made round drawer pulls and handrests for their severely angled furniture."

From a technical perspective, a round (or an octagonal) barn is based on the theory that a circle encloses maximum floor space with minimum need for support from interior walls and posts. By the 1880s, round barns were a popular feature in farm journals. In the 1910s and 20s, rural publications again promoted the practicality of building in the round. During this later period, poured concrete replaced the use of stone or wood.

Jerry, Alvin, and Doreen Fasen, siblings who grew up on the family farm in Le Sauk Township near Sartell, Minnesota, have poignant memories of a Central Minnesota round barn. Besides the barn, the Fasen farmsite contains a freestanding silo, a milk house, a Quonset-style machine shed, and a yellow-brick smokehouse. The original family home was torn down several years ago. Now abandoned and under new ownership, the farm stands on the fringe of suburban development.

The farm's showplace is a large, well-lighted round barn constructed of poured concrete with a central silo that extends above a unique bell-shaped roof. A granite plaque embedded in the wall is inscribed "P Fasen 1928."

As Jerry, Alvin, and I walked through the barn, they remembered racing their bicycles around the concrete walkway inside the barn. Passing or meeting one another head-on meant a possible fall into the gutter, they told me. Alvin said the barn was designed to house 30 head of cattle and two horses. He believes his father, Peter, may have seen a photograph of a round barn in a farm journal and later hired a Wisconsin contractor to build his barn. Alvin was sure someone other than his father had drawn the plan. "Dad certainly didn't know pi-r-squared!" he said. "A circle is the most appropriate design for a barn," Alvin said. In a round barn, cows "stand with their hindquarters toward the wall, heads to the silo, and the farmer feeds his stock while walking in a circle." The barn also had its disadvantages, Jerry said. A central silo is more difficult to fill because of the need to push silage through a longer pipe. The barn also was harder to clean because mechanical cleaning devices are designed to fit rectangular rather than round barns,

The Fasen family's poured concrete round barn, with its central silo, stands abandoned today near Sartell.

Jerry said. The Fasens remember the annual chore of barn cleaning. The interior yellow-brick wall had to be scraped, disinfected, and whitewashed, a process that took five men one day to complete, Alvin said.

When I talked to Doreen Fasen Knopik about her experience growing up on the family's farm, she recalled riding bareback, operating milking machines, and helping prepare five meals a day during threshing season. Making soap in a cauldron behind the smokehouse was also her job, she said. As a significant landmark, the Fasen Farm represents another example of Central Minnesota's vanishing rural landscape.

06/26/2000

Gogala Farm, St. Anthony, 1865

Andrew Gogala and I are sitting on the front lawn of his farmhouse near St. Anthony, the village named for his great-grandfather, near Albany, Minnesota. The only sounds on this cool July morning are wrens nesting in Andrew's homemade birdhouses. "The wrens will be gone by the end of July," he tells me, "but they may produce a second batch of chicks before leaving."

The Gogala farmhouse near St. Anthony is an L-shaped Greek Revival home. The first portion was built in the early 1880s by Anton Gogala, Sr. A framed bay was added in 1916. Today, both sections are clapboard-sided and painted white with cornerboards trimmed in green.

During our interview, Sporty, Andrew's border collie, drops a Frisbee beneath my metal chair, challenging me to toss the toy so he can retrieve it. This routine goes on for an hour until Sporty tires of the game and slouches off into the bushes where he falls asleep.

Andrew is a member of the fourth generation of Gogalas to live on the farm in Section 32, Krain Township, where his great-grandfather settled in 1865. Andrew's brother, Joseph, 82, lives on an 80-acre farm north of the family homestead. Andrew's great-grandfather, Anton, Sr., his spouse Agnes (Marat) Gogala, and their five children immigrated from their home in the Slovenian village of Bohimska Bela. In the 19th century, Slovenia was part of the Austrian Empire.

The Gogalas learned of Central Minnesota through the writings of the pioneer Slovenian missionary, Francis Xavier Pierz. In 1864, Father Pierz visited Slovenia and persuaded 50 to 60 "Krainers," residents of the Slovene province of Carniola, to leave Europe and establish a New Slovenia in Minnesota.

Andrew Gogala stands in front of the log blacksmith shop on the farm north of Albany. He is the fourth generation of Gogalas to live on the Krain Township farm.

Disillusioned with class inequalities in their homeland, the Gogalas, along with five other families, left home in the spring of 1865, arriving in America after a three-month journey by sailing ship. Anton Gogala, Sr., and his son, Anton, Jr., were blacksmiths in Slovenia. When they learned a gun would be needed to hunt game in the Minnesota wilderness, the Gogalas traded their anvil for a double-barreled musket. To this day the brothers prize this ornately-engraved heirloom.

Anton, Sr., a man of some wealth, had been the village mayor. Upon his arrival in New York, robbers seized the money he had saved to start a new life in America. When the Gogalas reached Minnesota, father and son took jobs in the sawmills of St. Anthony (Minneapolis) to earn back the cash they would need to establish a farm.

For two years, Anton, Jr., worked in a Sauk Centre brewery. At the time of settlement, Krain Township was a part of Central Minnesota's Big Woods. Using only a felling ax and a grub ax, the Gogala family cleared the land and built a log house. The house and outbuildings were erected as protection from bears and wolves. Even today, Andrew says, the farm is a wooded refuge for deer and small animals.

In 1871, a group of Slovenian immigrants built a log church in St. Stephen - the first Slovene church in America. A second group that included the Gogalas erected a church and school in 1874 in the village of St. Anthony. Descendants of these early settlers still reside in both communities. Before building a church in St. Anthony, the Gogala farmhouse was used as a meeting place for an itinerant missionary who served Mass to the Slovenian community.

Marriages, baptisms, and funerals were held in the house until Anton, Sr., donated land to build a log church in the nearby village. In the early 1880s, Anton, Sr., erected a log house to which a framed bay was added in 1916. Today, both sections are sided and painted white with cornerboards trimmed in green. L-shaped, Greek Revival in style, the house stands on stone piers which the Gogalas hewed on site. The house is located on a slight incline that overlooks an 1875 log cowbarn, an 1880 log smokehouse, a 1905 frame horsebarn, a 1915 log blacksmith shop, and several smaller outbuildings.

Nestled among stately 200-year-old black walnut trees, the smokehouse is rarely used today, though it still carries the aroma of curing meat. Aside from the house, most of the farm buildings are of European origin - structures whose form, materials, and use are found commonly in the Slovenian homeland.

Because Anton, Sr., had been a doctor's apprentice in Europe, his American neighbors came to him for medical advice and care. Using the blacksmith shop as a primitive hospital, Anton set bones and healed wounds with herbs and homemade medicines.

The farm was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980 as a representative pioneer farmstead, a form that has virtually vanished from the American scene.

When I first visited the farm in the 1980s, the Gogala brothers were still housing dairy cattle and pigs. Today, Andrew harvests oats, corn, alfalfa, and meadow grass on an 80-acre plot. "This is not a good year for prices," Andrew said.

Andrew was born in the house whose lawn we are sitting on today. His parents, John and Francis (Geisenhof) Gogala, had four boys and five girls, seven of whom are living today. Andrew remembers his mother as a "gracious lady," a person who was "happy in adversity." As a farmwife who baked, cooked, canned, and butchered, Francis also was famous in the Slovenian community for her chicken and dressing which she served at weddings and funerals.

Andrew is proud of his education and the skills he learned in school that sustain him to this day. While attending a rural school, grades one through eight, he remembers winters so cold his fingers became numb while carrying a tin lunch pail. He still owns a backpack his mother made him from a discarded pair of overalls. He completed high school in Albany, Minnesota, where he took two years of German and four of English. He remembers reading Shakespeare, Keats, and Yeats. The habit of reading a daily newspaper was also formed in high school where he was encouraged to read the *St. Cloud Daily Times*.

At the end of our interview, Joe Gogala drove up the driveway. He said he had paid $50 for a minor car repair in Little Falls - a price he had once paid for a Chevy. Joe served with the Army during World War II, where he contacted malaria in the South Pacific.

The Gogala family represents the last generation with direct ties to the American immigrant past. Andrew's respect for education, his values, and his memories of his ascendants form a significant chapter in Central Minnesota history.

09/07/1999

St. Cloud Houses
1857-1920s

Yellow brick is one of the most distinctive features of St. Cloud's architectural landscape. Between the 1850s and the Great Depression, local deposits of cream-colored clay were unearthed and molded into this distinctive brick. At one time about 370 yellow-brick houses stood within a one-mile radius of the Stearns County Courthouse. Erik Wixon's 2008 survey found 169 still standing. Red, pressed-brick, another local product, was used for several elegant Victorian homes in the late-19th century. Nehemiah P Clarke, however, wanted something different. For his Queen Anne home, he ordered red brick shipped up river from St. Louis.

Dickinson House, 1870

If William Dickinson, who arrived in St. Cloud in 1857, could return today, he would be thrilled to see his house at 503 Fifth Avenue South still standing. The house is one of St. Cloud's oldest extant dwellings. Today, the house is rental property.

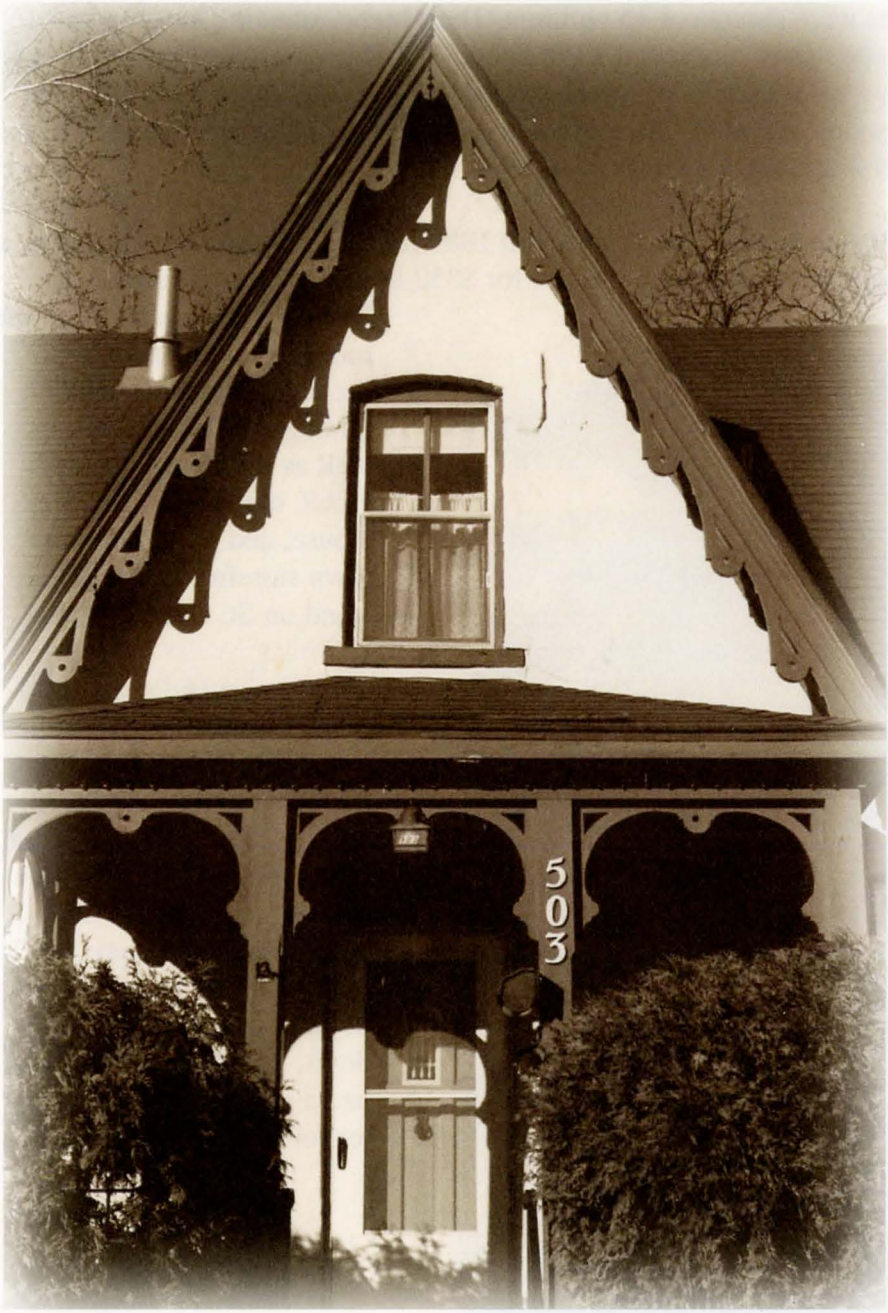
The Dickinson House is commonly called the "Gingerbread House," a reference to the scalloped bargeboards that mark its gabled walls. Dickinson left no record of his life in St. Cloud, although an 1874 atlas says he was English-born and an engineer or machinist by trade. A March 24, 1870, article in the *St. Cloud Daily Times* says, "Mr. Wm Dickinson has commenced an elegant dwelling house, below the ravine, and near Prof. (Ira) Moore's." Two months later, the *Times* noted that Dickinson's house was built of brick and stood two stories high.

The Gingerbread House is a rare local example of Gothic Revival architecture, a style in fashion between 1840 and 1880. Gothic Revival houses were designed to reflect their natural surroundings by using machine-made curvilinear forms. The invention of the scroll saw, for example, made it possible for carpenters to embellish their work with fanciful carved moldings. A balloon frame, a lightweight wooden structure invented in the 1830s, supports the Gingerbread House. The frame carries a veneer of local red brick, now unfortunately, covered over with stucco.

According to Dr. Lewis G. Wixon, an authority on local brick, the Dickinson House is a rare example of a smaller house built of red brick, a material more commonly used for mansions.

When Dickinson arrived here in 1857, he undoubtedly saw Lower Town's newly-erected Stearns House. With eaves that literally dripped with fancy moldings, the Stearns House may have influenced the design for Dickinson's future house, a smaller version of the Gothic Revival.

The Stearns House stood on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi where steamboats commonly tied up. Gothic Revival buildings are closely related to the design of steamboats whose decks carried similar carved moldings that make the steamboat one of America's most romantic architectural forms.



Bargeboards grace the central gable of the Gingerbread House. A bargeboard is an ornately-carved board nailed to the projecting edge of a gable or porch.

10/02/2004

Ramsay/Adams House, 1889

Julius and Isabella Adams were parents of 15 children. Their home, standing kitty-corner from Holy Angels Cathedral (now Cathedral High School's Performing Arts Center), is one of the finest Victorian houses in St. Cloud. When the cathedral bells rang, the Adams children rushed to one of the turret rooms to feel the floor vibrate. Although the churchbells were lost in a 1933 fire, the home at 230 Sixth Avenue North still stands today.

The handsome red, pressed-brick mansion was erected in 1889 for $15,000. Lamothe Ramsay, a prominent physician and surgeon, bought the house lot for $850 in 1887 Ramsay hired A.E. Hussey to plan a house in the most up-to-date fashion of the day. Hussey designed a number of local houses, as well as the Grand Central Hotel, the Davidson Opera House, and several downtown storefronts that still stand on St. Germain today.

The Ramsay/Adams House contains most of the features that define Victorian Picturesque: smooth-faced, granite-trimmed red brick, a tower topped with a witch's hat roof, a multitude of angles, bays and busy rooflines, ornamental chimneys, and curved glass windows. At one time the house had a porte cochere - a shelter for carriage passengers.

The Ramsey/Adams House is one of five Victorian mansions in St. Cloud.

The Ramsay/Adams House contained 27 rooms, including a library, a dining room, a kitchen, a pantry, a china closet, and a butler's pantry. Four bedrooms and a sewing room were in the upper stories. The top floor housed a billiard room where the men retired after dinner to smoke cigars. Technologically modern for its day, the house had a hot water system, electric bells, speaking tubes, electric lights, and gas heat.

Lamothe Ramsay was born in 1856 near Montreal, Quebec, Canada. After his move to the United States, Ramsay graduated from Chicago's Rush Medical College. Arriving in St. Cloud in 1882, Ramsay founded St. Cloud's first hospital. Originally named Ramsay Hospital, it later became St. Raphael's. A telegraph linked the hospital to Ramsay's home. Ramsay's successful career was cut short when he died suddenly of apoplexy at 35.

Edward P and Irene Barnum occupied the Ramsay/Adams House between 1891 and 1902. Barnum, a Democrat, ran for lieutenant governor in 1878 and 1880. He also served as Stearns County Clerk of Court, manager of the Sauk Centre House, and publisher of the *Sauk Centre Avalanche*. Frank D. Zins owned the house between 1902 and 1910. Zins was editor of the German-speaking *Der Nordstern* and an officer of the Rice State Bank.

The Julius and Isabella Adams family are the people most closely connected to the red-brick house. Adams was a cigarmaker, whose name can still be seen on the facade of his cigar factory at 712-714 St. Germain. By 1910, when the Adams family moved into the house, Julius and Isabella had eleven children. The couple had four more children before the family left the house in 1930.

A number of owners and renters have occupied the house since the days of the Adams' family. Todd and Sarah Theisen bought the mansion in 1993. Todd Theisen said he has spent a small fortune restoring the house, but that he is now looking for a new owner who "has the passion to take the house into the future."

(Author's note: In January 2008, Laurie Reed and Kirk Smith bought the Ramsay/Adams House and are now in the process of restoring it.)

09/01/2007

Bishop's House, 1890

An architectural treasure stands behind Cathedral High School at 316 Seventh Avenue North. Now called the Pastoral Center Annex, the building was erected in 1890 as a residence for St. Cloud's first bishop, Otto Zardetti.

Zardetti was one of Central Minnesota's most colorful characters and an important international religious figure. Born to Italian parents in Switzerland in 1847, Zardetti completed his education in Austria. After studying English literature and American history, the future bishop was struck by what he called "the American fever."

In 1880 Zardetti visited the United States, after which, according to historian William Bell Mitchell, he was forced to decide "whether he should devote the rest of his life to the service of the church in the United States or continue his splendid career (in Europe)."

In pursuit of his American dream, Zardetti accepted a professorship at St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee in 1881 In 1889, he was appointed to the episcopal see of St. Cloud. Although he served here as bishop for only four years, Zardetti built a strong reputation within the diocese. His accomplishments included increasing the number of priests for a growing Catholic population (30,000 in Central Minnesota in the 1890s), a reorganization of church administration, and the founding of an official Catholic publication.

Soon after his arrival in St. Cloud, Zardetti decided to build a home fit for a bishop, using a design from his own hand. According to church historian the Rev. Vincent A. Yzermans, Zardetti "secured a donation of 80,000 bricks from Saint John's Abbey (some have said by heavy-handed tactics) and levied a house tax on all the parishes of the diocese."

Completed in 1890, the Bishop's House is a three-story, red-brick Victorian structure built on a granite foundation. Prominent features include a portico supported by polished granite columns, a central tower, and a mansard roof.

Although the house appears to be freestanding, it is attached to the 1866 Joseph Broker House, another important St. Cloud landmark. The Broker House serves as additional space for the Parish Annex. The interior of the Bishop's House retains much of its original character.

Visitors enter a wide, 44-foot-long, high-ceiling hallway that opens on either side to rooms that presently serve several individual church-related functions. A similar plan accommodates second-floor offices. Originally used for bedrooms and a library, the storage-filled attic contains a skylight and a strip of the original 1890's stenciling. Many of the home's original features were advanced for their day. At a time when most Central Minnesotans still lived in pioneer conditions, the Bishop's House sported electric lights, indoor plumbing, and hot-water heating.

In 1894, Zardetti was elected to the arch-episcopal see of Bucharest, Romania. In 1899, he was appointed assistant at the Papal throne. Although he had hoped to return once again to visit St. Cloud, death found Otto Zardetti in Rome in 1902. His home stands today as Zardetti's Central Minnesota legacy.

The Bishop's House combines elements from the Victorian and Renaissance-inspired styles.

12/07/2002

Metzroth House, 1891

From 1884 to 1928, 271 yellow-brick houses were built within a one-mile radius of the Stearns County Courthouse. Today, about 169 of these yellow-brick structures remain. Collectively, St. Cloud's yellow-brick houses characterize a unique feature of the city's architectural landscape. A recent survey by St. Cloud's Heritage Preservation Commission listed 95 yellow-brick houses as "a potential National Register multiple property listing of cream-colored or yellow-brick houses."

According to Dr. Lewis G. Wixon, a St. Cloud State University geography professor and an authority on local brick, the cream color is the result of a distinctive chemical composition found in local clay deposits. Wixon's research shows St. Cloud's brick industry originated in the late 1850s. By the 1880s, the city had six brickyards that employed 150 men and turned out 30 million bricks a year. St. Cloud's brick production ended during the Great Depression when depletion of clay beds and the high cost of kiln cordwood made brick-making unprofitable.

The Metzroth House is a fine example of a yellow-brick mansion.

The 1891 Otto F. and May Metzroth house, 611 Eighth Avenue South, St. Cloud, is a good example of a well-maintained yellow-brick house. Otto Metzroth was born in St. Cloud in 1866, the son of John W and Margaret Metzroth, two early St. Cloud settlers. When Metzroth turned 14, he began working in his father's tailor shop. In 1888 Otto and his brother, Charles J., bought their father's clothing store and operated it as partners. Otto's involvement in the business lasted 65 years.

Metzroth married May Ball in 1894. Four years after her death in 1915, he married Georgiana Krause. Otto Metzroth died in 1943.

As a successful merchant, Metzroth felt he could afford to build a large brick home. His house may have been designed by Allen E. Hussey, a leading local architect who practiced in St. Cloud from the Civil War period to his death in 1900. Victorian Queen Anne in style, the Metzroth house's major features include multiple gables, bay windows, and an elaborate front porch with its original brackets. Other features include granite sills, patterned brickwork, returning eaves, and a tall, ornamental chimney. Behind the Metzroth house stands a handsome carriage house. False-buttress corners show a rare feature among St. Cloud's few remaining carriage houses.

Why are yellow-brick houses important to St. Cloud's heritage? Wixon said the use of local brick (rather than wood) for buildings symbolized St. Cloud's evolution from a pioneer community to a progressive modern city. Size and style of a yellow-brick house also indicate the economic status of the original owner, Wixon said. Small workers' cottages, dozens of larger homes, a handful of mansions, and a few public buildings provide a rough gauge by which to measure financial success within the community, Wixon said. From the standpoint of architectural styles, yellow-brick buildings follow a spectrum of styles, from Greek Revival to Victorian. A tour of St. Cloud's yellow-brick buildings tells the story of our architectural history written in clay.

Here is a sampling of yellow-brick structures with their historic names and dates of construction from a Historic Preservation Commission survey completed in 1996.

1885 Kotowski House, 1423 Third Street N

1887 Fandel House, 416 Ninth Ave. S.

1890 Materna House, 317-16th Ave. N.

1893 Alstrom House, 605 Seventh Ave. N.

1895 Preiss House, 601 Ninth Ave. N.

1898 Dam Double House ("The Castle"), 398 Fifth Ave. S.

1898 Koshiol House, 212 13th Ave. N.

1903 Sullivan House, 328 Fourth Ave. S.

1903 Rosenberger House, 601 Eighth Ave. S.

1906 Enderle House, 302 Sixth Ave. N.

03/06/2004

Fisher/Eich House, 1931

In his 1920 novel *Main Street*, Sinclair Lewis' heroine, Carol Kennicott, deplored the drabness of the built environment in Gopher Prairie, Minnesota. Had Carol visited St. Cloud she would have found her ideal architectural landscape along Highbanks Place - a curving, tree-lined street graced with period-style houses from the 1920s and 1930s.

Tucked between the Mississippi and a remnant of the ravine that at one time connected Lake George to the Mississippi, Highbanks Place stands on property that belonged to St. Cloud pioneer Thomas C. McClure, and later to his daughter, Caroline McClure Freeman. A 1922 *St. Cloud Daily Times* article describes the wooded six-acre McClure/Freeman estate as "a scene of many beautiful fetes in bygone days, and it will be a matter of regret to see this little park put into homes." In fact, in 1873 city officials could have purchased the site for $3,500, a sum equal to the price of individual lots in the 1920s. In 1923, the *St. Cloud Journal-Press* commented on this lack of foresight: "The municipal dads of that day talked much like our present commissioners and thought the price was too high."

The Fisher/Eich home on Highbanks Place resembles a castle plucked from the French countryside.

Between 1926 and 1942, ten houses were built at Highbanks Place. Ranging in style from Colonial Revival to Spanish Revival, the neighborhood exhibits a rich slice of St. Cloud's architectural heritage. Straddling two eras - the Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression - the streetscape mirrors the architectural and social ideals of upper-middle class, small-town Midwesterners.

In 1931 St. Cloud architect Nairne Fisher designed and built his own home at 37 Highbanks Place. The elegant Chateauesque (or Norman Cottage) style house was Nairne and Dorothy Fisher's home between 1930 and 1940. During the 1940s, the house belonged to William and Elizabeth Hilger. In 1950, Milton and Katherine Eich bought the house; after Katherine's death in 1984, her son Daniel and his wife, Barbara, took up residence there.

In 1930, Nairne Fisher was in his prime. Besides planning his own home, Fisher and his partner, Leo Schaefer, designed St. Cloud's St. Mary's Cathedral and the Garfield, Jefferson, and Sartell grade schools, and the Pope County Courthouse in Glenwood, Minnesota. Later, the architects built the St. Mary's Building, 830 St. Germain, and a project for an outdoors theater at Lake George that was never built.

Built of brick over a steel and concrete frame, the Fisher/Eich home resembles a small castle from the French countryside transplanted to a site on the Mississippi. Some of the home's finest features include a steeply-pitched tiled roof, a circular entrance tower topped by a conical cap, multipane casement windows, and a slate driveway. Except for a remodeled kitchen, the interior has seen few changes since the 1930s, including a tiny room upstairs where a maid once lived. Steps leading down to the basement and the basement floor are laid in terrazzo. The backyard overlooks a magnificent view of the Mississippi River.

Barbara and Daniel Eich say they love their home. Watching strollers and hearing the carillon on the St. Cloud State University campus are added benefits of living along Highbanks Place, Barbara said.

08/03/2002

Brower House, 1924

The word "gem" is an overused label for buildings cited for their unique character. But for the Ripley B. and Jennie F. Brower House - presently a guesthouse for the St. Cloud Diocese - no other term is more appropriate.

The façade of the Brower House shows leaded glass windows, hand-tooled beams, and a decorative exterior stucco finish.

The Brower House, 402 First Avenue South, stands adjacent to the Newman Center on the edge of the St. Cloud State University campus. The house is virtually concealed because it sits nestled among trees and shrubs on a terrace that lies below street level. The backyard overlooks a steep bank that descends into the Mississippi River. Built in 1924 in Tudor Revival style, the Brower House symbolizes the romantic aura that permeated the decade preceding the Stock Market Crash of 1929.

Partially hidden beneath vines that change color from season to season are walls sheathed with a veneer of seam-faced granite and thick stucco applied in a swirling pattern. The roof is covered with slabs of multicolored Indiana slate, humped irregularly to give the appearance of age, and held in place by copper nails. The projecting second-story bay is the major feature linking the house to its roots in medieval England. This bay is framed with ax-cut, half-timbered cypress beams, incised to produce a rippled, handcrafted surface.

The Brower House, like many well-designed structures from this period, contains many fabricated features that are so well executed they possess an architectural integrity of their own. Besides the nonstructural beams, such elements include stucco-embedded granite fragments spaced helter-skelter to create the illusion that the walls are eroding away.

Other unique exterior features include six-foot-high, leaded glass windows, a massive granite chimney, and a large screened porch with a majestic view of the Mississippi. A slate-roofed gazebo stands in the backyard guarded by a wooden gate supported by granite posts.

The interior of the Brower House is equally distinctive. After opening the heavy oaken door, visitors cross a large foyer and step down into a sunken living room. The adjoining dining room is slightly raised, a feature that mirrors the platform found in the dining area of an English manor house. Throughout the house are found ornamental iron electrical fixtures, including two of Art Nouveau design. Upstairs, the bedrooms have been restored to their original appearance.

Recently I asked my friend and building expert, Gene Kropp, to accompany me on a tour of the house. Gene's father, Art Kropp, constructed the granite work for the Brower house. When Gene saw the slate floors that cover the entire ground level, he said: "It would cost $10,000 to do that kind of work today!"

A 1929 article on the Brower House in a New York magazine, *Arts and Decoration*, reveals the ambience that architects and their clients hoped to incorporate in their house designs during the 1920s:

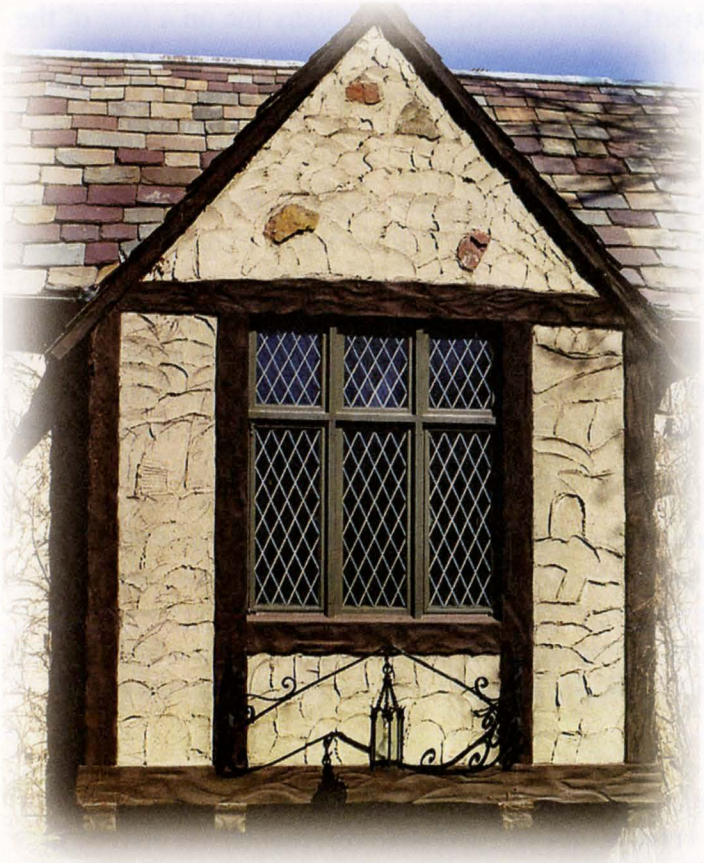
"Surely those mighty waters must take on their gentlest mood when they pass this place, with its walks and terraces brilliant with shrubs and flowers and trailing ivy. A height of land from which the ground shelves off in a series of four terraces to the water level - such is the exquisite setting for this garden home."

A similar article in the *St. Cloud Daily Journal-Press* in 1924 talks about the popularity of the "English style of architecture." The writer quotes local architect Louis Pinault who said this style "finds its greatest vogue among those who seek beauty, individuality and comfort, regardless of price." (In the 1920s, the cost of a new home in St. Cloud averaged between $3,500 and $5,000. Of the 39 building permits issued in 1924, the $12,000 Brower House was the most expensive house built that year.)

Like the house itself, the Brower family legacy is an important chapter in St. Cloud's history. Ripley Brower's father Jacob, a Civil War veteran, lawyer, and state representative, arrived in St. Cloud from Todd County in 1873. In 1889, the Minnesota Historical Society commissioned Brower to "examine and survey the source of the Mississippi River." Brower's work documented the true source of the Mississippi and paved the way for a law that established not only Itasca State Park but the Minnesota state park system as well. Jacob Brower became Itasca Park's first commissioner. (Browerville, Minnesota, is named for the family.)

Ripley Brower was born in Round Prairie Township, Todd County, in 1869. He attended St. Cloud Normal School in 1885-86 where he played football and baseball. After receiving his law degree from the University of Minnesota, he opened an office in St. Cloud in 1891 Between 1898 and 1905, he served the 47th Senatorial District as a Republican, and from 1916 to 1928 he acted as city attorney.

Jennie F. Hanson, Brower's spouse, was born in Litchfield, Minnesota, in 1901 The Browers had two children, Rachel and Ripley B. Jr. Although little is known about Jennie Hanson Brower, she must have been a talented person in her own right. The New York magazine article cited above says that Jennie was her home's "architect, builder and landscape architect." Jennie Brower survived her husband by 24 years, dying in 1966.



Detail of the central gable of the Brower House showing the leaded-glass windows.

The second owners of the Brower House were Bert and Ruby Baston. In 1964, they sold the house to the St. Cloud Diocese. The home has since been used for church meetings and a place to house guests.

The Brower House is a fine example of an architectural style that historians in the past few years have come to appreciate with renewed interest. The present caretakers are to be praised for their preservation efforts and continued use of an important local landmark.

07/06/1999

Dam House, "The Castle," 1899

"For a man's house is his castle" is a cliché that Central Minnesota pioneer Freeland H. Dam took literally. Completed 100 years ago, the Dam house, popularly known as "The Castle," still proudly stands at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Fourth Street South, a few blocks north of the St. Cloud State University campus where it now serves as a nine-unit apartment building for students.

Freeland Dam's success, symbolized by his castle, exemplifies the fulfillment of the American Dream. The son of Hercules and Ruth (Straw) Dam, descendants of early Dutch settlers on Manhattan Island, Freeland was born in Enfield, Maine, in 1835. At age six, he was introduced to the basic skills of blacksmithing and carpentry - crafts that laid the ground for occupations that he pursued the rest of his life.

When gold was discovered in California in 1849, Hercules Dam left home to seek his fortune leaving Freeland, age 13, to care for his mother and two sisters. Besides his duties at home, Freeland was apprenticed to a Portland sawmill where, during a five-year period, the young man mastered the rudiments of the milling and building trades.

In 1856, Hercules Dam moved his family to Minnesota where they joined other New England settlers on the unsurveyed land in southwest Stearns County that later became Maine Prairie Corners. During this time, Freeland worked as a mill foreman at St. Anthony Falls to help support the family farm - an endeavor clouded by a chain of disasters that included the locust epidemic of 1856, the Panic of 1857, and the Dakota War of 1862. For several years, Freeland walked the 75 miles between Maine Prairie and St. Anthony because stagecoach fare cost $7.50 - an exorbitant price at that time.

In his 1915 *History of Stearns County*, William Bell Mitchell described the perils facing the Dams and other new settlers at Maine Prairie: "In the fall of 1857, all mechanical business in the country closed tight. So then it was back to the farm again in earnest. That year the [Dam] family had saved a little frost bitten corn which they ground during the evenings in a coffee mill, the few neighbors often joining in to make the function social, and while the mill was kept going the ladies made shoes and mittens from old clothes, as wardrobes were getting low."

In 1863, Freeland returned briefly to Maine to marry Emily Whitney, a woman he had known as a young man. Later, their only child, Edward, died at age nine. Between the late 1860s and 1890, Dam's fortunes - and the local economy as well - had so improved that he built a sawmill near St. Cloud and another mill at Superior, Wisconsin. According to Mitchell, Dam cut pine from his own land, "putting the product through his own factory and taking the profit from stump to finished houses."

At that time, Dam also invented an assembly-line process to build bobsleds from raw wood to finished product, one every 18 minutes.

By 1888, Dam was established in St. Cloud as a contractor, builder, and manufacturer of sash, doors, counters, lumber, lath, and shingles. The 1888-89 *St. Cloud City Directory* shows that Dam had an office and a steam factory on Fifth Avenue South that employed 30 workers. An employee once said, "If everyone treated their employees as F. H. Dam did, there would be no strikes."

In 1898, Dam began construction of his yellow-brick mansion at 398 Fifth Avenue South. Designed as a duplex - called a "double tenement" at the time - it housed two residences, separated by a brick wall, under one roof. Dam spared no expense installing modern features that included electric lighting, indoor bathrooms, and hot-water heating. (The original ornate radiators are still operational today.)

The yellow-brick fabric is another unique feature. According to Dr. Lewis G. Wixon, an authority on the history of local brick construction, "most prestigious homes in St. Cloud at the time were built of imported red-pressed brick. Of the yellow-brick structures, the Dam house is the most heavily embellished. Using St. Cloud brick perhaps reflects Dam's commitment to buying local materials."

Ten years before Dam built his house, another wealthy citizen, lumber baron Timothy Foley, erected his home of red-pressed brick at 385 Third Avenue South. (The present owner, Dr. Keith D. Larson, has restored the house to its original Victorian splendor.) The designer for both the Dam and Foley houses was Allen E. Hussey, a talented local architect. Hussey practiced a broad range of architectural styles in his body of work, including the Searle's building (1886) and the Davidson Opera House (1897).

The Dam house is Victorian Queen Anne in style. Queen Anne features include a corner turret with a candle-snuffer dome, multiple shingle-sided gables, and a wrap-around porch. Drastic interior changes occurred after the house was divided into apartment units. Fortunately, a few fragments of its original grandeur still can be seen throughout, including Eastlake-inspired spindlework, stained glass windows, several ten-foot-high oak doorjambs, and an intact tile-faced fireplace. In many of the rooms, inlaid cherry-wood panels serve as borders for the hardwood floors. Wherever openings occur in the modern drywall partitions, sections of the grand staircase can still be observed.

The Dam house is a restoration architect's dream. My tour guide, manager James Hansen, said if he wins the lottery he'd like to undertake the work needed to restore the house to its original character. Owner Dan Borgert told me he tries to draw quality tenants who respect the property.

The 1899 home, shown from the Fourth Street south side, has been rented out to students for many years. It originally was a duplex.

Although he has no plans at present to restore the Dam house, he may make exterior improvements within three to five years.

Since the expansion of St. Cloud State University that began in the 1960s, many architecturally significant structures have been razed, including the landmark Saffron House. Preserving the Dam house would be a giant step toward honoring the heritage of this city.

06/01/1999

Lewis/Atwood House, 1926

"If only these walls could talk" is a common wish that people express when they enter an older building. The desire for "talking walls" is a strong feeling in the picturesque house at the corner of Fourth Avenue South and Eighth Street on the campus of St. Cloud State University. During the past 73 years, the house has served as home for a prominent St. Cloud physician and his family; as the residence of the widow of a St. Cloud banker and attorney; and as a campus guesthouse. Today, the house at 724 Fourth Avenue South is used for St. Cloud State's Alumni and Foundation Center.

The house was built in 1926 for Claude Bernard Lewis, a highly respected doctor who also happened to be the older brother of Sauk Centre native and American writer Sinclair Lewis. Among the sounds a visitor might imagine hearing in the house are arguments between the level-headed older brother and the erratic and highly emotional younger brother, words exchanged in anger when Sinclair had had too much to drink prior to or during visits to the Lewis house.

According to John J Koblas, one of Sinclair Lewis' biographers, Claude's wife Wilhelmina (Claude called her "Mary") liked her brother-in-law and would cook a fine meal and set an elegant table when the author came to visit. When Lewis had had too much to drink, however, the brothers quarreled and Claude, who drank only table wine, would try to distance himself from his undisciplined brother. (Incidentally, when the brothers were boys Claude, who was older by seven years, saved Sinclair from drowning.)

St. Cloud author Glanville Smith recounted more peaceful times when the first Lewis residence, which stood next door to the present house, was a harbor for Sinclair who, in 1930, would become the first American writer to win the coveted Nobel Prize in Literature.

"Harry (the author's given name) took refuge at Claude's house whenever it was convenient," Smith wrote, "as it provided him with a sense of belonging. Frequently he would repose on the front porch, abstracted, seemingly composing sentences in his mind, mumbling words to himself to adjust the rhythms and points of emphasis prior to long, lonely sessions at the typewriter."

Although not as famous as his brother, Claude Lewis was an important figure in the history of Stearns County. Born in Ironton, Wisconsin, in 1878, Lewis moved with his parents, Dr. Edwin and Emma Kermott Lewis, to Sauk Centre in 1883. He graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1900, completed his medical degree from Chicago's Rush Medical College in 1903, and in 1905 began what would become a long and distinguished St. Cloud career. Lewis married twice: in 1907 to Wilhelmina Freeman, a nurse he had met during his internship and, after her death, to Helen Daboll in 1950.

As a successful St. Cloud physician, Lewis added many firsts to his name. He helped organize St. Raphael's, St. Cloud's second hospital. He established the city's first hospital record system,

and also hired the first head of St. Cloud's nursing school. When Lewis died in 1957, a local journalist praised him and described his medical era as a time of "frank, outspoken, hard-working practitioners, unaided by antibiotics, miracle drugs, and modern conveniences."

As well-established citizens by the mid-1920s, Claude and Mary began to plan their dream home and turned to Louis Pinault, a gifted St. Cloud architect, to design it. Art and Gene Kropp, local contractors, were in charge of the masonry work. The new house was built next door to the first house on a vacant lot covered with oak trees and facing Central (now Barden) Park. The house cost $30,000, an enormous sum for that time.

The Lewis house is Tudor Revival, a style reminiscent of 16th-Century England, although broadly interpreted in the hands of American architects. Main features of Tudor include false half-timbering, broad, sweeping gables, and wall surfaces of brick or stucco. The Lewis house is divided into three sections of varying widths, a feature that makes the facade less symmetrical and more picturesque.

The 1926 Tudor Revival Lewis/Atwood home stands on the campus of St. Cloud State University. Today it serves as the Alumni and Foundation Center.

The north section is crisscrossed with cypress timbers, designed to appear as if the house frame were penetrating the exterior wall. Other interesting features include: scattered chunks of rough-cut granite that project through the stucco - designed to make the surface look as if it were eroding away - and leaded, stained glass windows that adorn the front door and sidelights.

Tudor homes - many fine examples appear along St. Cloud's Riverside Drive - were designed to provide a picturesque illusion that appealed to owners during the romantic 1920s before the

Crash sent the nation into the Great Depression. Architectural illusion aside, homes built during this era reveal a high degree of craftsmanship and a choice of high-quality materials. (Even the small garage behind the Lewis residence was designed to reflect the architecture of the house itself - and at a cost of $2,000.)

Although many interior changes have been made over the years, the original appearance of the house is still noticeable. During a tour several years ago, Gene Kropp (who was a young carpenter in 1926) pointed out to me the stenciled wall surfaces in many of the downstairs' rooms, a process done with a patterned roller. Red-oak flooring downstairs and birch upstairs were hand-sanded, a procedure done by machine after 1933, Gene told me. The basement gameroom was used for playing table tennis and billiards. The attic is an architectural study in itself. Now crowded with unused furniture, this unfinished space reveals superior framing, including hand-cut studs.

Seven years after Claude Lewis' death, Helen Lewis sold the house to Ferne Atwood, widow of Allen Atwood, a St. Cloud banker and attorney. Ferne, who came to St. Cloud in 1919 to teach history and home economics at St. Cloud Normal School, made few interior changes during her eight-year residency. She did remodel the kitchen and turned the south screen porch into a sun-room.

During the major expansion era on the St. Cloud State University campus in the 1960s, the Lewis/Atwood house was taken over by the state of Minnesota and Ferne was paid $100,000 under provisions of the law of eminent domain. (This house was the second Atwood home taken over by the state.)

Following Ferne's departure, authorities at first planned to raze the house. Luckily, however, in 1973 then St. Cloud State University President Charles J Graham asked the state to allow the building to be used for institutional purposes. Having found a new use for the house, alumni donors and local business benefactors helped furnish the five upstairs bedrooms. These rooms were redecorated, and each room bears the name of an individual benefactor on the door. For several years these rooms were opened for night occupancy to serve campus visitors and commuters. At present, the Lewis/Atwood house serves as the Alumni and Foundation Center. Unfortunately, the architectural integrity of the house has suffered in the process of dividing up the interior space into individual offices.

Given its location along Barden Park, which the St. Cloud Historical and Neighborhood Preservation Association is trying to restore, plus its architectural heritage and its place within the social context of St. Cloud's history, restoration of the Lewis/Atwood house should become a top priority for campus planners and administrators.

02/02/1999

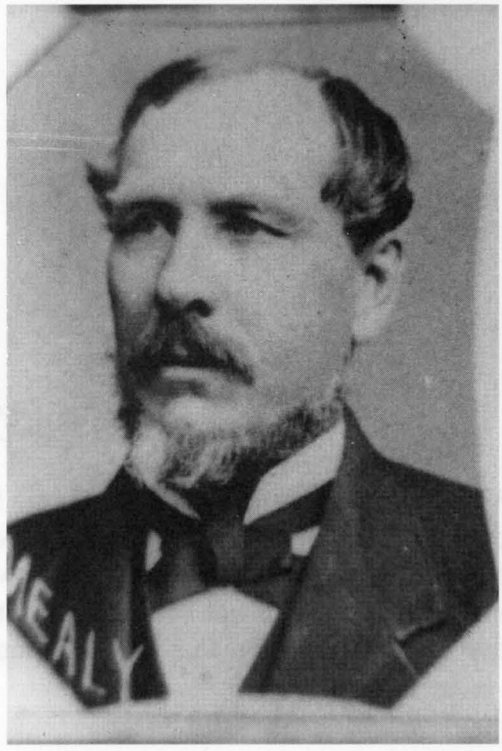
Ghosts
1855, 1911 & 1913

When my students and I tour St. Cloud State University's campus, I like to point out the architectural merits of Riverview Hall. Student interest really perks up when I tell them the story of the woman in high-heels whose spirit twice has returned to walk Riverview's halls. Whether one believes or does not believe in spirits, ghost stories add a spicy element to a building's folklore - just ask Marion Jameson, a former resident of the T.G. Mealey House in Monticello.

T.G. Mealey's Ghost, Monticello, 1855

The lilac bushes that Tobias Gilmore Mealey planted in 1855 still fill the spring air with their rich aroma. The bushes stand on a hill called "little mountain" in Monticello, Minnesota, where the pioneer built his elegant house. The vacant house still graces that hill.

A native of New Brunswick, Mealey first saw Minnesota in 1852 while returning east from the California gold fields where, as a supplier to the miners, he had amassed $25,000. When he arrived home, Mealey married Catherine Prescott before moving permanently to Monticello in 1855. Within a few years the pioneer built a sawmill, a clothespin factory, a potato starch factory, and established a general store. In the 1870s and early 1880s, he served terms in the Minnesota Senate and the House of Representatives.



T.G. Mealey as he appeared as a state legislator.
(Photo courtesy of Marion Jameson)

Tobias and Catherine Mealey had three daughters and two sons. In 1884, daughter Susan married Rufus Rand, a prominent entrepreneur. The grand mansion still standing west of the Mealey House was the couple's wedding gift. The Rand House is now a bed and breakfast.

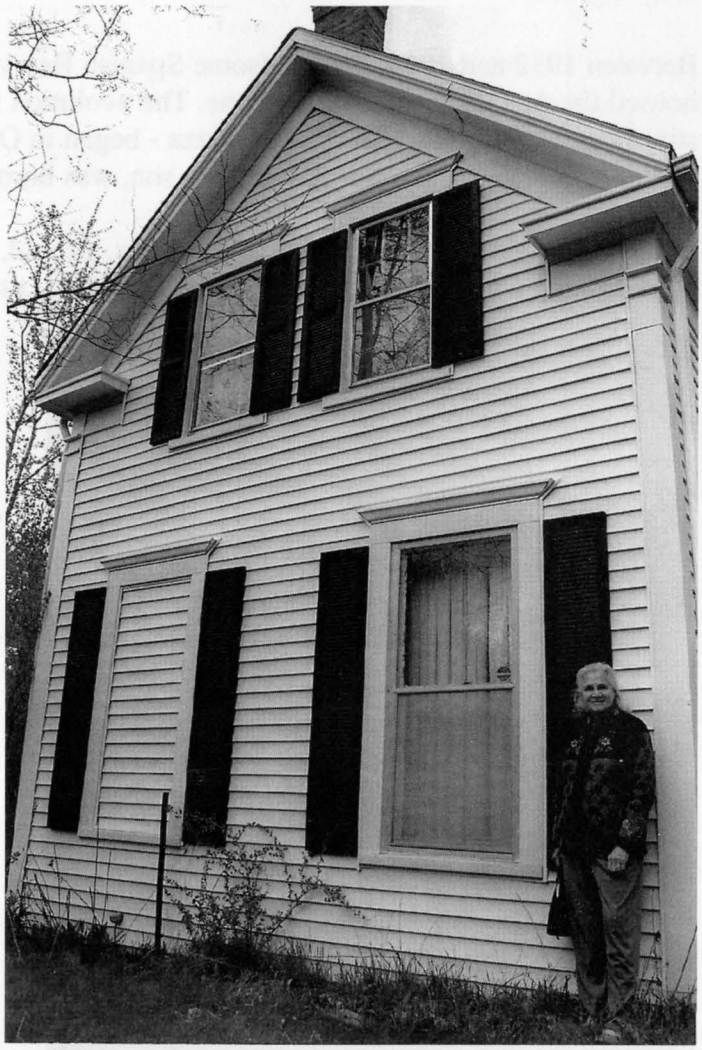
The Mealey House is a classic example of Greek Revival architecture, a style marked by returning eaves, cornerboards, and clapboard siding. The two-story, temple wing originally contained a parlor, a bedroom, a living room, a dining room, and four bedrooms upstairs. A kitchen, a summer kitchen, and a maid's room were attached behind. The house's elite style mirrored the status to which the family aspired. According to oral history, the pioneer built his house on a hill to distance himself from the "river rats" who lived along the Mississippi River. According to local lore, the daughters talked the groom into hitching up the horses at night so they could skylark in town with their male friends. Their father became suspicious when he found how tired the horses were the next morning.

After Tobias Mealey died in 1904, and Catherine Mealey in 1905, their daughter, Deda, used the house as a summer retreat until 1940. From 1940 to 1947, the house stood vacant until Carl Sebey, a Monticello attorney, and his wife, Jeannette, bought it. In 1965, Robert and Marion Jameson purchased the house they called "Chaos Castle" and lived there until Robert's death in 2004. After extensive restoration, the Jamesons placed the house on the National Register.

There are several reasons why the house and site should be saved. First, only a handful of structures from Minnesota's territorial period still stand today. Second, the site features a now grassy, lilac-lined remnant of the Territorial Road, the trail that once served Native Americans, oxcart drivers, and pioneer settlers who used the path to make their way northward to St. Paul.

The presence of uninvited spirits is another unique aspect of the house's history. Soon after the Jamesons bought the house, the couple began hearing strange sounds in the bedrooms upstairs: furniture being dragged across the room, unexplained rappings, and on one occasion, sleigh bell and oxcart sounds resounding from the Territorial Road. The Jamesons believed that the sounds emanated from the spirit of "Old T.G.," whose body lay in the parlor at the time of his wake. Correspondence between Marion Jameson and Jeannette Sebey revealed that the Sebeys also heard suspicious noises in the house when they lived there.

Today, the house and its surrounding 7 1 acres are for sale. Hopefully, a buyer who loves history will restore the house and preserve the historical Territorial Road - Mealey's lilac bushes and all.



Marion Jameson stands next to the 1855 Greek Revival House built by Monticello pioneer Tobias Gilmore Mealey.

06/04/2005

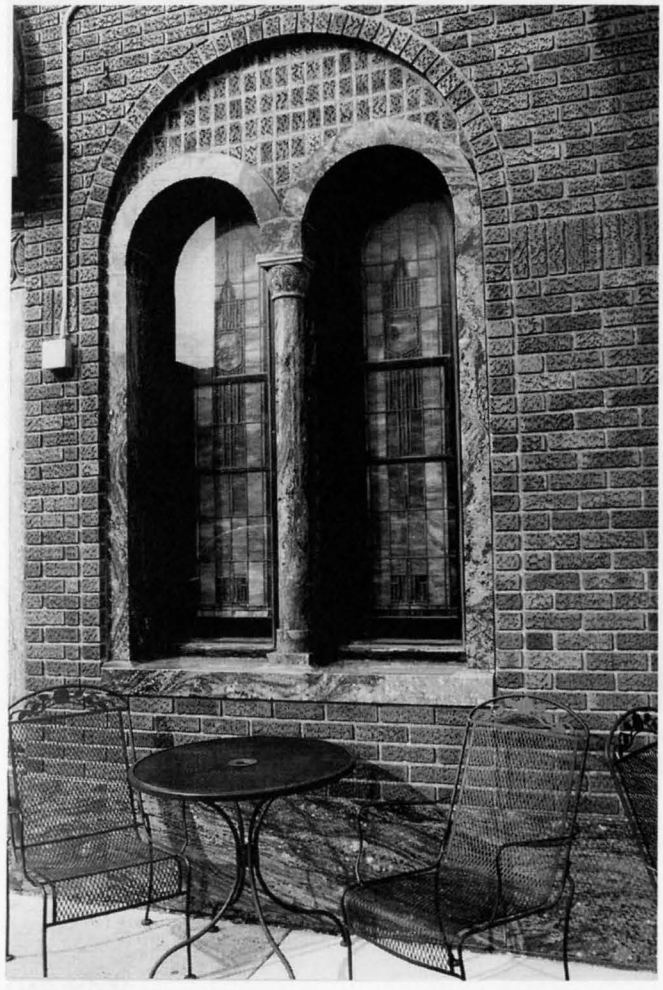
Building Offers a Ghostly Tease, 1911

Tammie Taylor occasionally teases her employees to sit down with a ghost and sip a latte. Tammie and her husband, Scott, own Taste of Seattle, a coffee shop in downtown St. Cloud.

Why a ghost?

Between 1932 and 1965, the handsome Spanish Revival building at 27 Seventh Avenue North housed the A. J Daniel Funeral Home. The evolution from funeral home to coffee shop - via a stint from 1977 to 1989 as Waldo's Pizza - began in Oberlanstein-on-the-Rhine, Germany, where Arnold J Daniel, a ship-builder's son, was born in 1851

In 1879 Daniel, his wife, Clara, and two sons, Arnold, Jr., and Anton, immigrated to America. In 1881 Daniel, a cabinetmaker and builder of coffins, established a furniture business in St. Cloud. In 1896, he received a certificate after completing a one-week embalming course. Traveling by horse and wagon, Daniel traversed rural Central Minnesota, where he was often gone for days while conducting funeral services. In 1911, he erected the three-story building at 117 Seventh Avenue North for a furniture store. The restored Daniel Building stands next to the Taste of Seattle.



The 1911 Daniel Funeral Home (Taste of Seattle) has one of the finest facades in downtown St. Cloud.

When he was interviewed in 1981, grandson David Daniel said that pioneer families were tired of having wakes at home, so in 1932 the Daniel family erected the present building. A drawing in the *St. Cloud Daily Times* described the funeral home as,"distinctly an asset to St. Cloud, and its equipment and

accommodations to the public are the finest to be obtained." Even a kitchen was installed to feed hungry farmers.

The funeral home turned coffee shop boasts one of the finest architectural facades in downtown St. Cloud. Escaping the rash of "modernization" that swept down America's main streets after World War II, the Taste of Seattle building is a fine example of what most downtown facades could look like had their original fronts been retained or later restored.

The building is undoubtedly the work of Louis Pinault, a talented St. Cloud architect. During his 55-year career Pinault, who was born in St. Joseph in 1889, designed St. Mary's Cathedral, the Chancery, Central School (now City Hall), Medical Arts Building, Wilson and Jefferson schools, as well as dozens of other public buildings and houses in Stearns County. In a *Daily Times* story in 1925, Pinault praised the emerging Spanish Revival, a style marked by graceful curves, stained glass, columns or pillars, and hollow tile roofs. In the Taste of Seattle Building, Pinault used polished rainbow granite pillars, arched Roman windows set in stained glass, bouquet brick, and a decorative cornice constructed of red tiles. This building, as well as several Pinault-designed St. Cloud houses from the same period, represents a major chapter in the city's architectural history. Tammie Taylor said she plans to keep the building "as it is."

Although many of the original features are gone, the stained glass, some wooden paneling, and a 1930s light fixture in the vestibule remain from the funeral home era. A large bar, built in 1855 and moved from Janesville, Minnesota, is a fitting addition to the restaurant's decor.

Taylor said her business is 50 percent coffee and 50 percent delicatessen. She employs seven workers, including her ten-year-old son, Jesup, and daughter, Tanda, who handles all the baking.

Drop in and look for the ghost.

07/06/2002

Riverview Hall & the High-Heeled Ghost, 1913

Not many buildings can boast of being a National Register landmark, home to a high-heeled ghost, a haven for bats and, above all, a place of memories for thousands of students who have passed through its halls for 85 years.

Riverview, the second-oldest structure on the campus of St. Cloud State University, was constructed between 1911 and 1913. The building was designed by a St. Paul architect, Clarence Johnston, a close friend of Cass Gilbert, architect of the Minnesota State Capitol, and a craftsman as talented as his more famous colleague. Johnston chose Georgian Revival (Renaissance) style to reflect the classical curriculum common to students pursuing degrees at St. Cloud Normal School prior to World War I.

Although the building's elite style echoed the classical past, Johnston used common St. Cloud yellow brick for Riverview's massive walls. This handsome material also was used for more than 200 structures in the city of St. Cloud. Built at a cost of $60,000, Riverview originally was used to house the campus model school - a place where students preparing for a teaching career at the elementary level could observe trained teachers at work. In the 1960s, when the model school became the campus laboratory school with headquarters elsewhere, Riverview became the home of St. Cloud State University's English Department.

Twenty years ago, Professor John Bovee, now retired, was working in his office one night about 11 p.m. Suddenly, he heard what he thought was a colleague wearing high heels coming down the hall. When Bovee peeked out his door, there was no one in sight.

Ten years later, at 10:45 p.m., Custodian Judo Anderson heard a similar sound. While standing at the bottom of a stairway, Anderson heard a sound like the tap-tap of high heels on the floor above. Awaiting the woman's descent down the staircase, he heard instead the sound of the main door closing. "I sure saw the front door open and everything," he was quoted as saying at the time.

Two years later, another strange incident - although unrelated to the activities of an alleged spirit - took place in the same building. At the head of Riverview's grand staircase stands a grandfather clock, placed there in 1913. Teachers arriving at work on November 3, 1980, discovered that the clock was missing. Later that night, a St. Cloud man found the clock standing in the middle of Stearns County Road 75 near the Interstate. Newspaper articles describing the missing antique prompted its quick return.

Closely allied to ghosts and other supernatural phenomena are creatures who often receive a bad rap - bats. Over the years bats periodically have flown through Riverview's hallways, offices, and classrooms, causing consternation among faculty and students.

Today, Riverview looks almost the same as it did in this 1913 photograph.

(Photo courtesy of St. Cloud State University Archives)

In a recent interview with English Department Chair Bob Inkster, I asked about the bats and whether he had an opinion about the recurring ghost episodes. Inkster said that bats inhabit the building in late summer and early fall, "hanging on top of such ingenious places as office door frames." He recounted the time a bat invaded a classroom and a group of hockey players hit the floor until one of their female classmates disposed of it. Inkster has no opinion on the ghost stories but noted, "ghosts are an apt metaphor for Riverview," as there are innumerable mysterious problems that inhabitants of old buildings face.

"The building is either too hot in summer or too cold in winter," Inkster said. There is also some concern over the presence of radon, tests for which are periodically undertaken. All in all, Inkster said, the building is a "nice place, designed at human scale, and not mass-produced," adding that he feels this is a "fit description of the average St. Cloud State student." Inkster also noted that the rear rooms do in fact have a view of the river, although Riverview faces west instead of the more appropriate riverside east (None of the buildings along the river on campus actually face what is one of the most spectacular views of the Mississippi.)

Supernatural events and problems related to building age aside, Riverview's true importance lies in those students and teachers who have studied and taught in the building's classrooms. Deborah Bjorn, who attended the model school from first through grade eight, now teaches

composition in the same place. Bjorn has warm memories of her days as a model school student. When her father, Arthur Nelson, moved his family in 1947 from New York State to St. Cloud to become a professor of chemistry, Bjorn entered the model school along with 25 other local students. Biorn remembers when traffic passed in front of Riverview before expansion of the campus began in the 1960s. Where the Mathematics and Science Center sits today, there once stood two grocery stores and an open field with a softball diamond.

Biorn recalls that children played jacks, hopscotch, and jump rope on Riverview's front steps. A treasured memory for Biorn is walking over to Stewart Hall where she sat and waited until her father completed his work so the two could walk home together. Bjorn said that in those days there was "a close community between students and the college faculty at Riverview."

As Riverview approaches its second century of use, it is informative to recall the words of Isabel Lawrence, acting president of St. Cloud Normal School from 1915-1916, to describe the building:

"This building is one of the finest school buildings in the United States. It is a continual object lesson to the normal school students of the right environment for children. The building is an example of beauty and good taste in architecture and furnishings, of what should daily surround children if there is to be cultivation of their sense of beauty and order."

10/27/1998

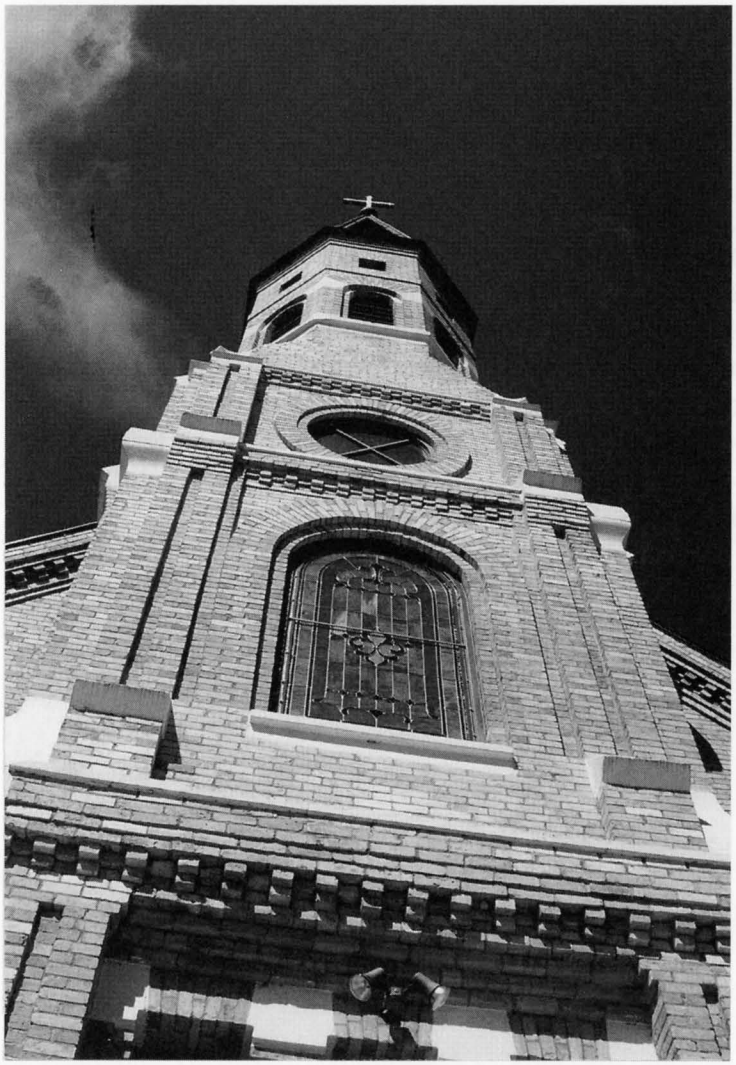
Churches
1903-1961

An influx of German Catholics laid the groundwork for the erection of European-inspired, cathedral-like churches that are found today in every hamlet in Central Minnesota. For decades prior to the building of these lofty structures, pioneers cut down trees and lugged logs to sites where parishioners gathered for church-raisings. Wood-framed buildings took the place of logs until funds became available to erect churches in brick and stone. When parishioners began building in permanent materials they looked back to Europe. St. Mary's Cathedral, St. Cloud, is a slice of the Italian Renaissance just as St. Cloud's First Presbyterian Church is patterned after an English parish church. Molded from concrete, steel, and glass, Marcel Breuer's Saint John's Abbey is a monument of the International Style (1930s-1960s).

St. Stephen Church, 1903

In St. Stephen, the golden-leaved maples frame the walls of the town's handsome yellow-brick church. In nearby St. Stephani Cemetery, the Slovenian founders - Trobecs, Peternells, Smoleys and Justins - of the Stearns County community sleep beneath the trees. The forest behind the church reminds visitors of the village's original name, St. Stephen-in-the-Woods. On a recent warm day, a walk through the cemetery and out into the leaf-strewn woods was an adventure for me and for Stuart, our family's Yorkshire pup.

St. Stephen was the first Slovenian immigrant settlement in the United States. In the early 1860s, Slovenian missionary the Rev. Francis Xavier Pierz circulated glowing accounts of opportunities in Central Minnesota in a Cincinnati German-language newspaper. He also wrote hundreds of letters to fellow countrymen, hoping to establish a "New Slovenia" in Minnesota's Big Woods. In 1864, Pierz, at age 79, visited Slovenia and persuaded 50 to 60 "Krainers" - a German name for residents of the Slovene province of Carniola - to come to Minnesota. In 1872, several Krainers established St. Anthony in Krain Township, Stearns County.



The St. Stephen Church is a proud reminder of the community's Slovenian heritage.

Two Slovenian immigrants founded St. Stephen. In 1864, Gregor Pogacnik visited his brother, Anton, in St. Joseph. Hacking their way through the thick woods of northeastern Stearns County, the brothers hauled axes, muskets, hunting knives, clothing, and provisions by oxcart until they reached the site that later became St.

Stephen. There, Pogacnik built a log house for his spouse, Agnes, and their daughter, Mary. The town's co-founder, Gregor Peternell, settled in St. Stephen the next year.

In 1869, Pierz's assistant, the Rev. Joseph F. Buh, visited St. Stephen and persuaded settlers to build a church. Then in 1870, parishioners cut timber and hauled logs from morning until night. The building, the first Slovenian house of worship in the United States, was completed the following year. Because the church had no pews or windows, the congregation stood while the priest read by light from spaces between the logs.

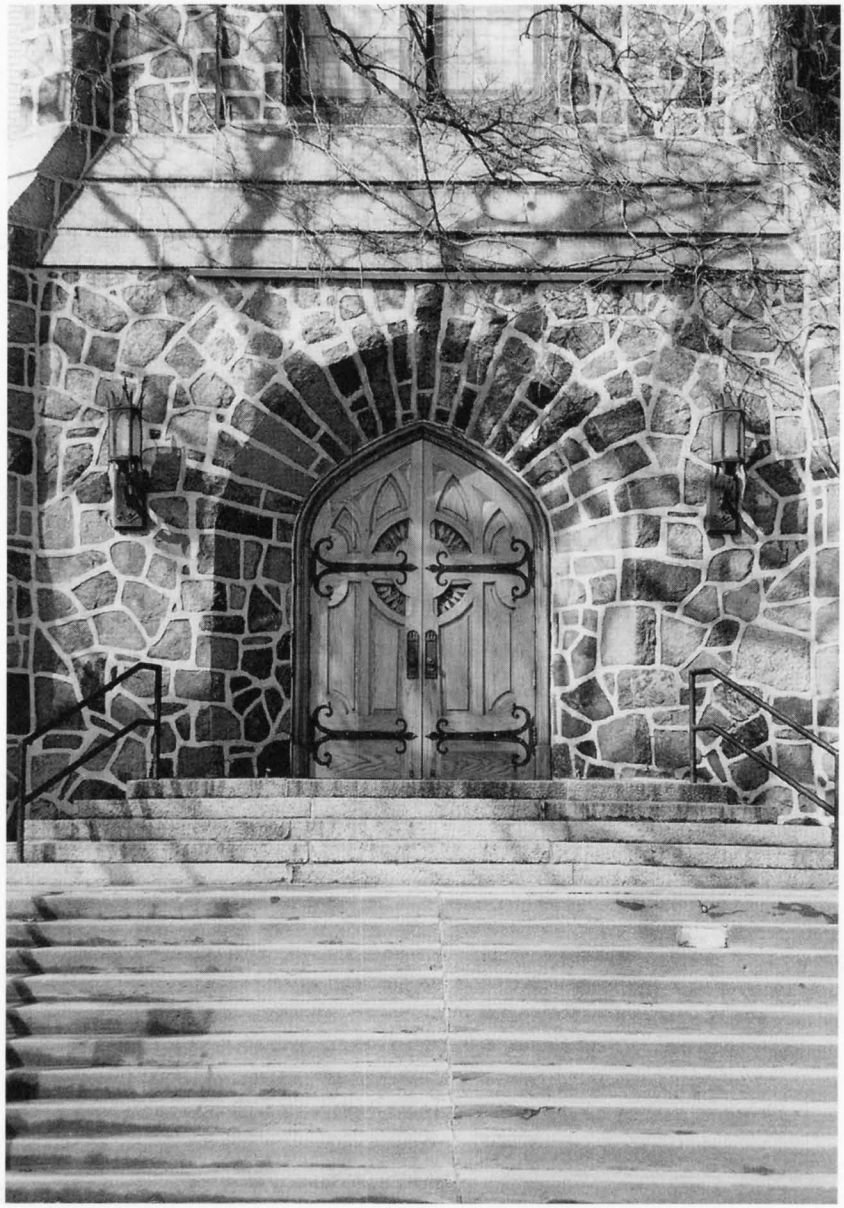
In 1900, parishioners commissioned John Jager, a Minneapolis architect, to erect a brick structure for $20,000. After hauling fieldstone for the foundation, local farmers laid the cornerstone in 1903. Unique in style, the building combines many architectural elements from the European past. The interior has remained relatively untouched.

According to historian Alan K. Lathrop, Jager was a native of Carniola. He arrived in the United States one year before he designed the St. Stephen church. Until his death in 1959, Jager pursued a prominent career as an architect and city planner.

11/05/2005

First Presbyterian Church, St. Cloud, 1919

In the fall of 1864, the Rev. Elgy V Campbell and his spouse, Mary Charlotte Shane, arrived by stagecoach in the tiny village of St. Cloud. Following his graduation from a Pennsylvania Presbyterian seminary, Campbell had decided to move west "where," in his words, "nothing had been done in the way of church work, no foundation laid, and no ruts worn." In his autobiography Campbell wrote, "I think my mate and I played a game against each other. We did not let each other see how awfully blue we were, but she must have felt the trial more keenly than I, for she was alone so much of the time while I had to be outside hustling."



A beautiful entrance to the First Presbyterian Church is enhanced by handmade wooden doors.

Within a few weeks, the minister had organized a fledgling congregation of eight women and two men. The following year, a small frame church dubbed the "Presbyterian Warehouse" was erected for $800. It was the first Presbyterian church between St. Paul and the Pacific.

By 1917, when the cornerstone was laid, the congregation had raised enough money to build a new church at 373 Fourth Avenue South, at that time the most fashionable neighborhood in St. Cloud. Three men - an architect, a contractor and a pastor - combined forces to produce a church in the Tudor Revival style. Harry Wild Jones, a prominent Minneapolis architect, designed the building at a cost that would eventually reach $80,000. Jones received his architectural education at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He traveled and studied in France and Italy after his graduation. Jones later worked as a draftsman in the Boston office of Henry Hobson Richardson, America's premier architect at the end of the 19th century. After opening an office in Minneapolis in 1885, Jones concentrated largely on designing churches. Although he built churches in China, India, and Burma, many of his finest works are found in Minnesota.

Edward J. Hirt served as contractor for the First Presbyterian Church and supervised construction of church buildings in Browerville, Morris, Perham, and Melrose. He was also the contractor for St. Cloud State University's Shoemaker Hall and St. Cloud Orphan's Home.

Several elements make the First Presbyterian Church an architectural masterpiece, such as the elongated, buttressed wall with a tower at one end. The tower contains a massive, cave-like entrance that welcomes entering parishioners through solid wooden doors. For the walls, Campbell chose granite in place of brick when members in the granite business agreed to donate the stone. A crazy-quilt pattern with granite pieces set in heavy mortar softens the fortress-like exterior. Ornate wooden beams and leaded windows - with names of the church's earliest dignitaries etched in glass - grace the interior.

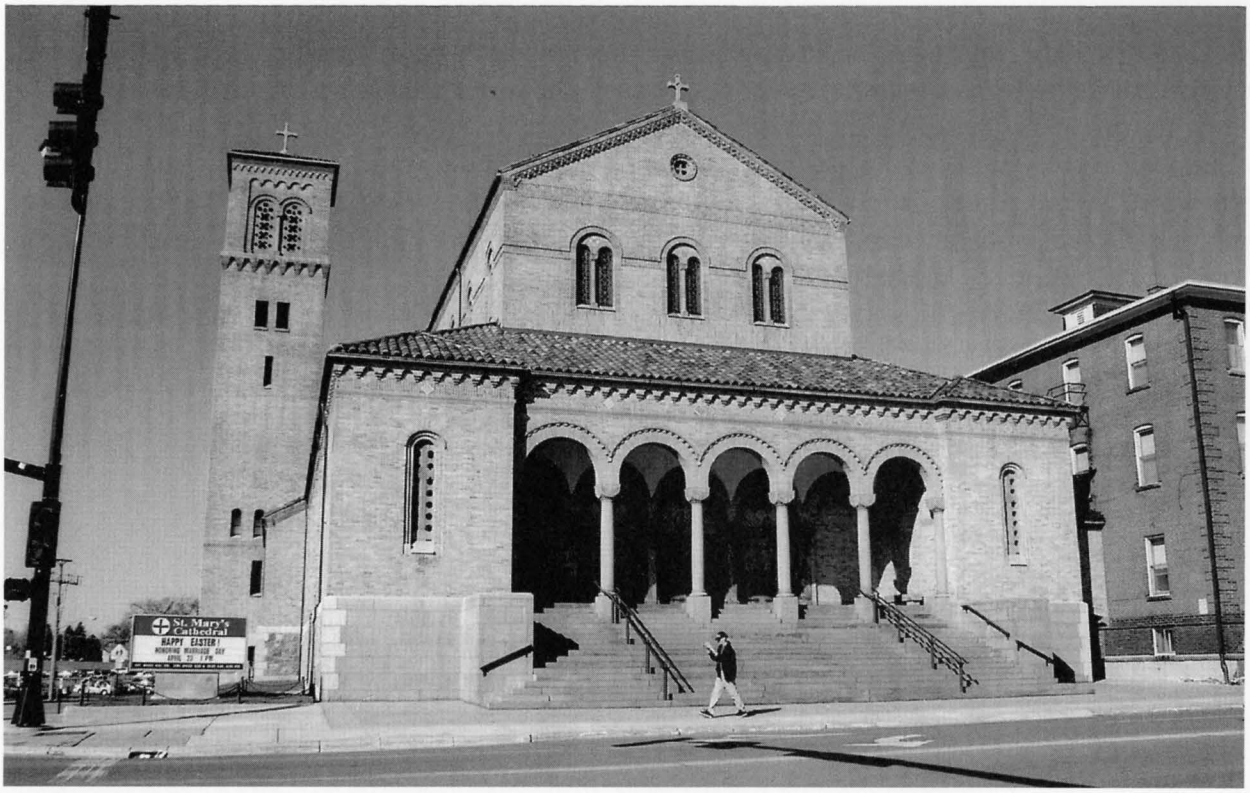
Rev. Campbell served for 58 years, retiring in 1922 at age 85. In retirement, at 92, he performed his 759th marriage ceremony. Campbell died in 1929, while his wife died almost two years later.

St. Mary's Cathedral, St. Cloud, 1931

If you want to experience the beauty of European architecture, visit St. Mary's Cathedral, 25 Eighth Avenue South, in downtown St. Cloud. Recently, the Rev. Steve Binsfeld, St. Mary's rector, gave me a top-to-bottom tour of this magnificent landmark. Standing proudly above Lake George, St. Mary's is an elegant, mid-20th century interpretation of a 4th-century Christian church. Built during a nine-year period, St. Mary's was completed during the Great Depression.

St. Mary's parish history began with the Rev. Francis Xavier Pierz, the Slovenian missionary, who bought land behind the present Federal Building in 1855 and erected a Greek Revival wooden edifice that held a congregation of 25.When it outgrew its use, a Gothic Revival, red-brick structure was built in 1862 on the site of today's Medical Arts Building. The church was gutted by a disastrous fire on August 25, 1920.

After the fire, the Benedictine community of Saint John's Abbey began planning the building that stands today. Before hiring an architect, parish pastor Luke Fink, O.S.B., traveled to Europe to study possible prototypes for an ambitious new cathedral design. The chosen design stems from a basilican church in Ravenna, Italy. Masses were held in the future cathedral's crypt from 1921 to 1930 while the church was being built.



St. Mary's Cathedral, 25 Eighth Avenue South, was completed during the Great Depression.

Brick and granite walls, topped by a mission-tile roof, mark St. Mary's exterior beauty. The lower south wall is constructed of quarry-faced granite chunks with brick walls above. The east entrance contains six granite columns that face massive wooden doors with hand-wrought iron hinges. A stately campanile dominates the sky above the church's south wall. The five, south-wall pilaster capitals contain a swastika design that has created controversy because of the symbol's association with Nazi Germany.

Binsfeld said the swastika is the ancient "crux gammata," a symbol predating Christianity. In a recent St. Cloud State University publication, *Insights for a Diverse Campus Community*, Binsfeld said the sign "appeared on a great number of monuments as a cross in Christian context." Although the St. Mary's designs are in no way connected to the Nazis, money is being raised to remove them.

As the city's oldest parish, St. Mary's is celebrating its sesquicentennial this year. A comprehensive church history by Patricia Kelly Witte was recently published to celebrate St. Mary's 150th anniversary.

07/02/2005

Saint John's Abbey, Collegeville, 1961

If you have ever owned a tubular-steel chair, or lived in modular-unit housing, you've come in contact with the inventions of the internationally-recognized designer and architect, Marcel Breuer.

Marcel Breuer (BROY-er) was born in Hungary in 1902. Between 1924 and 1928 he was a major figure at Germany's Bauhaus, a school noted for its radical ideas in the fields of art, design, and architecture. Hitler closed the Bauhaus in 1933 because he feared that artistic free expression would destroy his twisted dream of an authoritarian government.

Knowing that he would not survive in this oppressive atmosphere, Breuer fled Germany and in 1937 joined the faculty of the School of Architecture at Harvard. Up until his death in 1981, Breuer pursued a successful American career as a teacher, a furniture designer, and more notably as an architect.

How did this famous architect, a practicing Jew, make his mark in Roman Catholic Central Minnesota? The answer can be found on the campus of Saint John's University, Collegeville. To see a Breuer masterwork - the 1961 Abbey Church - drive west on Interstate Highway 94, turn off at the Saint John's exit, and slowly make your way toward the campus where in the distance you will see the massive reinforced-concrete structure called a bell banner.

Inspired by the adobe mission churches of the American Southwest, the bell banner is a broad trapezoidal slab mounted on an arched platform. The slab operates as a frame for a wooden cross and the five bells that once hung in the nearby 1879 Abbey Church - now the Great Hall.

As one of the most unique architectural forms in America, the bell banner welcomes campus visitors and invites worshippers into the church. Besides these two structures, other Breuer projects on the campus are a wing of the monastery, Alcuin Library, and Saint Thomas Aquinas Hall.

Initial designs for the bell banner and the church were drawn in 1953, and both projects completed in 1961 The architect is considered one of the masters of the International Style, a design mode symbolized by a creative use of reinforced concrete and adherence to minimal ornamentation. Because most people dislike unadorned concrete, the style - which encompasses the period 1930 through the 1960s - is not the most popular American idiom.

In order to more fully comprehend a masterpiece I have appreciated over the years, I made my way to Saint John's where I talked to two men whose lives are integrally tied to the abbey church: Fr. Gordon Travis and Fr. Godfrey Diekmann.

Father Gordon, president of Saint John's Preparatory School, was a newly ordained priest when

the abbey's cornerstone was laid in 1958. Although he was not directly involved in the building process, Fr. Gordon has treasured memories of the time when the abbey was under construction.

He told me that Breuer persuaded the monks to use clear rather than stained glass at ground level to allow ample light to penetrate the nave. "All creation is good," the architect told the monks, "why don't we let nature in?" Breuer's clear glass, besides linking people and nature, also provides the monks a view of the nave as they amble along the cloister walks adjacent to the exterior walls.

Not all of the church's light, however, arrives through plain glass. The entire north wall contains concrete panels shaped in a honeycomb design with shards of colored glass mounted within. The colored glass was designed by Bronislaw Bak, a former Saint John's art professor, and installed in 1961 by the community of monks, faculty members, students, and other volunteers. Fr. Gordon said that the colors and patterns were chosen to represent highlights of the liturgical year.

Marcel Breuer's bell banner stands in front of the wall of the 1961 Abbey Church at Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota.

I also spent two hours with Fr. Godfrey Diekmann, a member of the abbey's original building committee and a man who knew the architect personally. Fr. Godfrey will turn 91 this spring. Like the abbey itself, he is a monumental figure within the Saint John's community. He was born in 1908 in nearby Roscoe, Minnesota, where his father was a teacher and his mother a seamstress.

The future priest entered the monastic community at age 17 In 1929, he professed his vows in Rome where he had been sent to study. In 1933, he returned to Saint John's where he taught both high school and college. According to one biographer, Fr. Godfrey's teaching was "spirited and intense;" years later his students still say that being in his class was a life-changing experience. In 1963 he was present for Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, and two years later he participated in the 1965 civil rights march in Selma, Alabama. As a strong believer in social justice and ecu-

menism, Fr. Godfrey performed, among other leadership roles, dialogues between Catholics and Protestants and was a founding member of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy. Now four years into retirement, Fr. Godfrey suffers from a serious heart condition. Fortunately, he said, he still can garner enough energy to prepare for whatever lies ahead.

The history of the abbey and its architect is a narrative that Fr. Godfrey carries around in his head. He said plans for a new church began in the early 1950s when the monks realized the abbey was too cramped to serve their needs. Planning a new church was a difficult decision because the monks had a long history of worshipping in the old church.

After forming a committee, the Abbot sent a letter to 12 major American and international architects asking if they would be willing to submit a design for a new abbey. Fr. Godfrey said the committee elected to forego a competition, the common procedure for selecting an architect for a large-scale project. Upon receiving a preliminary drawing, each architect would be invited to campus for an interview and a study of the site.

Included among the names were Richard J Neutra, Walter A. Gropius, Eero Saarinen and Marcel Breuer. The letter said that the Saint John's community was seeking an architect who could build a church that "will be truly an architectural monument in the service of God." Fr. Godfrey said the committee purposely excluded Frank Lloyd Wright from the list because members had heard that Wright was notorious for pursuing his own agenda with little regard for client input. The monks also did not contact the other giant of that era, Le Corbusier, feeling that the Swiss-born architect would submit a "set piece." Over a two-year period, ten architects came to the campus to meet with the monastic community. The monks favored Breuer from the outset because of his "humanity and sense of reverence," Fr. Godfrey said.

After our initial interview, we walked over to the church so that he could talk about the structure on site. As a worshipper passes through the large wooden doors, he or she enters the baptistery - a small, darkened area that receives subdued light from an opening above. In the manner of many European churches, Breuer designed this space to heighten a worshipper's sense of awe as the large, illuminated nave comes into view.

In the church, this spatial contrast is further enhanced by an intermediate feature - the massive cantilevered balcony that stands between the baptistery and the nave. Rooted deep in the ground, this unique architectural form projects so far over the nave that one virtually sits above the altar. Fr. Godfrey pointed out that all parishioners and clergymen have an unobstructed view of the altar. The elimination of a choir screen and a kneeling rail enhanced this feature. Spanning the nave are giant concrete girders, called folded-shell construction, that eliminate the need for upright posts. Sight lines are thus perfect throughout the nave.

As we completed our tour, Fr. Godfrey's visible love of the abbey became apparent. For him, Breuer's work is "majestic" and "shouts its very existence." I cannot agree with him more.

03/02/1999

Schools
1906 & 1908

The one-room, rural schoolhouse is an American icon. The stone ruins of the 1906 St. John's School and the wood-framed 1908 Meyer School are two local icons. The remnants of the stone school were spared when an exit from Highway 94 to Saint John's University was built. The school walls stand in a wooded area where they are hidden from all viewers except those willing to wade through brush and piles of fieldstone to see them. For pupils who wish to experience a 19th-century education the Meyer School holds classes 20 days a year.

St. John's One-room Schoolhouse Ruins, 1906

Twenty-five sober-faced children and a proud though slightly weary teacher stare at us, frozen in time and space, from a photograph taken almost 100 years ago. The year is 1906. The place is a stone schoolhouse one mile north of Saint John's University, according to the photograph that appears in *"Stones and Hills, Reflections. St. John the Baptist Parish. 1875-1975."* Today, in a wooded area near Interstate Highway 94, the photographed school's roofless walls still stand.

The history of the stone school began in 1875 when farmers in Collegeville Township built a one-room log school to serve the needs of their children's education. Erected within walking distance of Saint John's, the log building was used until 1890, when authorities moved the school district to Avon Township where citizens erected a frame structure on the site of an abandoned mill.

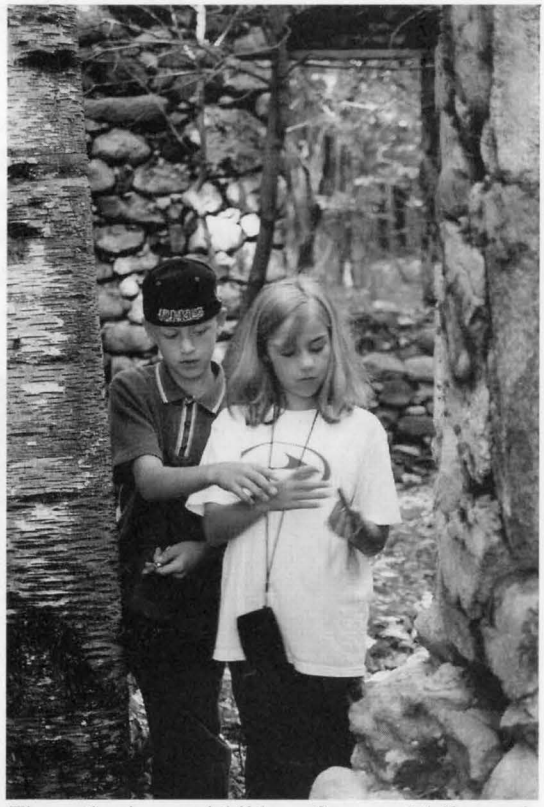
On June 28, 1894, eleven tornadoes were sighted in Central Minnesota. One swept across Lake Sagatagan where it touched down in St. John's cemetery before clawing its way through the campus. The twister destroyed many of the monastery buildings and several nearby farms.The little frame schoolhouse in Avon Township was among the tornado's casualties.

The stone school stands in a wooded area near Saint John's University.

As a young boy, early St. John's area resident George Kline watched as workers erected on the site of the log school a stone building designed to withstand natural calamities. In a 1981 interview Kline, 95, recalled seeing teams of horses hauling stone and remembered watching masons mix mortar in wooden troughs. Neighbors often gathered to help the workers erect the walls, Kline said. Separate doors for boys and girls were cut into the entrance wall. Although the frames and doors are gone, the hollow doorways are still visible.

Although the school is now a virtual ruin, large sections remain. Huge, quarry-hewn granite blocks were used for the corners and fieldstones for the walls. Originally, the triangular-shaped front and rear walls supported a gabled roof. Hollow spaces in the walls show where six windows once provided light.

Today, an aged birch tree stands in the center of the schoolroom. Chimney-pipe holes for potbelly stoves on the front and rear walls show that the schoolroom must have been well-heated. According to William Bell Mitchell's *History of Stearns County*, 35 students were enrolled in the stone school during its first year - all crowded into a space measuring 24-by-24 feet. In his description of early Stearns County schools, Mitchell wrote that rain and snow often seeped through the clapboard shingles. The students worked on rough plank benches that provided "a rude desk top with a receptacle for books underneath, though few volumes ever burdened these gloomy shelves," Mitchell said.



The author's grandchildren, Spencer Malley and Abby Rueter, both ten, carve their names in the stone-school's birch tree.

In his *Natural History of Collegeville, Minnesota*, the Rev. Alexius Hoffmann wrote that German settlers preferred male teachers who held degrees from European universities. A common practice was to hire a teacher solely for fall and winter when the children were not needed in the fields, Hoffmann said. As time passed, it became difficult to recruit men. By 1915, of the 330 teachers in Stearns County, 259 were women. Of the total, 185 held high school diplomas or degrees from normal schools or colleges. In the rural schools, men earned $65 a month, women $51 Subjects taught were German, reading and writing, catechism, arithmetic, and singing. Textbooks were rare. Before World War I, one-half of all schoolchildren in America were enrolled in the country's 212,000 one-room schools. In 1984, there were 835 one-teacher, one-room schools.

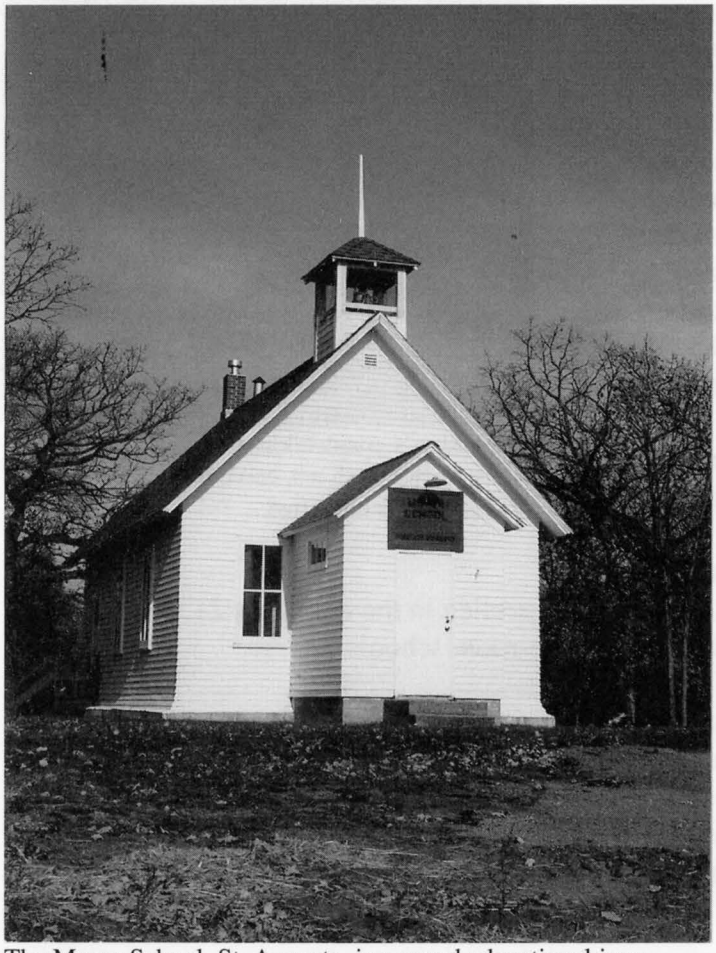
When I taught family history, I found that student interviews with grandparents who had attended country schools always prompted pleasant memories. Older family members recalled a strong sense of community, a solid basic curriculum, and an opportunity for older students to tutor younger ones. In later life, perhaps even the solemn children in the photograph looked back fondly on their days at the stone school.

07/24/2000

Meyer School, St. Augusta, 1908

Although classes at Stearns County's Meyer School were last held in 1968, the door was recently opened for Holly Nelson's third-grade class from Kennedy Elementary, St. Joseph, Minnesota. Now owned by St. Cloud School District 742, the Meyer School is used about 20 times a year to teach children about school life as their ancestors once knew it. A proud icon from a vanished era, the well-kept white building stands eight miles south of St. Cloud on Stearns County Road 7 near St. Augusta.

Gathering her class around the well behind the school, Nelson demonstrated the muscle-building chore of pumping water and carrying buckets into the classroom. Once inside, the 24 pupils noisily took their seats as Nelson began telling stories about life 150 years ago in Minnesota's rural areas. During the one-day visit, Nelson had students draw pictures on squares of fabric as part of a memorial quilt for those who died in the terrorist attacks on September 11 Later, she held a spelling bee and showed her pupils how to use slate tablets.



The Meyer School, St. Augusta, is a proud educational icon.

When students were asked to compare the rural school to their regular school, several hands shot up. One pupil said the rural school's room was smaller, older, and the walls showed cracked paint. Another preferred the old-fashioned immovable desk to his modern desk back in St. Joseph. The two privies that stand in the side yard raised a number of negative comments. No one liked the wooden paddle that hangs on the schoolroom's front wall - a relic of the era of corporal punishment.

The schoolroom itself is an American artifact. Enclosed within clapboard walls that hide the original yellow-brick structure beneath, the well-lighted and pleasantly-musty room has 25 desks. The walls hold a 48-star American flag, a Minnesota

state map, and a portrait of Abraham Lincoln. A picture of the class of 1938-39 and its teacher, Clayton Linn, hangs on one wall. The vestibule has space for coats and a place to store lunches. While I was there, students took turns pulling the bell rope that hangs near the front door.

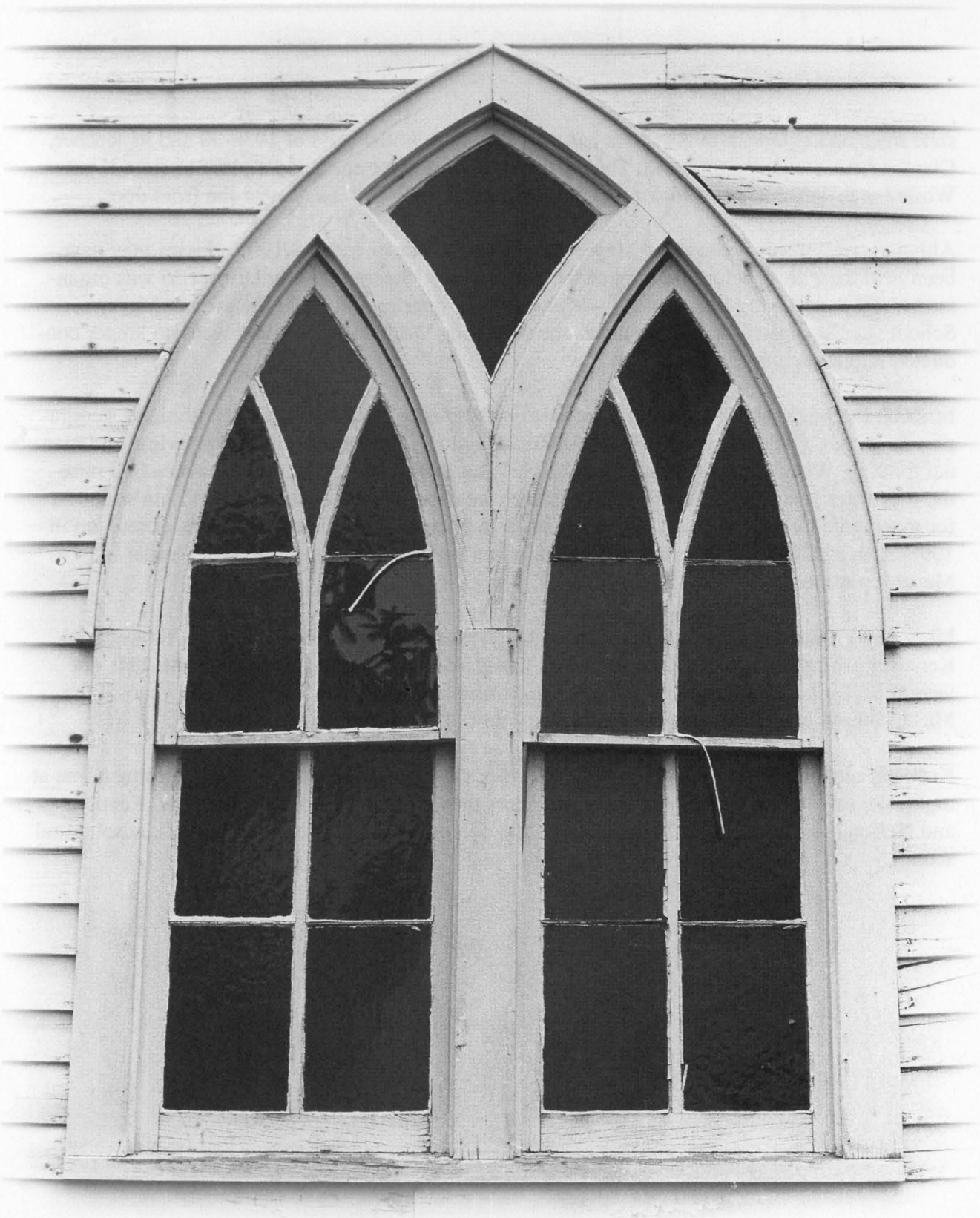
Although early records show the Meyer School was in use as early as 1908, classes may have been held there long before the turn of the 20th century. Stearns County District 35 was organized in 1868, and a log schoolhouse was erected one-quarter mile from the present Meyer School site. Because of anti-German sentiment during World War I, classes were no longer conducted in that language after 1917

In 1935, the rural-school curriculum included orthography, reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, language, grammar, composition, American history, government, music, drawing, and manual training. When Linn began teaching in 1937, his salary was $60 a month, with a $10 raise the following year. During his four-year tenure, the superintendent turned down Linn's request for maps, reference books, and library books. In a book written during an all-school reunion in 1996, Linn said his students made skis from barrel staves and played follow-the-leader in Meyer's pasture.

Mary Kelly Kennedy, 88, St. Cloud, knows the joys and sorrows of teaching in a rural school. Kennedy, who grew up on a farm in Swift County, received her teaching certificate after one year at St. Cloud State Teachers College. Beginning at age 19, she taught for two years at the Meyer School while living on the Kronenberg farm, two miles from the school.

Kennedy remembers walking through dense woods to reach the school. While returning home at night, she saw whiskey stills and customers' cars moving along the woodland trails. Kennedy and Nelson share a common 70-year-bond - the rich experience of teaching in a Minnesota rural school.

11/03/2001



Gothic Window. Wooden Church, Ronneby, Benton County.

Landmarks 1897-1973 and Lost Landmarks 1872-1920s

Of all the arts, architecture is the most perishable because of its tie to the whims of the market. When a building is no longer useful as a business, a house of worship, or a place to live, its existence is threatened. Since 1980, St. Cloud citizens have seen a number of landmarks, like Saffron House, razed. What is a landmark? A landmark is a building, a monument, or a landscape that evokes a special spiritual meaning. Landmarks are personal, public, or both. My grandfather's 1898 Victorian house where as a boy I tended his coal-burning furnace is a personal landmark. The 1902 St. Cloud Carnegie Library, where Rosie Moran warmed her mittens, is a personal landmark for Rosie and a public landmark for St. Cloud.

Reformatory Wall, St. Cloud, 1891-1922

You have passed by it hundreds of times - the huge gray wall that surrounds the Minnesota Correctional Facility. A thought runs through your head: What is it that's so special about the wall? Is it the longest wall in the United States? The longest granite wall? Or is it the longest wall built by penal labor? The key to the answer to this question begins with an important Central Minnesota product - granite.

If you could see behind the wall that forms a point at the junction of Minnesota Highway 10 and Minnesota Boulevard, you would find three water-filled depressions — the site of the first granite quarry in the state. Opened in 1868, the quarry has been dormant for several decades. When the 1885 Minnesota Legislature called for establishing a reformatory, members sought a site "at or upon one of [Minnesota's] stone quarries." Two years later, after visiting 22 towns, legislators voted unanimously to locate the reformatory in East St. Cloud.

Constituting 240 acres of land, including 40 acres of granite, the Sherburne County site was chosen for its quality and abundance of granite, availability of land and water, and its proximity to transportation. An early account noted that the quarry contained "a ledge deep enough to keep convicts busy for hundreds of years."

The granite was sold for commercial use until 1891 when the Legislature stopped production under pressure from private quarriers. This short-term venture also suffered because private companies could offer buyers brighter-colored stone. Crushed stone for highway surfacing was worked by inmates until about 1930.

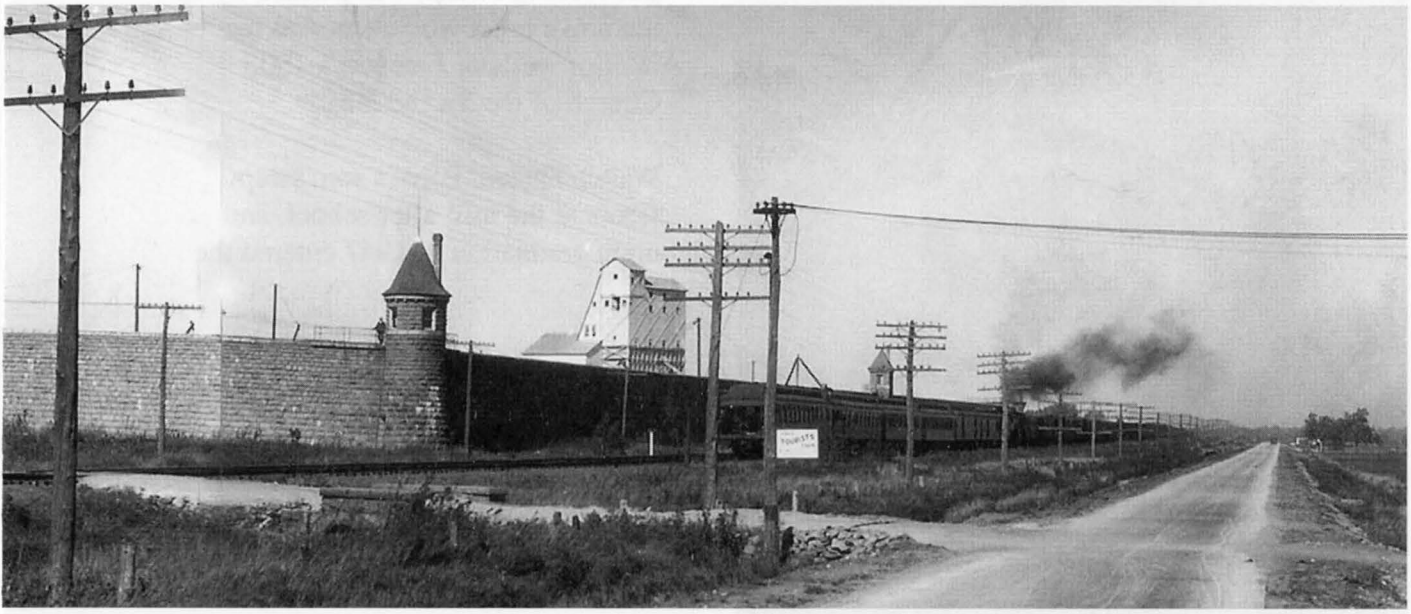
The granite wall around the Minnesota Correctional Facility-St. Cloud is the longest wall built by prison labor.

In 1891, reformatory officials began teaching prisoners how to cut, dress, and lay stone. It quickly became apparent that the ready supply of granite and the skills learned could be put to use for building an enclosing wall. The original wall was made of 16-foot-high oak planks supported by oak posts. By 1905, it had become apparent that wood was a poor substitute for stone and erection of the present granite wall commenced.

The *St. Cloud Journal-Press* noted in 1905 that the proposed reformatory wall "is to be the largest about any prison in the United States." Quarried, dressed, and laid entirely by inmates, the wall that stands today is four-feet-wide at the base, three-feet-thick at the top, and 22-feet-high. An amazing mile-and-a-half enclosure resulted when the wall was completed in 1922.

What, then, is the wall's true claim to fame? When the wall was finished in 1922, The *Daily Times* called it the "largest granite wall in the United States." In 1948, the *Times* said the reformatory project "comprises one of the most extensive outlays of granite in the United States." A 1981 article calls the wall "the second longest connected wall in the world," next to a wall in Chicago that surrounds a shopping mall.

Not entirely satisfied with any of these popular statistics, I called former warden Bill McRae, an expert on the history of the reformatory. McRae emphatically stated: "It is the longest wall in the world built by penal labor, except for the Great Wall of China." (That wall, by the way, is 2,150 miles long with another 2,195 miles of branches and spurs.) I'll go with Warden McRae on this one.



The Great Wall of China is the longest wall in the world. (Photo courtesy of Stearns History Museum) 06/02/1998

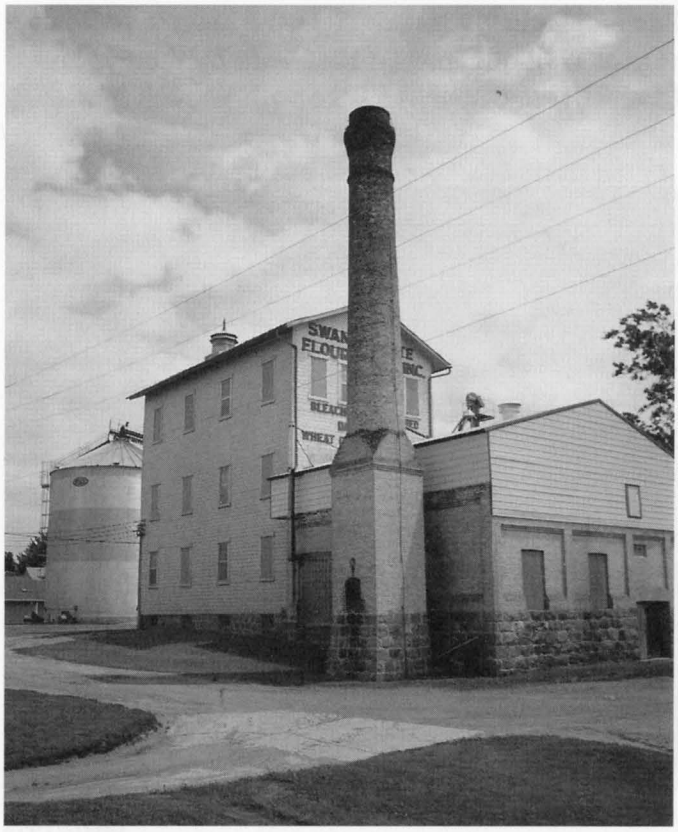
Swany White Flour Mill, Freeport, 1897

Walking into Freeport's 100-year-old Swany White Flour Mill is a journey into America's past. Ascending the narrow wooden steps up through the mill's three floors, I entered sun-lit rooms and heard the rhythm of machines grinding seed into clean, white flour. As people are about to enter the 21st century, it is a pleasant feeling to step back into the industrial world of the late-19th century. In spite of its roots in a vanishing America, the mill is neither a relic nor a living museum, but rather a bustling and successful modern operation.

In contemporary corporate America, it is unusual to find a small company owned and run by a single family - and a third-generation one at that. The mill is operated by Walter Thelen, 70, son Gary, 43, who is buying the business, and two other employees. Gary's spouse, Sharon, is secretary of the corporation. Gary has an eight-year-old son, Greg, who his father says could be in line as a "possible" fourth-generation miller.

Anthony Hoeschen built the Swany Mill in 1897 In 1903 Peter Thelen and his brother, Hubert, purchased the mill and ran it well into their senior years. Up until six months before his death in 1964 at age 92, Peter was still actively working at the mill. In her book, *Freeport. One Hundred Years of Family, Faith and Fortune,* author Lois Thielen says the Thelen family entered the business because the family of nine boys could not be supported at home. Peter gave up his job as a carpenter to join his brother in the milling enterprise. Their company's logo, a young girl feeding swans, was painted by an unknown artist who decorated the interior walls of Freeport's 1905 Church of the Sacred Heart.

Walter Thelen, Peter's son, swept floors at the mill after school, and upon graduation in 1947 entered the



The Swany White Flour Mill is the only family-owned mill in the state, and one of a few fully-operating flour mills of its size in the United States. The machinery used today was commonly found in the steam era of 1880-1930. The mill still proudly stands in Freeport, Minnesota.

business full time. Walter laughed when he told me he had "gone to milling school" under the guidance of his uncle Hubert, the mill's engineer. The Swany Mill is the sole small-family-owned mill in the state, and one of a few fully-operating flour mills of its size in the United States. The mill is also unique because the machinery used today was installed in 1928 and is a roller type commonly found in the steam era (1880-1930). The mill was converted from steam to electricity in 1966. A common schedule for the Thelens is a ten-hour-day, five-and-a-half-days a week. A specialty of the mill is organic flour made from grain grown in soil that has been chemically clean over a three-year period. The Thelens sell this product in local stores and as far away as Vermont.

In remarkably fine condition, the machinery hums and rattles at such a velocity and a noise level that the entire building shakes. When I discovered that the mill walls actually reverberate - especially at the third-floor level - Gary said, "Put this old equipment in a new building and the structure wouldn't last a month!"

Built in the style of a Midwestern grain elevator, the Swany Mill is a classic example of industrial vernacular architecture. Standing on a granite foundation, the three-story frame building is clad in silver-painted, pressed-metal siding stamped to resemble quarry-faced stone block. On the mill's south side sits a yellow-brick structure with a tall, ornate chimney. This unit houses the unused steam equipment.

"The Swany White Mill is a great landmark," milling authority Dr. Robert Frame said in a phone interview. "It is one of the last complete milling operations in the state, and is significantly important because it is publicly accessible." (The mill can be seen from Interstate 94.)

In the 1970s, the Minnesota Historical Society undertook a site survey of Minnesota's 19th-century mills. As a result of the survey, Frame wrote "Millers to the World, Minnesota's Nineteenth Century Water Power Flour Mills," which concluded that 804 steam, water, wind, gas, and electric mills were operating in the state before 1900.

The number of surveyed mills in Central Minnesota counties included: Stearns, 32; Benton, 7; Sherburne, 5; Wright, 23; and Todd, 12. A mill worker in the 1880s put in a ten-hour day and, depending upon his skill, earned a daily wage of $1 to $2.50. Accidents, unlike today, were common and deadly. A sign in the Thelen mill says: "Every Day is Safety Day."

The Thelens operate a small store where customers can walk in to purchase a variety of flour products. The store is a miniature museum where old-fashioned cloth sacks hang from the walls. The store, like the mill, preserves a small-town aura and promotes a classic family business that will soon stretch into its third century.

08/03/1999

Sinclair Lewis House, Sauk Centre, 1897

The houses still stand at 811 and 812 Sinclair Lewis Avenue in Sauk Centre, Minnesota. On February 7, 1885, Harry Sinclair Lewis - who in 1930 would become the first American author to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature - was born in the small frame house at 811

Four years later his physician father, Dr. Edwin J Lewis, moved his wife, Emma Kermott Lewis, and his sons, Fred, Claude, and Harry Sinclair, across the street to 812. Emma Lewis died of tuberculosis in 1891 The next year the doctor married Isabel Warner.

The house where Harry Sinclair Lewis lived from 1889 until he graduated from Sauk Centre High School in 1902 is a place of pilgrimage for the author's fans. In 1920, Sinclair Lewis published *Main Street*, a novel that forever changed the public's perception of small-town life.

The house is a late-19th-century, L-shaped Midwestern farmhouse with an Eastlake-style porch. Between 1966-1970, a local foundation restored the house to its 1897 appearance. It is now a National Historic Landmark.

Docent and local teacher Pat Engen met me inside. Engen has been leading tours of the home for two summers. The 11-room house is so well-preserved that it is possible to imagine the family at any moment walking through the door. Engen told me that Lewis might have sat at the bottom of the staircase eavesdropping on members of the Gradatim Club, a literary organization Isabel Lewis founded.

All rooms are fully restored and open to the public. Downstairs rooms include a parlor, a sitting room, the doctor's office, the kitchen, and the dining room. The office contains a desk that once belonged to Claude Lewis, who became a prominent St. Cloud physician. He died in 1957 E. J. Lewis was fascinated by technology. An array of pipes, a feature designed by Dr. Lewis, furnished hot water heat for the house. A bathroom was not installed until 1904.

The year Sinclair Lewis was born Sauk Centre Township's population was 2,807 Its Main Street was unpaved and plank sidewalks stood in front of five or six blocks of false front buildings. Aside from its frontier rawness, the pioneer village could boast an academy, a business college, public schools, an opera house, two newspapers, and a library.

When *Main Street* was published in 1920, citizens were shocked by what they considered Lewis' negative portrayal of townspeople and his descriptions of the village's drab surroundings. The images related to the author found in Sauk Centre today attest to his current popularity. Lewis' boyhood home, an interpretation center, a historical society (housed in the basement of the Bryant Library), and the Palmer House are all well worth a day's visit.

Sinclair Lewis' boyhood home, 812 Sinclair Lewis Avenue, Sauk Centre, has been restored to its 1897 appearance.

09/03/2005

Kimball City Hall, Kimball, 1908

Main Street is the heart of small-town America. The 1908 Kimball City Hall, a proud landmark on the corner of Main Street and Hazel Avenue, is the heart of Kimball, Minnesota, population 691 Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982, the building is the only city hall in Stearns County to have earned that distinction.

Designed by London-born, St. Paul architect Louis Lockwood, the Renaissance Revival structure has been in continuous use for almost 100 years. Erected at a cost of $7,000, the building still serves the purpose for which it was built - office space for village government, a meeting hall, and a library. At one time, it also held a theater, a fire station, and a school gymnasium. The now-vacant upstairs rooms housed a dentist's office and the Kimball Telephone Company.

Unlike thousands of Main Street buildings across America, the Kimball City Hall still retains its original exterior appearance. Three second-story arched windows, windowsills and keystones of local granite, a galvanized iron cornice, and a simple bell tower grace its elegant brown-brick facade. The Hazel Avenue wall, filled with tall, arched windows, adds character to the town's major intersection. A 1911 postcard view shows a manicured front lawn, an amenity lost when Highway 15 was rerouted down Main Street in the 1950s.

The 1908 City Hall still stands on Kimball's Main Street at Hazel Avenue. Efforts are under way to preserve and restore the historic building.

In 1886, the Soo Line Railroad decided to bypass the older village of Maine Prairie and move its tracks five miles south to Kimball Prairie. Kimball Prairie soon became a flourishing railroad center and a farming community. (Kimball became the town's official name in 1890.)

In 1913, historian William Bell Mitchell noted that the village contained a public library, a theater, two banks, a hotel, a creamery, a flour mill, two grain elevators, a weekly newspaper, four general stores, two farm implement stores, two blacksmiths, a lumber company, a hardware store, a livery, a restaurant, a furniture store, and an assortment of smaller businesses. In 1913, Kimball's population was approximately one-half of what it is today.

Building on Kimball's past, a group of local residents recently formed the Kimball Area Historical Society. Members are researching the history of Kimball and Maine Prairie and are hoping to find a home for documents and artifacts that define that region.

On a recent blustery winter day, I toured the Kimball City Hall with Dianne Robinson, who for 20 years has served as Kimball's clerk/treasurer/administrator. On the ground floor, the maple flooring and tall mopboards are still in place, and one room has retained its original metal ceiling. If the panel wall-dividers and dropped ceiling were removed, more space would be provided for the community meeting hall.

The upstairs rooms are a restorationist's dream. (Robinson's office recently acquired a rare item, the architect's original blueprints - a boon for anyone who plans to restore a building.) Ample light from the arched windows floods the interior, a space that has an exceptional view of the comings and goings up and down Main Street.

In a phone interview, State Historical Architect Charles Nelson said that the building is an excellent candidate for preservation with "a high potential for sympathetic readaptive use." Installing energy-efficient windows, updating the heating system, and repairing the brickwork would make the landmark more useable and cost effective," he said. In 1999, Nelson found the building structurally sound and at that time strongly recommended its preservation.

01/23/2001

WPA Walls, St. Cloud, 1930s

"They were the best bricklayers and stonemasons in the country," Gene Kropp said, "but during the Depression there was little work for men of their talent except for building an occasional house chimney."

A third-generation contractor and carpenter, Gene, 83, and I spent a pleasant spring afternoon studying the stonework that his father, Art Kropp, and five other underemployed masons - Paul Kreisel, Andy Lindmeyer, Lawrence Ohotto, Lawrence Schubert and August Witchen - had completed in the 1930s while working for the Works Progress Administration, commonly called the WPA. During our stroll through St. Cloud's history, Kropp pointed with pride to projects completed during the 1930s under the auspices of the WPA, one of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's most successful New Deal agencies, a program initiated to combat high unemployment during the Great Depression.

At the national level, between 1935 and 1943, the WPA oversaw public projects totaling $11 billion that had put 8.5 million individuals to work during the lowest economic period in American history. (In 1932, 12 million people were unemployed, millions underemployed, and untold numbers of people dependent upon both groups.)

In Central Minnesota, the number of WPA workers between 1938 and 1942 reached 5,100 in Stearns County, 903 in Benton County, and 723 in Sherburne County. Although most local projects were carried out by males, the number of Central Minnesota women employed by the WPA rose from ten percent to 33 percent during the same period. The average monthly wage offered by the government, which varied according to skill and location, was $54.33.

By 1940 in Stearns County alone, WPA workers had built 573 miles of roadwork, six new bridges, 11 miles of sidewalk, and 13 miles of curbing. Besides constructing new schools at Rockville and Collegeville, 67 public buildings (including 34 schools) were renovated by WPA workers. Other projects included such diverse undertakings as tennis courts, sewers, grandstands, water mains, dams, playgrounds, and athletic fields.

The WPA also built 14,142 linear feet of retaining walls in Stearns County. These walls are one of the most interesting and notable landscape features found in the area - features that carry a deep emotional attachment for Gene Kropp. On our tour of St. Cloud, Kropp and I visited three WPA wall sites: the Riverside Park stairway that descends to the Mississippi; the wall surrounding Selke Field; and the stone-arch entrance to Northway Drive, at one time the gateway to Whitney Airport. According to Kropp, each site represents an upward step in quality from fieldstone to cut-stone to seam-faced construction.

The fieldstone construction of the Riverside staircase does not hold its mortar as well as the other types of masonry, Kropp said, showing me where pieces had fallen away. At Selke Field,

Kropp pointed out how well each block of quarry-cut stone fits within the overall mass of the long gray wall. Alternate blocks of different colors also give the wall's surface a brighter sheen.

WPA workers, including Art Kropp, spent three years constructing this huge wall. At the Northway site, Kropp showed me his favorite use of stone - seam-faced masonry. Seam-faced masonry is made by cleaving granite at its natural seam in the quarry, and then mortaring each fragment, veneer-fashion, into place on site.

Gene Kropp points out the Selke Field Wall where his father and other craftsmen laid stone during the Great Depression.

Besides the technical and aesthetic aspects of stonework lies the immense pride WPA masons felt during the years they worked for the Federal Government through the Depression. Gene Kropp himself is a product of the Depression. In 1933, at 18, Kropp began a year's stint as a carpenter with the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps). Working for $30 a month —the government sent home $25 to family members - Kropp joined other young men along the Gunflint Trail where he helped to build barracks for the Corps. As a soldier during World War II, Kropp taught carpentry to wounded soldiers so they would have a skill in civilian life.

The rich material culture found in this and other communities is the legacy of men like Gene and Art Kropp. Their pride of workmanship has set as example for the present generation.

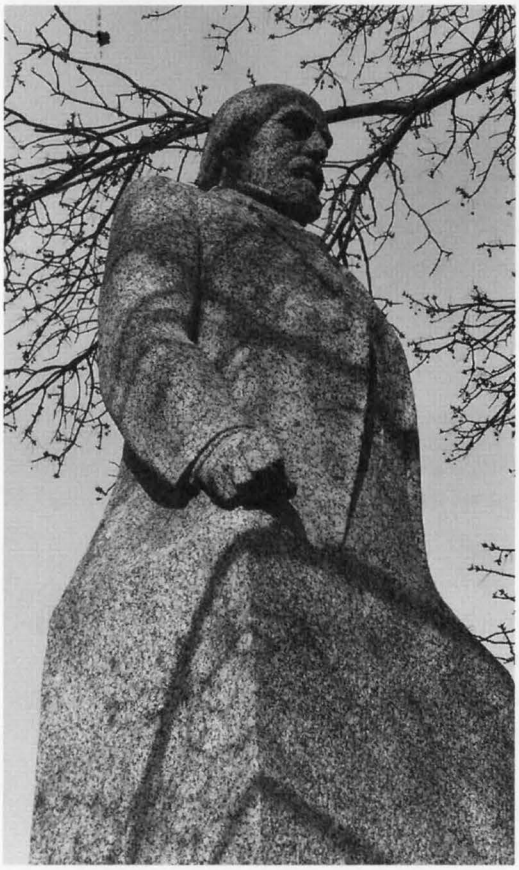
07/07/1998

James J. Hill Statue, St. Cloud, 1939

If ever there was a person whose likeness should be carved in solid granite it would be the Empire Builder - James Jerome Hill - father of the Great Northern Railroad. A rugged individualist who lived in an age of fierce business competition, Hill himself was granite-like in physique, personality, and fierce ambition.

On a triangular piece of land at West Lake George Boulevard and Second Street South stands the 20-foot-high statue of Hill, cut from a ten-ton block of Rockville granite. Towering above the well-groomed lawn below, Hill's huge head looks out over Lake George, his right hand balled into a fist. The statue captures one writer's description: "Physically, Hill was awesome: short and bandy-legged with a long torso, a huge chest, powerful arms and a thick muscular neck...his good eye glared like the headlight of one of his locomotives."

Born on an Ontario farm, Hill immigrated to St. Paul in 1856 and, at the age of 17, began his career in transportation as a steamboat clerk. Blind in his right eye as a result of a childhood accident while playing with a bow-and-arrow, Hill was turned down when he tried to volunteer for service in the Civil War.



James J. Hill's statue reminds the viewer of the railroadman's granite-like personality and drive.

After completing his apprenticeship in steamboating, Hill formed his own railroad company. To gain knowledge of the terrain and to study its agricultural potential, Hill undertook lonely personal journeys by horseback and snowshoe throughout the wilderness of northern Minnesota.

In 1878, Hill and several partners purchased the bankrupt St. Paul & Pacific Railroad which over the next two decades the businessman expanded into Canada and west across the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific. In 1890, when the now-successful railroad - built without government grants or subsidies - became the Great Northern, Hill said: "When we are all dead and gone, the sun will still shine, the rain will fall, and this railroad will run as usual."

With his fortune made, Hill turned his energies toward social, scientific, and philanthropic enterprises. After 1908, he was a leader in the

fields of conservation and experimental farming. As a lover of books and as a writer, Hill provided funds in 1912 to erect and maintain the Hill Reference Library in St. Paul. He also amassed an excellent art collection. Hill and his wife Mary Teresa Mehegan, formerly a waitress whom he met in a St. Paul hotel, had ten children. Their magnificent 46-room mansion, now open to the public, stands at 260 Summit Avenue, St. Paul.

Why is James J Hill important to St. Cloud, Minnesota? Although Hill made enemies among his competitors and his employees during his 60-year career, he was a mythic hero to the Great Northern shopworkers of St. Cloud and Waite Park, as well as to local businessmen. In the late 1920s, Jacob L. Hohman, a Waite Park Great Northern carshop employee and an amateur artist, carved a bust of Hill that he hoped would become a model for a civic statue. Although Hohman's work was later rejected, the idea of a Hill Memorial had formed in the public mind. Because of the Great Depression, no progress toward building the memorial was made until 1937 when, at the request of Hill's grandson, Louis W Hill, Jr., a clay model was executed by Joseph Capecchi. The model became the final granite piece fashioned by John Garatti, a well-known St. Paul sculptor. (In 1911, Archbishop John Ireland invited the Italian sculptor to come to America to carve statues for the Cathedral of St. Paul, the exterior walls of which are constructed of St. Cloud granite.)

After two other locations were rejected, the present site for the Hill Memorial was chosen so the statue would face Lake George. Granite-wall landscaping was carried out by the firm of Morell and Nichols, the St. Cloud Park Board, and the Works Progress Administration. Today, the siting is one of the best features of the memorial, though Hill's face is partially obscured by flanking trees. The WPA seam-faced granite wall is a model of contemporary preservation.

On June 17, 1939, the Hill Memorial was ready for dedication. On that day, the 100-piece Great Northern drum-and-bugle corps, a large body of Great Northern Railroad veterans, and members of the Hill family arrived by special train from the Twin Cities. Later in the day, the railroad's drum-and-bugle corps, the Cathedral High drum-and-bugle corps, the St. Cloud Municipal Band, 1,000-plus members of the Veterans Association of the Great Northern Railroad, and local dignitaries marched from the Breen Hotel to the memorial site where in a blustery wind the statue was unveiled.

In its report of the day's events, the *St. Cloud Times* provided an image of the statue that today is still meaningful.

"Ever stand close to the mountain and see its rugged base? Not until you get away from it for a distance can you get the full understanding and the thrill of its grandeur, its beauty and greatness."

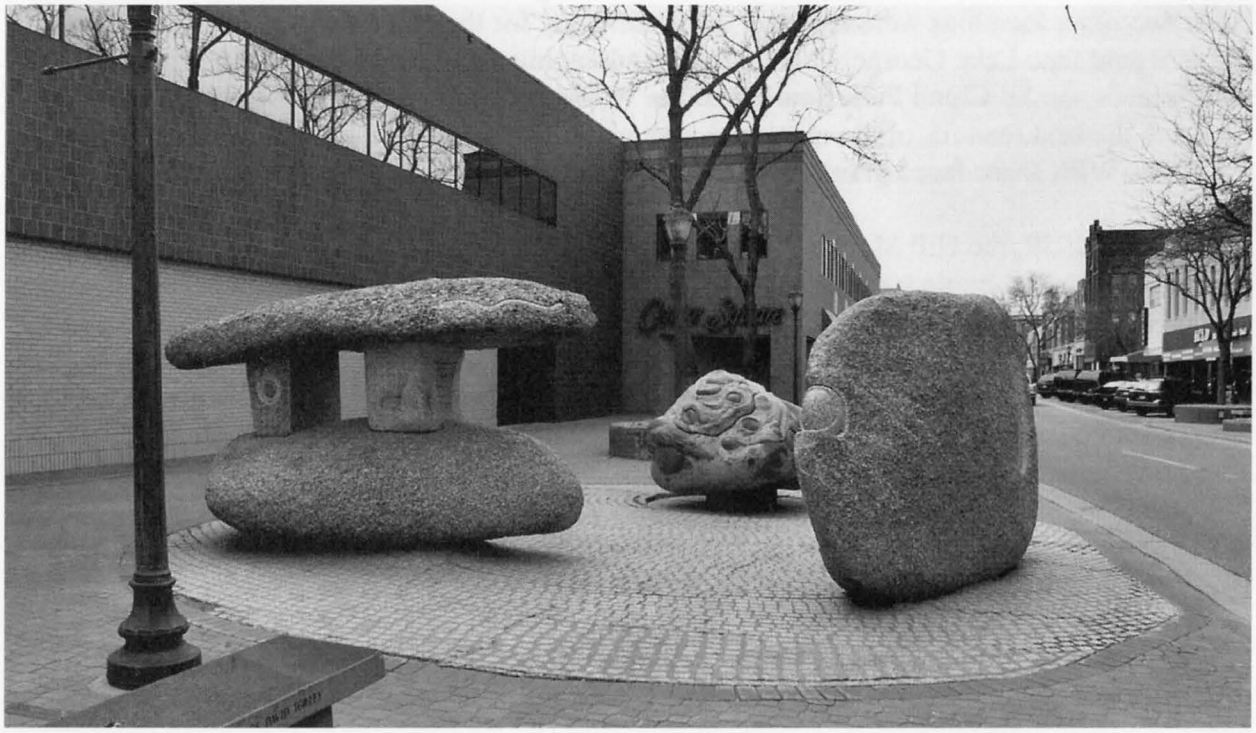
10/06/1998

The Granite Trio, St. Cloud, 1973

When I told a friend I was going to write a story about St. Cloud's "Granite Trio," he said, "What local musical group is that?" An unscientific survey among my friends resulted in a similar response: "What is the 'Granite Trio'?" Because August marks the 25th anniversary of the Granite Trio's dedication, perhaps it is time for St. Cloud to become reacquainted with the "Trio" - the triplet sculptural figures that stand in front of Herberger's Department Store on St.Germain.

The Granite Trio is the work of Eagan, Minnesota, sculptor Anthony Caponi. The artist named the three pieces "The Castle," "The Jewel Stone," and "The Sentinel." The figures were carved over a record two-month period during the summer of 1973. At the time, Caponi, born in Pretare, Italy, was chairman of the art department at Macalester College, St. Paul. He was educated at the University of Florence, the Cleveland School of Art, and the University of Minnesota.

According to a 1974 *St. Cloud Times* story, the sculptural figures were meant to provide a "jewel stone in an already beautiful crown" - a reference to the completion of the now-removed, three-block-long Mall Germain.



From left to right: Anthony Caponi's "Granite Trio" pieces are: "The Castle," "The Jewel Stone," and "The Sentinel."

The plan for incorporating a sculpture on the new Mall originated with members of the St. Cloud Community Arts Council who searched for an appropriate artist to carve a sculptural piece. The Council's Mall Committee consisted of Arlene Helgeson, Dixie Lee Elliot, and Edward Zapp, Jr. Caponi was chosen from among seven artists who submitted drawings and models for "a large participatory sculpture."

After his selection, Caponi began sculpting in July 1973 at the Moonlight Grey Quarry, Cold Spring Granite Company, Rockville. He used a mallet, chisel, and a jack hammer to shape several granite pieces, plus a single huge field boulder. After the initial stage of sculpting at the quarry, Caponi continued work at the Mall site where interested passers-by could observe his work-in-progress. One year after the sculpture's completion, Major Al Loehr proclaimed a "Tony Caponi Day."

In a recent phone interview, I asked the artist how he remembered his experience in St. Cloud. Caponi spoke fondly of local leaders who sponsored his work, as well as the reception he received from local citizens. "The cooperation from St. Cloud's engineering department, educators, and people at large was most encouraging," Caponi said. St. Cloud was a place where an artist could find "a true sense of belonging within a real community." He compared his St. Cloud experience to the period of the Renaissance, a time when citizens truly appreciated the work of an artist.

Many viewers are puzzled by the sculpture and wonder what it means. At the time of its completion, Caponi wrote: "I think of a rock as a beautiful, organic unit in its raw state, and I strive to preserve as much of its natural surface as possible in my finished work...I regard every boulder as the container of precious life, real or imagined."

In this viewer's mind, Caponi's Granite Trio represents elemental organic forms that centuries from now may be thought of, like Stonehenge, as ancient spiritual images. St. Cloud should be proud to have its urban setting graced with this monumental artistic work.

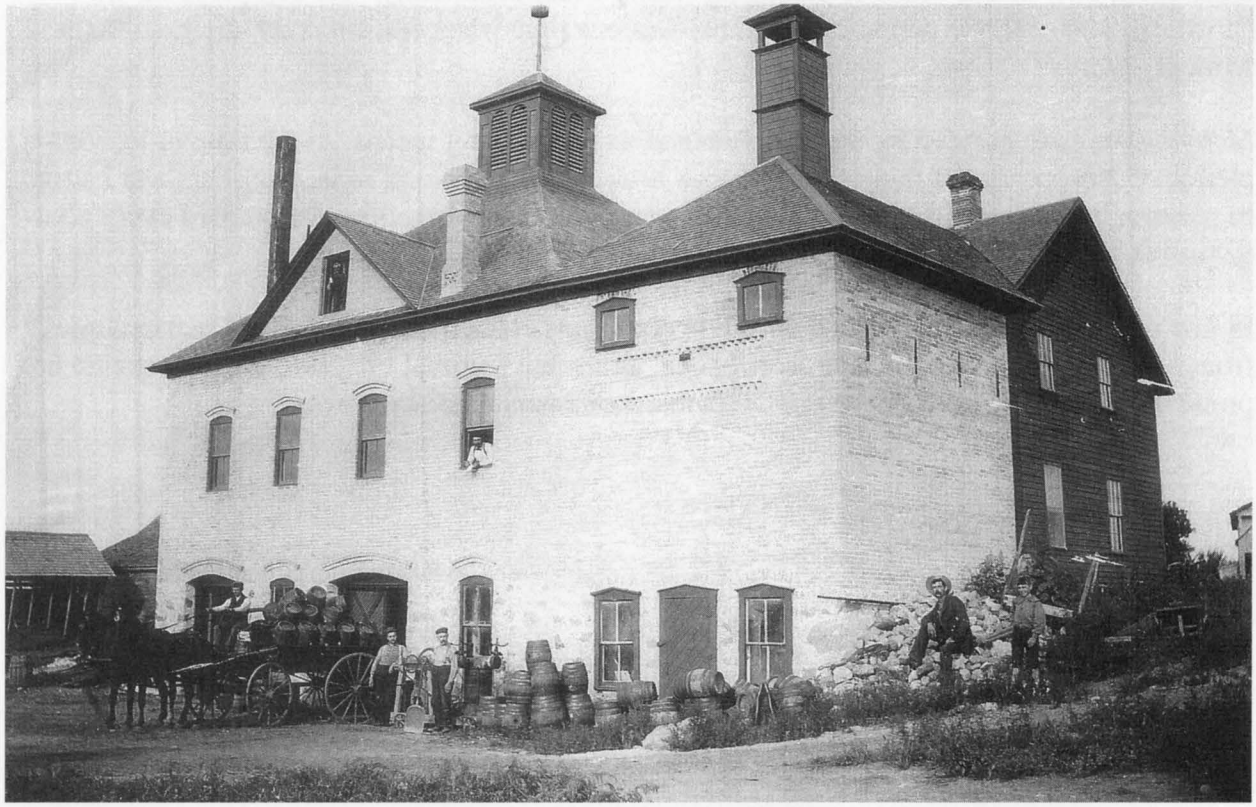
04/01/2006

Pitzl Brewery, New Munich, 1872

Hundreds of yellow-brick buildings still grace Stearns County today. The once elegant Pitzl Brewery, built in 1872, still stands in New Munich on the corner of Main and Seventh Avenues. Sadly, its windows are boarded over and gaping holes show where bricks have fallen away.

The brewer, Mathew Pitzl, was born in Hungary in 1869. After his mother's death his father, Mathias, immigrated to America in 1887 with Mathew and his sister, Teresa. After working for three years in St. Paul, Mathias moved his family to Stearns County where Mathew farmed and later drove a beerwagon for the John Froeler & Son Brewery in New Munich. Three years later, Mathew Pitzl returned to St. Paul where he learned the art of brewmaking at the Shelby Brewery.

In 1900, Mathew Pitzl went back to New Munich and purchased his former boss' business for $5,500. According to William Bell Mitchell, Mathew Pitzl "practically rebuilt the place," installing modern equipment and increasing the number of barrels produced in a single day.



The Pitzl Brewery as it appeared in about 1900. Mathew Pitzl is the figure in the second-story window.

By 1910, Pitzl Brewing Company was the biggest beer producer in Stearns County and the third largest in the state.

Besides owning and operating the brewery, Mathew Pitzl farmed in Oak Township, helped incorporate the village of New Munich, and served as vice president of the First State Bank of New Munich. The brewer had five children with his first wife, Victoria, who died in 1899. When Pitzl remarried, he and his wife, Anna, had five more children.

With the advent of Prohibition, Mathew Pitzl closed the New Munich brewery, but he still sold beer illegally from his remaining stock. According to local historian Ed J Worms, in 1924 federal agents broke into the brewery and destroyed more than 3,000 bottles of beer. Worms said foam that seeped into the Sauk River could be seen for 100 yards downstream.

In the mid-1920s, Mathew Pitzl loaded his equipment on a train and moved his operation to Estevan, Saskatchewan, Canada. He lost his business after he learned that the groundwater was contaminated with alkali salts. Mathew Pitzl died in Canada in 1931

From its beginnings, New Munich was a promising place to establish a business. The town was named by a Bavarian hunter from Munich, Germany. Henry Borgerding and Henry Marto were the town's earliest settlers. William Bohmer and Anton Te Vogt ran a store in a log house. The first church also was built of log. Although a post office was open as early as 1859, the village was not incorporated until 1896.

The village became a booming community when the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railroad established a branch there in 1907 By 1915, New Munich had a bank, a school, a creamery, a bookbindery, an elevator, a lumberyard, a gristmill, a public hall, an implement shop, two hardware stores, three general stores, three shoemakers, and two hotels.

02/03/2007

Warren/MacDougall Farmstead, Morrison County, 1874

On the wind-swept prairie of Morrison County, three miles west of Royalton, stands an outstanding example of Central Minnesota's rural heritage. Although the Warren/-MacDougall farmstead is in its present state a near ruin, that which remains is a testament to both a famous scholar of early Native American life and a unique family of pioneer farmers. The farmstead is also important to our heritage because it is surrounded by a natural landscape that shelters a colony of blue herons and a significant slice of vanishing prairie vegetation.

Descendants of the MacDougall brothers, who began arriving in Morrison County from Canada before Minnesota became a state, were farming the site as late as 1962. Today, the farmstead and the area around it are owned and protected by the Minnesota Chapter of the Nature Conservancy.

The story of the Warren/MacDougall site began with Zebulon Pike, the famous explorer who, after his 1805 visit, named the area *Two Rivers*. Between 1847 and 1853, William Whipple Warren, whose 1885 *History of the Ojibways* is still considered a seminal study of Indian life, built a log cabin and founded a trading post on the site. Now only a depression in the ground, Warren's post once served fur traders along the oxcart trail from St. Paul to Pembina, North Dakota. Warren died a premature death in 1853, at age 28, after a long struggle with a lung ailment.

In the spring of 1847, Duncan MacDougall, the first of four brothers to settle in Morrison County, began farming a mile north of Warren's trading post. In the early 1850s, Duncan's brother James arrived and established a post office at *Two Rivers*. In 1857, Donald MacDougall joined his siblings. The last brother, Peter, arrived with his wife, Martha, in 1873. Peter MacDougall, who constructed the buildings and renamed the site *Riverside*, is the brother most closely identified with the farmstead.

To fully appreciate the haunting grandeur of Riverside, I parked on the county road and entered the farm along a half-mile path framed by ancient, moss-covered wooden posts. In the far distance, I heard the rusty sound of the blades on the farm's long unused windmill. Approaching the farmsite, I saw two large buildings: a four-bay, English-style barn on the left and a Georgian Revival farmhouse to the right.

The MacDougall barn, built in 1874 is, without doubt, one of the largest barns in Minnesota. More at home on the prairies and plains of central Canada, the barn is an outstanding example of a multi-purpose structure that once housed cattle and horses and additional space for hay storage, a dairy shed, and a granary. The barn would have rotted long ago had not the Minnesota Historical Society donated funds to re-shingle the roof in the 1970s.

The MacDougall Farmhouse is a rare example of continuous architecture.

The MacDougall farmhouse is also unique to Minnesota. More commonly found in New England, the house, built in the late 1870s, is a fine example of continuous architecture, a plan that joins the house to a kitchen, a summer kitchen, and a woodshed. The purpose of this plan (individual units of which were constructed during a 30-year period) allowed the family to move from room to room without going outdoors during inclement weather. Unfortunately, the farmhouse is in very poor condition at this time.

Besides the house and the barn, several smaller outbuildings stand on the site today. These include a keystone corncrib, a chicken-coop, and a machine-shed - now flattened after falling victim to heavy snow accumulation. These structures surround a large open area that the MacDougalls used to exercise their team of roan Belgian horses, animals that weighed 4,200 pounds harnessed. The farm buildings form a rough circle around this open area: an unusual layout for the Minnesota rural landscape.

The land surrounding the MacDougall farm is particularly interesting because of its siting near the Mississippi River, the abundance of trees and wildlife, areas of natural meadowland, and the remains of cultivated fields from the days of large-scale farming. Standing within the circle of old buildings on a sunny summer day, I had a strong sense of early pioneer life on the Minnesota frontier.

The Warren/MacDougall site is an important part of the disappearing 19th-century rural landscape. Possible preservation efforts rest on recognizing the area as the home of a prominent historian and an immigrant family whose buildings, farm layout, and agricultural practices still form valuable insights into Central Minnesota's social history.

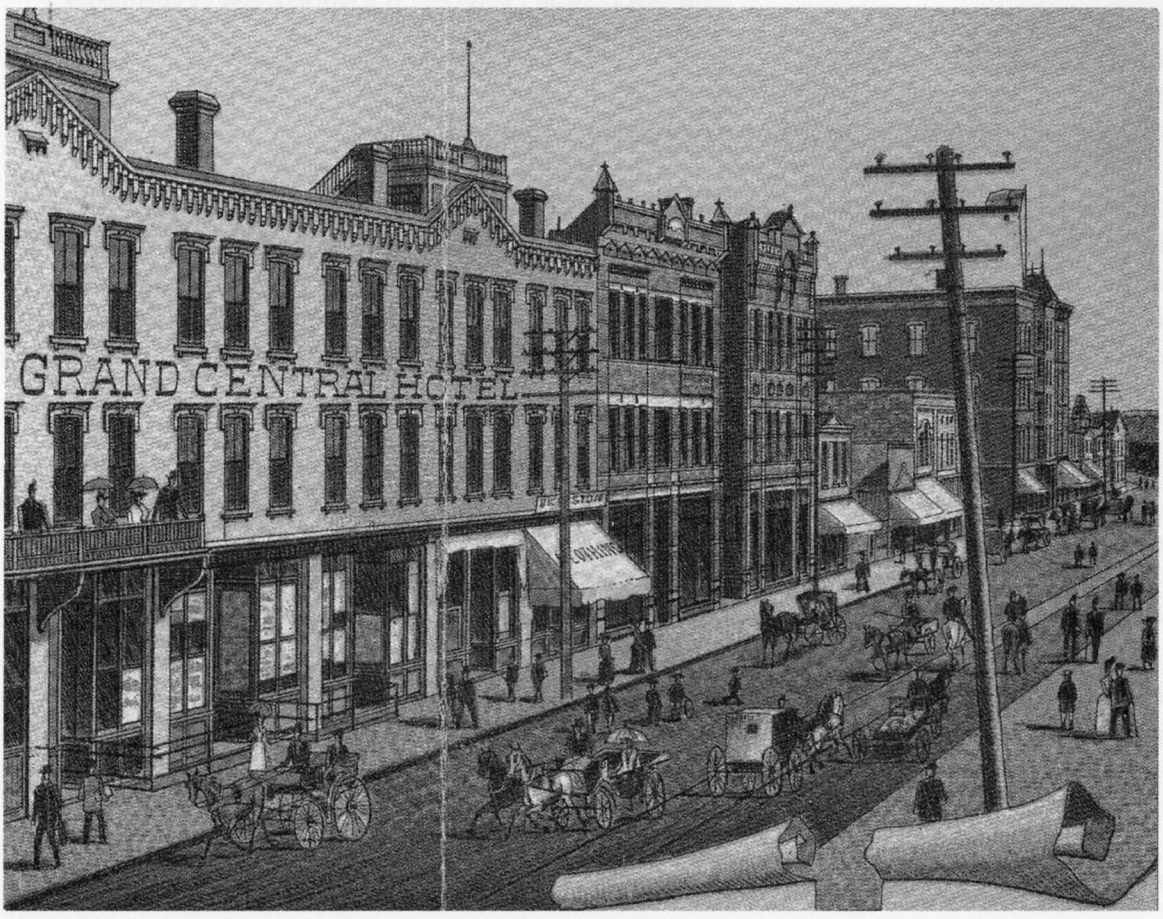
(Author's Note: In 2004, arsonists torched the MacDougall House and connected buildings.)

09/01/1998

Grand Central Hotel, St. Cloud, 1881

Buffalo Bill Cody and John Philip Sousa stayed there. So did itinerant actors and musicians who performed at the Davidson Opera House - a one-block carriage ride down Fifth Avenue. Built in 1881, the Grand Central Hotel at Fifth Avenue and St. Germain Street was demolished in 1972 to make room for the Radisson Hotel. The Radisson is the fourth hotel on that site.

In 1855, Anton Edelbrock established the Central House, a structure made of tamarack logs. Four years later, Josiah E. Hayward built a Greek Revival style building with a veranda. In 1881, after that hotel had outlasted its use, Hayward hired Allen E. Hussey to design a three-story, yellow-brick structure with sleeping rooms upstairs and stores downstairs on the Fifth Avenue side. The hotel also boasted an elegant dining room, electric call bells, an elevator, gas and electric lights, and a basement heating plant. In 1917, a water filtering plant was installed. "No one thought of drinking city water," the *Journal-Press* said.



An 1892 postcard view of the 1881 Grand Central Hotel.

Josiah Hayward bought the Central House and West Hotel in the late 1800s. He was born in Maine in 1826, and in 1856 he moved to Winnebago Prairie, Brockway Township, where he farmed. Married in 1848, Josiah and Mary Stinson Hayward raised eight children. While Josiah Hayward managed a lumberyard, his wife helped run the Grand Central. Later, a son and grandson operated the hotel. In 1928, a chain bought the business.

In 1885, the *Journal-Press* reported that G. F. Garner, the French chef at the Grand Central, had eloped with the pastry cook. According to the newspaper, Hayward had hired Garner in Minneapolis ("that paradise of naughty people") to take charge of the hotel's kitchen. In the middle of the night Garner, who was married, boarded a southbound train with Emma D. Swanson, the 20-year-old cook. The newspaper noted the couple had not been seen since.

For several years before it was razed, the Grand Central provided space for low-income men and transients sponsored by the Salvation Army and the Red Cross. By 1972, the hotel was in such poor condition that no plans were made for restoration.

St. Mary's Russian Orthodox Church, South Elmdale, 1897

For 100 years, an onion dome atop St. Mary's Russian Orthodox Church has pierced the sky above the village of South Elmdale in Morrison County. On a recent visit, I walked into St. Mary's musty-smelling sanctuary - a room stripped of its icons, and except for a dozen pews, hauntingly deserted.

Down a gravel road near the church, I found a well-tended cemetery, its earth carpeted with wild blue phlox and dandelions. Strolling through the grounds, I discovered the names of immigrants who built the homes and farms that dot the landscape of Two Rivers Township.

In this quiet place, names like Kwitchak, Kotzck, Plafcan, Voytilla and Habas weave a tale of the Russians, Czechs, and Ukrainians who left Europe to seek new lives in Central Minnesota. Many of these late-19th-century immigrants settled in Holding Township, Stearns County, and in Elmdale and Two Rivers Townships in Morrison County.

In the 1870s and 1880s, before a church was erected, members walked nine miles to North Prairie to worship in a Roman Catholic Church. In 1895, the community procured an Orthodox priest from Minneapolis who volunteered to serve Mass in local homes. In 1897, the Russian Orthodox congregation erected a church in South Elmdale.

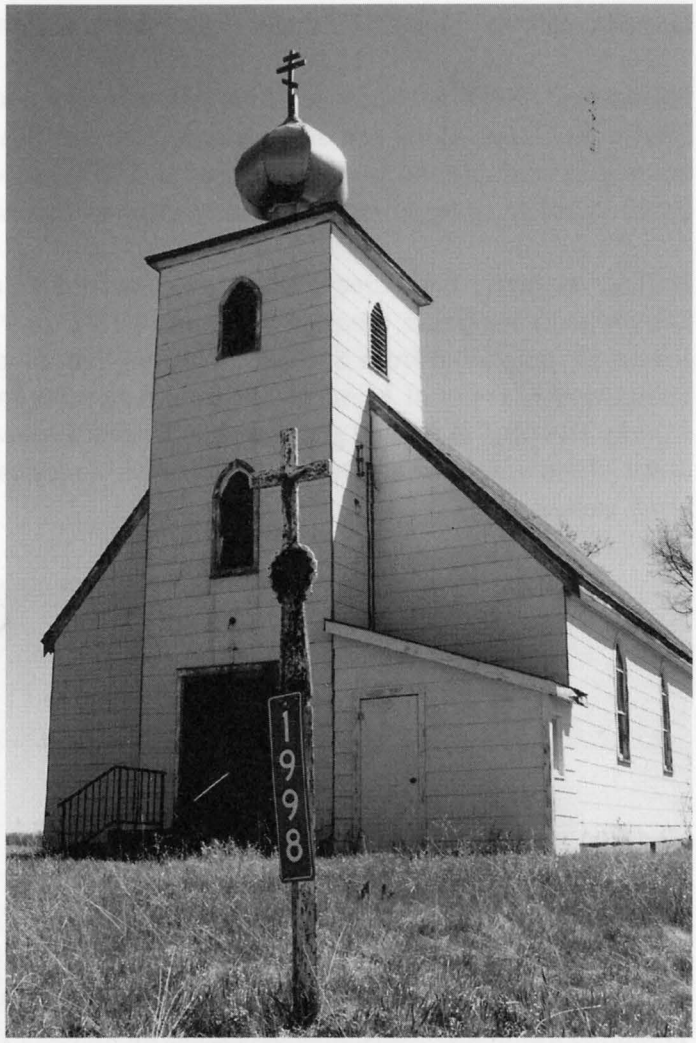
The building that stands on the same site today was built in 1947 This later structure, with its bell tower, stainless-steel onion dome and clear-glass Gothic windows, is a larger version of the original church. At the turn of the century, the congregation had to remain standing during a lengthy chanted Mass. Only pregnant women and elderly members were allowed to sit. Following acceptance of a more liberal liturgy, the men of the church built the pine pews seen today.

Until about a year ago, the sanctuary contained a beautiful array of artifacts, including a glass chandelier that, according to tradition, was a gift from the Czar. Except for a screen (called an iconostatis) from which icons were hung, these appointments were removed by the Minneapolis Orthodox Church for safekeeping.

Between 1870 and 1970, about 500,000 East Slavic people, including Russians, Rusins, Ruthenians, and Ukrainians, came to the United States. Some 5,000 to 10,000 settled in Minnesota, largely in the Twin Cities. By 1906, Minnesota had three Russian Orthodox churches: the church in Morrison County, St. Mary's in Minneapolis, and St. Nicholas in Kittson County. The Minneapolis congregation accounted for 866 of the total 964 members.

Kate Habas Chuba, 89, Upsala, and a former member of the Elmdale church, said the Slavic

community suffered when younger people left the area to work in the Twin Cities. Walter Koczur, 85, still lives in the South Elmdale farmhouse his father built in 1895. Sitting in his kitchen, Walter told me that his parents, Mike and Mary, and their 12 children emigrated from Czechoslovakia to Pittsburgh where Mike found work in the iron mills. When the Koczurs learned that land in Morrison County was available at $4 an acre and that other Slavic people had settled there, the family made a permanent move west.



St. Mary's Russian Orthodox Church as it appeared in 2000.

Koczur has fond memories of St. Mary's Russian Church. Baptized and confirmed in the original church, he and three other men constructed the onion dome at the time the second building was erected. Walter says the building soon will be sold and the money used to maintain the cemetery.

The Central Minnesota landscape contains vacant church buildings, rural schools, and township halls. The public memory of its historic past will be enhanced if caretakers preserve a few of these treasured relics.

(Author's Note: The onion dome was recently moved to the cemetery grounds. The church has been converted into a private residence.)

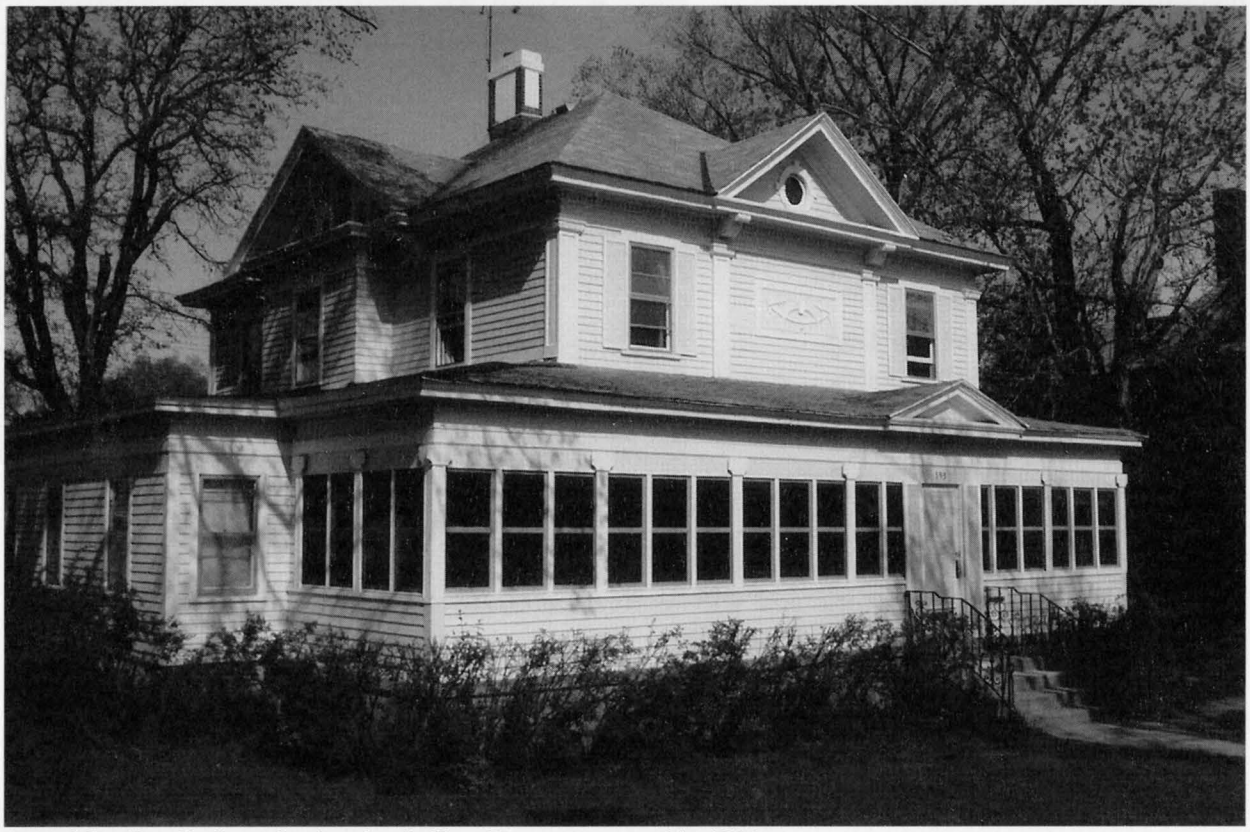
05/22/2000

Saffron House, St. Cloud, 1898

It is a house people still talk about. Although Saffron House was razed in 1981, its memory stirs emotions for those who still remember it today. Its loss fostered a citizens' movement that helped create St. Cloud's Heritage Preservation Commission in 1990.

Nicknamed "Saffron" because of its yellow wooden siding, the house at 395 Fifth Avenue South, St. Cloud, stood across the street from the "Castle." Built in 1898, its hipped roof, dormers, and a wrap-around porch (enclosed in 1937) made it an elegant Victorian landmark. During its 90-year life span, several prominent citizens owned the house.

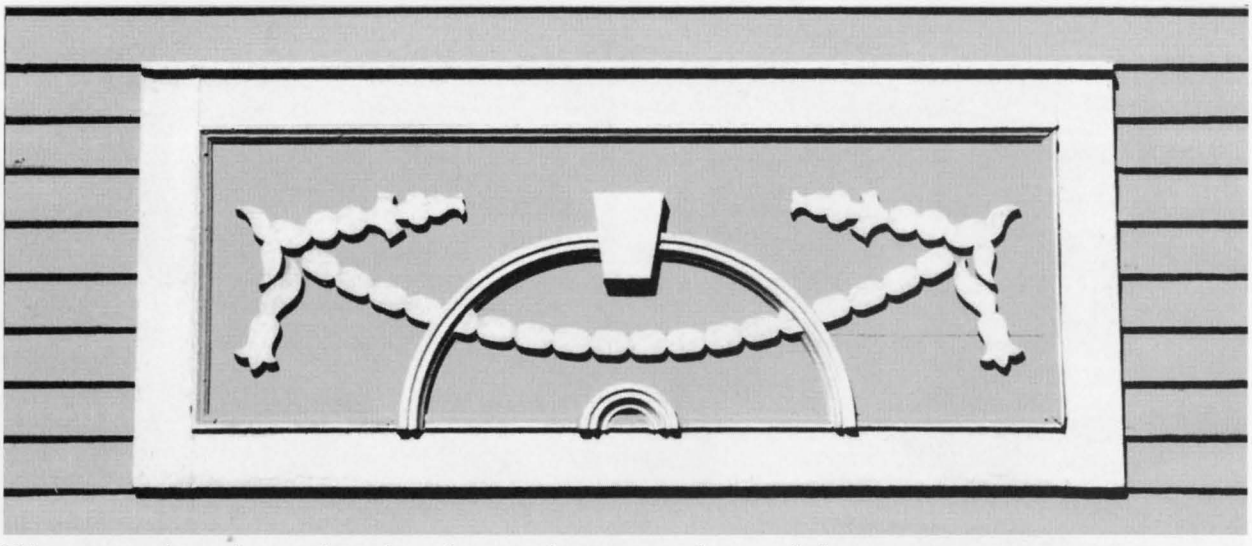
Builder Ambrose Wahl erected the house for John C. and Mittie Adamson Boehm. A well-known local physician, Boehm was born in 1860 in Vienna and came to America when he was seven. He graduated from St. Cloud Normal School, and in 1893, received his medical degree from the University of Minnesota. Mittie Adamson entered nursing school at St. Paul City and County Hospital at 16 and graduated as its first trained nurse. The Boehms met at the hospital during John's internship. During the Spanish-American War, Mittie treated troops in Florida's army camps.



One of St. Cloud's finest landmarks, Saffron House was razed in 1981.

After his wife's death in 1915, Boehm sold the house to Willard S. and Grace Gardner Freeman. The Freemans lived in Saffron House for two years. Willard Freeman was a high school coach, a sheep rancher, a farmer, and a grocer. In 1917 he sold the house to Fred Schilplin, one of St. Cloud's best-known citizens. Fred Schilplin was born in 1868 in St. Joseph Township. When Schilplin was 16, his parents died. He became a $2.50-a-week apprentice at the *St. Cloud Daily Times*, a job that launched his 62-year career in journalism. From 1887 to his death in 1949, Schilplin worked his way up from apprentice to reporter, city editor, and finally, owner-publisher. He also served as a Stearns County sheriff, a postmaster, and a New Deal administrator during the Great Depression.

Fred Schilplin married Maude Comfort Colgrove in 1899. Educated at the University of Minnesota, Maude was a feature writer at the *St. Cloud Daily Times*. She was widely known in Minnesota for writing a poetry column, the first of its kind in the state. After her death, Schilplin sold Saffron House to Thomas F. and Marianne Hunstiger who occupied the house from 1959 to 1967 From 1967 to 1979, the Alpha Phi sorority used the house. From 1982 to 1988, the house served as women's student housing. During summer 1988, a private individual and the St. Cloud Housing and Redevelopment Authority offered to buy and move the house. On the day the bids arrived, the owner began dismantling the structure. That fall, an ugly, boxy apartment house called "Saffron Suites" replaced one of St. Cloud's cherished landmarks.



This ornamental wooden panel was hung between the two second-story windows.

01/14/2006

Carnegie Library, St. Cloud, 1902

As a young girl, Rosie Moran remembers warming her mittens on the radiators in St. Cloud's 1902 Carnegie Library. The landmark building at Fifth Avenue and Highway 23 was razed in 1981 Wells Fargo's ATM machine stands there today.

The St. Cloud Library was made possible through a $25,000 gift from Andrew Carnegie, the steel tycoon and philanthropist, who between 1881 and the mid-1920s donated money to 2,509 communities to build libraries around the globe. In the United States alone, 1,691 libraries were erected by towns willing to provide a building lot and raise taxes for annual maintenance. In Minnesota, 63 Carnegie libraries were erected between 1899 and 1917 At last count, 13, including St. Cloud's library, have been destroyed.

From its beginnings, St. Cloud citizens have supported the idea of an enlightened democracy, buttressed by a free library system. The first local library was formed as early as 1857 when the town still was emerging from a cluster of three tiny villages. Eight years later, the first public library association was created, and space for books was found in Silas Marlatt's drugstore. Between 1865 and 1901, books were housed at different times in private homes, the city council

The handsome 1902 Beaux-Arts Carnegie Library was torn down in 1981.

chambers, the telegraph office, in rooms above a general store, and in rooms at the West Hotel. In 1880, the newly-organized Ladies Reading Room Society started raising money to build a library.

In the winter of 1901, the West Hotel burned to the ground. Although most of the books were saved, authorities recognized the time had come to build a permanent facility. A week after the fire, responding to local letters, Andrew Carnegie agreed to fund a new library, and with approval from the city council and a $2,000 gift from James J Hill, the Ladies Reading Room Society bought a lot for a new library.

Designed in Beaux-Arts style, a classical mode influenced by Chicago's World's Fair of 1892-93, the story-and-a-half structure was built of granite and Roman mottled-brick with granite and terra cotta trim. Architects were Miller & Patton, a Chicago architectural firm.

Visitors entered through a door framed by paired columns of polished granite. These columns now are stored at the Stearns History Museum. (The columns standing in the Museum's parking lot were salvaged from the 1913 Zapp Bank on St. Germain.) The Reading Room Society women conducted a rummage sale to fund the four smaller columns that stood in the library's auditorium. (These columns now stand on the east side of Courthouse Square in downtown St. Cloud.) Two elegant oak and polished granite fireplaces from the library are mounted in the Stearns History Museum.

Fandel's Department Store, St. Cloud, 1914

Sharon Rohling-Hill remembers in the 1950s walking up the creaking steps at Fandel's Department Store to visit her grandmother, Beata Rohling, who worked as a seamstress at the store.

Mike Fandel, grandson of the store's founder, recalls sweeping floors at Fandel's at 7:00 a.m. when he was a child in the late 1930s and early 40s. His father, Victor, paid him five cents an hour - a sum that Mike later learned his dad had taken from his own paycheck. Mike later drove a delivery truck and delivered goods throughout the city. He made as many as 100 stops in a two-hour period.

The handsome architectural landmark that housed Fandel's store graced St. Germain Street from 1914 until its demolition in 1985. St. Cloud Architect Rolland C. Buckley was in his prime when he designed the $50,000, three-story, multicolored brick and red-granite commercial block on the corner of Sixth Street and St. Germain, where Herberger's Department Store stands

An early view of Fandel's shows a three-story, commercial-style building. The structure was razed in 1985.
(Photo courtesy of Stearns History Museum)

today. Buckley furnished the first and second floors in birch mahogany and painted the walls ivory white.

An indirect lighting system made the store "almost as light by night as by day," according to a 1914 *St. Cloud Journal-Press* story. The newspaper said that the self-service elevator allowed patrons to "go from one floor to another simply by pressing a button." On the first floor an "elevated gallery" held offices, bookkeepers' desks, and a station for customers' money that arrived by way of a cable system.

Buckley was educated in Chicago and worked with several firms there before moving to St. Cloud in 1912. Besides Fandel's, Buckley designed the Elks Building, Zapp Bank, and Starland Theatre in 1913; the Caughren Theatre, Sauk Centre, 1914; and the Daniel Building in 1915. (The Elks and Daniel buildings remain downtown landmarks.)

Frank Fandel, the store's founder, epitomized the American Dream. When Fandel was 12, he and his parents left Luxemborg and in 1871 arrived in St. Paul. A precocious youth, Fandel knew six languages. For several years he worked as a waiter in the St. Paul Hotel (where he once served George Custer) before deciding to head west to Montana to open a general store. Worn out by travel, Fandel left the wagon train in St. Cloud where he decided to seek his fortune.

In 1882, Fandel and Michael Nugent formed the Empire Store. When the store opened at 7:00 a.m., Frank Fandel personally greeted customers, some of whom brought butter and eggs to barter for the store's products. Customers often opened charge accounts in spring and waited until harvest time to pay them. In 1895, when Fandel bought out his partner, the store became Frank Fandel's and later just Fandel's.

Frank and his wife, Katherine Schaefer of Albany, had five children. Katherine died in 1896 and in 1900 Frank married Margaret Marshall from Shakopee, Minnesota. Frank Fandel died in 1944. Fandel's was sold to Herberger's Department Store in 1985.

Colbert House, St. Cloud, 1923

Colbert House is a piece of sunny, Southern California architecture rising from the frozen landscape of St. Cloud. If you wish to see this landmark, you had better do it soon because it has a date with the bulldozer. Colbert House stands two doors south of Newman Center at 412 First Avenue South, a site adjacent to the St. Cloud State University campus. Judson and Stella Wilson built the California bungalow in 1923 for $15,000.

Colbert House is an architectural landmark because California bungalows rarely are found in Central Minnesota. The style originates from the work of two architect brothers, Charles Sumner Greene and Henry Mather Greene, whose houses are better known in Southern California. Greene & Greene practiced in Pasadena from 1893-1931 The architects built dozens of California Bungalows, a style that gradually spread east. Colbert House is one of a handful of local structures - including one or two in Pantown - that carry the label California bungalow.

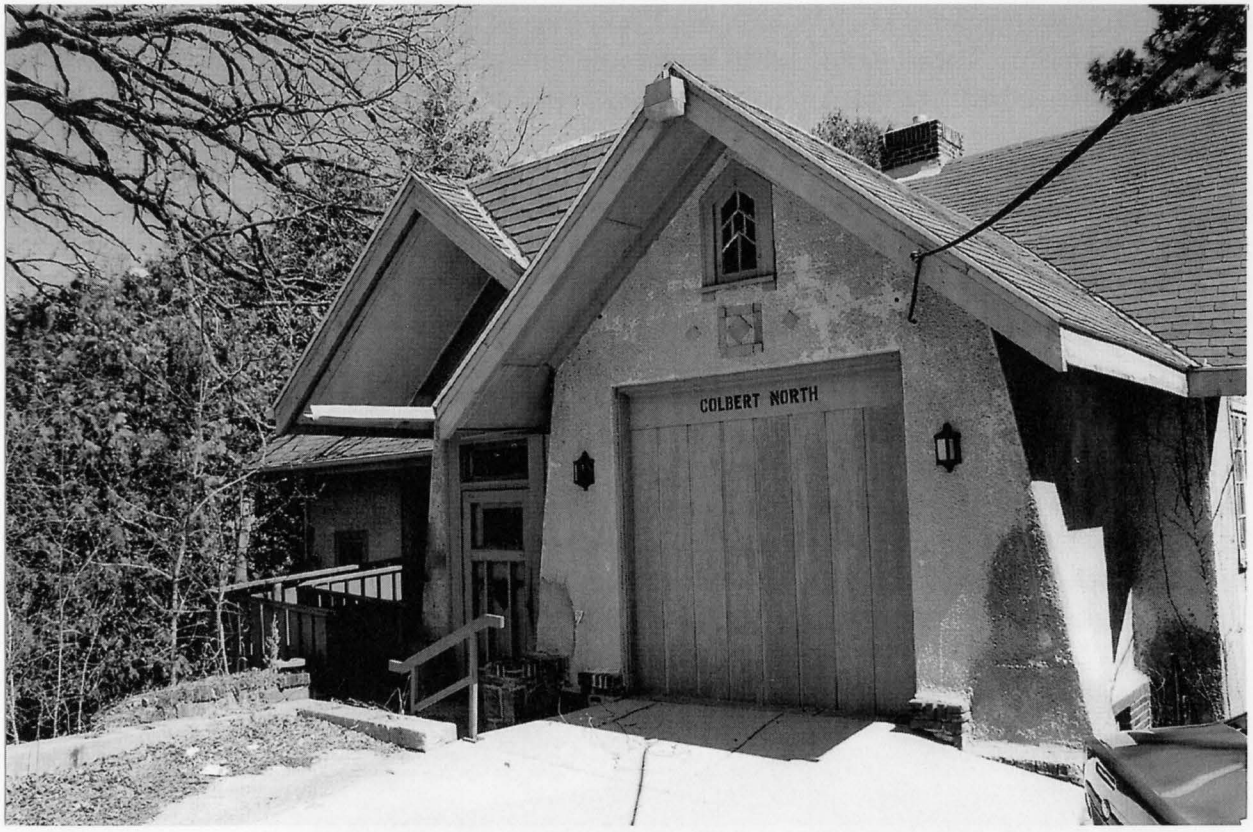
Houses designed by the Greene brothers have these characteristics:

- Influence of Japanese and Swiss sources
- A love of nature and natural materials
- Broad, sloping roof lines
- Stained board-and-batten siding
- Incorporation of the house within a garden site

Whoever designed Colbert House (the architect is unknown) made use of many of these characteristics, but created his or her own interpretation of the bungalow style. Besides the Greene-inspired overhanging eaves on the front facade, features unique to the Colbert House include a wood-framed front door with a leaded window above it and unusual, pyramid-shaped windows. From the street, Colbert House appears to be a one-story structure. From the rear, however, the house rises to two stories with a pagoda-shaped bay. A magnificent Mississippi River vista unfolds outside the house's back door.

Many people have lived in the Colbert House. Judson Wilson, owner of a ladies' ready-to-wear store, lived in the bungalow for two years. In 1925, William M. and Katherine T. Fisher bought the home. From 1929-1947, banker Fred H. Stangl, and his wife, Vera, occupied the bungalow. Albert R. Strobel lived in the house from 1947-1963. In 1963, R. Brigham and Floreine Colbert bought it. When the state purchased the house in 1986, St. Cloud State University used it for office space.

According to Steve Ludwig, St. Cloud State University Vice President of Administrative Affairs, the house will be demolished because it is no longer functional for institutional use. The good news is that removal of this house and its neighbor - Colbert House South - will provide a terminus for the river-trail that winds along the Mississippi bank behind the campus.



The Colbert House is indicative of the California Bungelow style. The style is uncommon in the Midwest. Both Colbert Houses were razed in 2006.

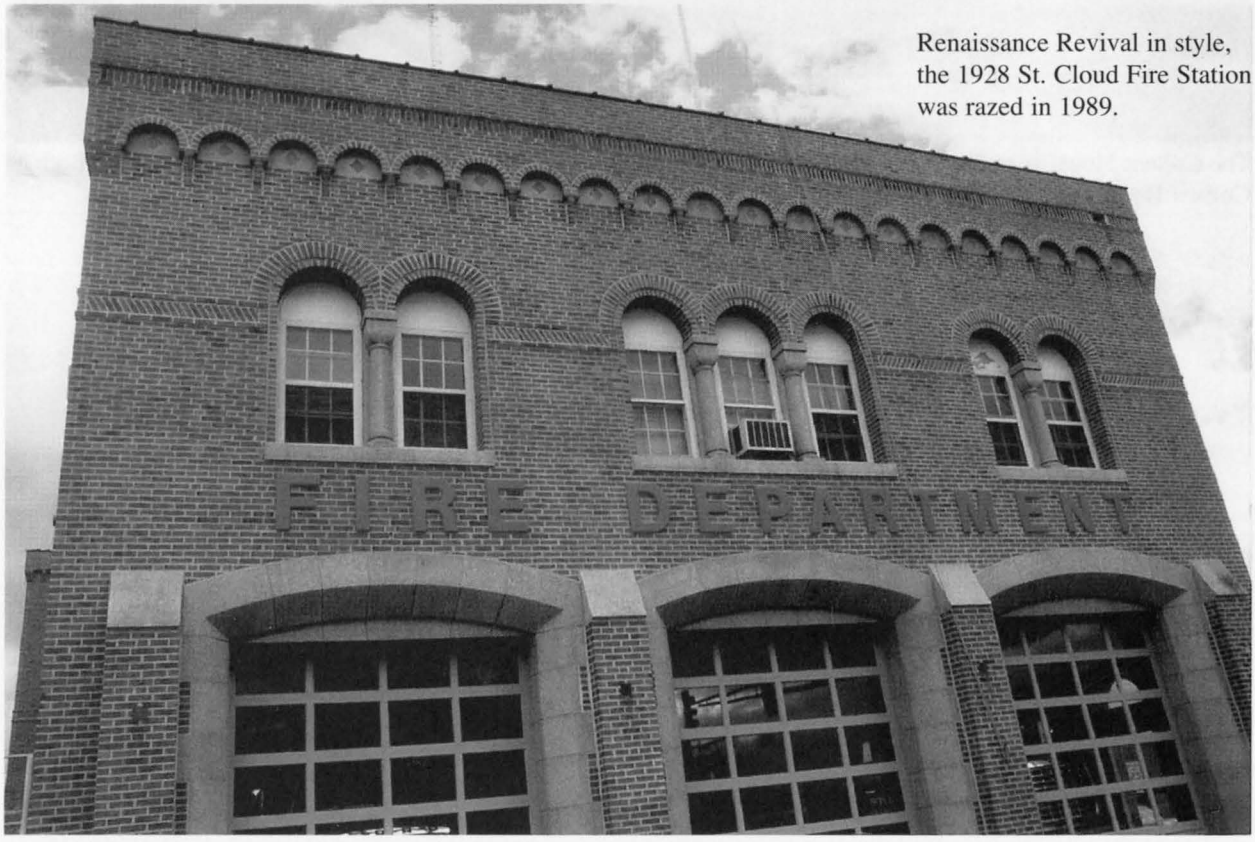
05/07/2005

Fire Station, St. Cloud, 1928

When it was completed in 1928, architect Louis Pinault told the *St. Cloud Daily Times* his St. Cloud Fire Station would fulfill its purpose for eight or ten years. Pinault, who died in 1981, would have been surprised to learn his work lasted 60 years.

Until it was razed in 1989, the fire station stood at 102 Seventh Avenue North in downtown St. Cloud. Designed in Renaissance Revival style, the $100,000 structure was built on the site of a hay market. Unlike most downtown buildings whose facades are false fronts, the fire station was a freestanding form, richly detailed on three sides. Built of brick trimmed in gray-granite, the building might have graced a 16th-century Italian street corner.

Born in St. Joseph in 1889, Pinault graduated from high school in St. Cloud in 1909. He competed his degree in architecture at the University of Illinois in 1914. He formed a partnership in St. Cloud with his former professor, Frederick L. Mann. When the United States entered World War I, Pinault enlisted in the Army where he served as an officer in the Corps of Engineers. When he was discharged, he enrolled in the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Paris, the world's premier school of architecture. From 1923-1963 Pinault practiced alone until forming a partnership with Peter L. Truszinski. Pinault retired at age 83 in 1972.



Renaissance Revival in style, the 1928 St. Cloud Fire Station was razed in 1989.

Pinault's projects show his talent as a designer in a number of different styles and building types. His local works include the Chancery (1917), the Jail and Armory (1921-22), and the Granite Exchange (1928-29). In 1926 he designed the Claude Lewis House (now St. Cloud State University's Alumni House) and in 1932 the Daniel Funeral Home (now Taste of Seattle). During the 1930s, Pinault built Wilson Elementary School, Jefferson Elementary, and Melrose High School.

By the 1980s, Pinault's fire station was no longer useable. Falling plaster from the basement ceiling, a floor that was too weak to support modern fire engines, and complaints from firefighters of headaches from exhaust fumes were among the 36 cited code violations. When the new Ninth Avenue fire station was completed in January 1989, authorities discussed the fate of its 60-year-old predecessor. Preservationists argued to save the station and find an alternate use. The Winkelman Building Corporation proposed using the structure for office space. Others wanted the building for a restaurant or as a space for a farmers market.

As is often the case of an outmoded landmark, the station was torn down and replaced with a 95-stall parking lot.

Grace Episcopal Church, Royalton, 1887

"I feel like I've lost a member of my own family," Donna Freitag told me. Donna and her husband, Bob, are long-time members of Grace Episcopal Church, Royalton, Minnesota, whose 12-member congregation gathered for the last time in November. Donna, Bob, and I recently sat around the Freitag's dining room table sorting through scrapbooks, photographs, and other memorabilia that record the rich history of the Royalton church.

The tiny wooden structure that housed Grace Episcopal stands on Birch Street, one block east of Main Street in Royalton. Because of dwindling membership and the need for major repairs, the1887 church and the nearby 1910 guildhall stand vacant today. No decision has been made about its future.

Because I've been a long-time admirer of the church building, I recently drove Donna Freitag to Royalton to tour the two buildings. When Donna unlocked the traditional red-painted front door, we found the sanctuary at least 20 degrees colder than the temperature outside. Donna pointed out the ornate iron floor grille that until last November had provided heat from the furnace below. Before the service on chilly winter mornings it was a common practice for parishioners to huddle around the grille to gather warmth. As we walked through the sanctuary, Donna was visibly moved. "There's a lot of life in this little church," she said. "I lost a part of myself during the last service."

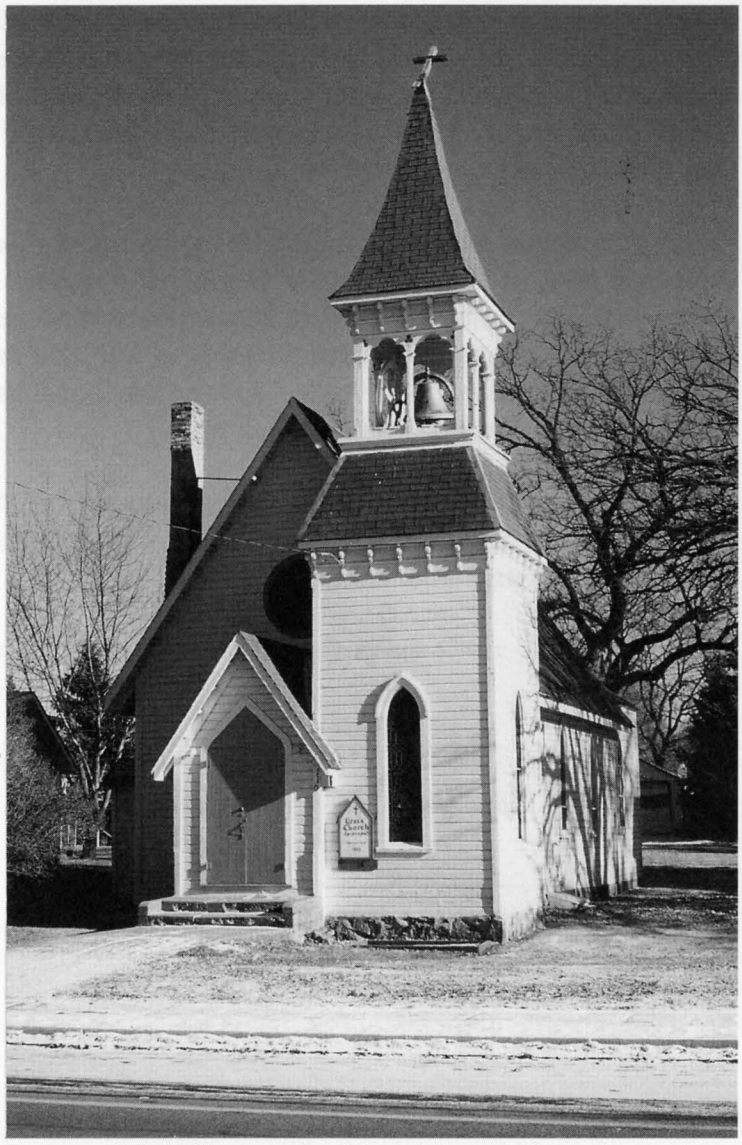
In a phone interview with the Rev. Patricia Gillespie, an Episcopalian rector who serves a number of Central Minnesota congregations, I was told the Royalton closing is "sad because of its deep historical roots and the stories that will be lost." Gillespie cited several reasons it is difficult for small congregations to survive, including the need for new members, the inability of smaller churches to afford a full-time minister, and the ordeal of having to drive long distances to attend services in rural areas.

The Episcopal denomination has produced some of the best church architecture in the United States. Episcopalian settlers across America built small, well-designed wood, brick, and stone structures following in the tradition of English ecclesiastical architecture. Lack of durability has reduced the number of wooden churches in America everywhere, a fact that makes the Royalton church a choice candidate for preservation and possible future use.

Victorian Gothic in style, the central bay features a steeply-pitched roof, lancet windows, and wooden siding. The side tower contains a bracketed mansard roof and an ornate belfry with bell intact. Both sections stand on a stone foundation. The exterior is a fine example of a rural carpenter's expert knowledge of the elements of ecclesiastical architecture.

Highly-crafted leaded windows appear in the nave and in the tower. Etched into each window are the names of early benefactors - Wilson, Lonsdale, Lakin, and Lambert. The window

marked "Sunshine Guild," Donna said, refers to an early women's youth group. Two stained glass windows recently were removed and generously donated to Sauk Centre's Good Samaritan church after a wall collapsed in that building. Hand-carved crossbeams adorn the nave's ceiling. Also hand-crafted are the altar, lectern, and baptismal font. At the time of the closing, the altar was removed and carried back in to symbolize the Episcopalian tradition of deconsecration.



Because of dwindling membership and the need for major repairs, Grace Episcopal Church, built around 1887, stands vacant.

Grace Episcopal's history stretches back into the mid-19th century. As early as 1851, Episcopal missionaries were serving the Royalton area. At the time, the village was a mere resting place on the Government Road, the trail that ran along the east side of the Mississippi.

Although early church records were destroyed in an 1866 fire, it is known that in 1855 a Bishop Jackson Kemper held services in Platte River, Royalton's original name. From 1855 to 1884, traveling Episcopal priests visited parishioners' homes where they administered to the struggling congregation. In 1884, the church was rejuvenated when a St. Cloud clergyman, C.A. Cummings, took over the pulpit. Records describe Cummings as "small in stature, but a very Goliath in church work, and from the time of his coming [there ensued] new life and activity in the church."

In 1887, a lot was donated for a church building and a fair held at the Royalton skating rink to raise money to erect it. A 25-cent-per-person oyster dinner raised $90 toward the project. If an architect was involved, no name appears in the records. It is known that carpenters Stager and Glover, Sauk Rapids, built the superstructure. Because of a surveyor's mistake, the building was later moved to its present site.

Royalton was a progressive community by the century's end. In the booster language of the day, a Chicago railroad journal, *Nichols' Headlight*, described the town in 1899 as "a hustling, wide-awake village." The article cited such progressive features as access to the rich surrounding farmland, a 50-employee sawmill, and a flour mill that the writer said made the village "one of the best wheat markets in the state." Among the four illustrations of Royalton churches is one showing Grace Episcopal in its present form.

In her history of Grace Episcopal, Donna Freitag wrote: "I came to visit Grace Church one Sunday about nine years ago and never left. I felt something special here that day. Something I had never felt in any other church."

(Author's Note: The church and the parish house today are used as rental units.)

01/24/2000

A Personal Story
Lake Koronis Honeymoon, 1910

The happy fisherman in these photographs died in January 1933, three months before I was born. My father's death left my mother with four children, ranging in age from 14 to 20, and a fifth child on the way. No one at that time believed that a 46-year-old woman could become pregnant, a rare event then, if not today. In 1905-06, my mother studied at the University of Minnesota's Agricultural School where she had hoped to study architecture, but instead came home at year's end to marry her high school sweetheart. In 1919, my parents built a Craftsman-style house for their children; the house where Mother and I lived alone until I left home for college. This house and my grandparents' Victorian home that stood next door shaped my early appreciation for architecture.

Lake Koronis Honeymoon, 1910

For 50 years the album lay on our family's coffee table, its black pages filled with photographs that captured scenes from my parents' Lake Koronis, Stearns County, honeymoon.

After their marriage ceremony August 3, 1910, in Pipestone, Minnesota, Will and Mabelle Brown Morgan boarded the midnight train for Paynesville. For one month, the newlyweds swam, fished, and entertained friends from home at Horton's Resort on Lake Koronis.

Images from time-long-past peek out from the album today· My dad in a straw hat, bow tie, and a long-sleeved white shirt, holding a string of fish. Mother in modest Victorian attire - long black socks and a body-covering swimming suit. My parents' friends fishing in high-collared, starched blouses and broad-brimmed hats.

Although I have always known the name of the lake where my parents honeymooned, I have never known the place they stayed. At the Stearns History Museum, I learned that Horton's is the earliest, still-standing Lake Koronis resort. Now called Stone Gate Lodge, Horton's Resort was established about 1904.

On a recent July afternoon my wife, Judy, and I drove out to Lake Koronis - a map, my photographs, and a picnic in hand. There we learned that the fourth owners of Horton's Resort, Don and Gloria Wiese, were on that day marking their 30th anniversary as proprietors of Stone Gate Lodge.

When I showed Gloria the 1910 photograph of my dad standing by a two-story cabin, she identified it as one of the resort's reconverted structures - one still in use. From the cottage door I could look out at the lake and its three islands, a scene unchanged from my parents' day.

The more I learned about Lake Koronis and its legends the more I appreciated my parents' brief journey there. Author Lucille Horton, daughter of the resort's founder, Gilbert L. Horton, wrote that the resort's site was once called Eagle Bend, named for the bald eagles' nests that nestled in the surrounding tall cedar trees. The lake itself was originally called Cedar Lake. According to a *St. Cloud Daily Times* article in 1930, thousands of cedars once lined the lakeshore.

"Many cedar fences in the vicinity of Paynesville, erected 50 years ago, are still in excellent condition and are the last vestiges of this crop of red cedar, once one of the best in the state," the writer said.

The origin of the word "Koronis" is somewhat of a mystery. According to a popular legend, a young Indian woman named Koronis, disappointed in love, threw herself off a cliff on First Island. A more likely source is "korone," Greek for crown - a reference to the three islands that "crown" the lake. The islands hold rather uninspiring names - First, Second, and Third Islands.

According to Lucille Horton, Horton's Resort began as a fishing camp with a two-story house her father built of native timber. Through the years, later owners built eleven cottages and three overnight cabins on the site. At the time my parents stayed at the resort, cottage interiors were unfinished and lacked running water and indoor toilets. Horton wrote that later improvements included indoor plumbing, perhaps the earliest amenity for any Minnesota resort. Cottages once rented for $25 to $50 a week, or $150 to $200 a month, Horton said.

As a child, I spent hours poring over the pictures in the little black album. Since my mother and I never sat down to label the photographs, most of the people's names are lost forever. Although nameless, the images still evoke the mood of a journey undertaken 94 years ago this week.

Will Morgan and two visiting friends fish on Lake Koronis in 1910.

The author's mother, Mabelle Morgan, poses near Lake Koronis in August 1910, while his father, Will, boats. The Morgans spent their honeymoon on the lake south of Paynesville.

08/07/2004

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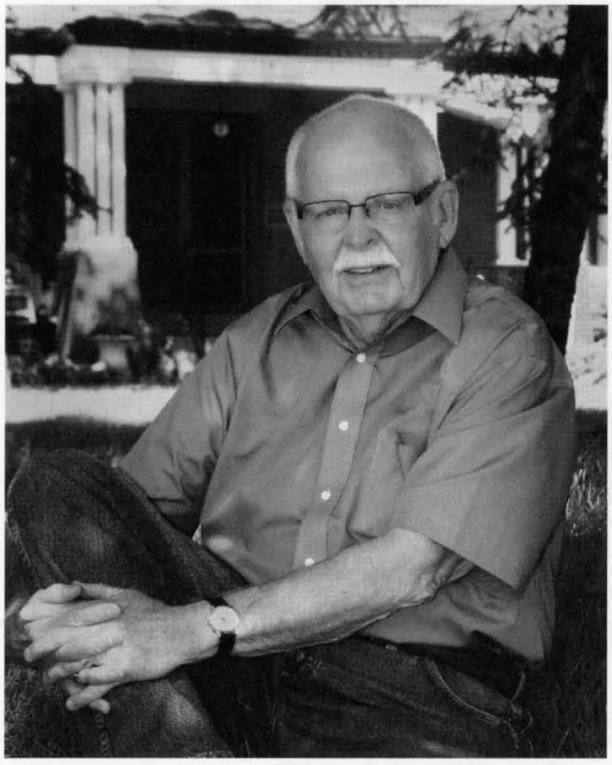
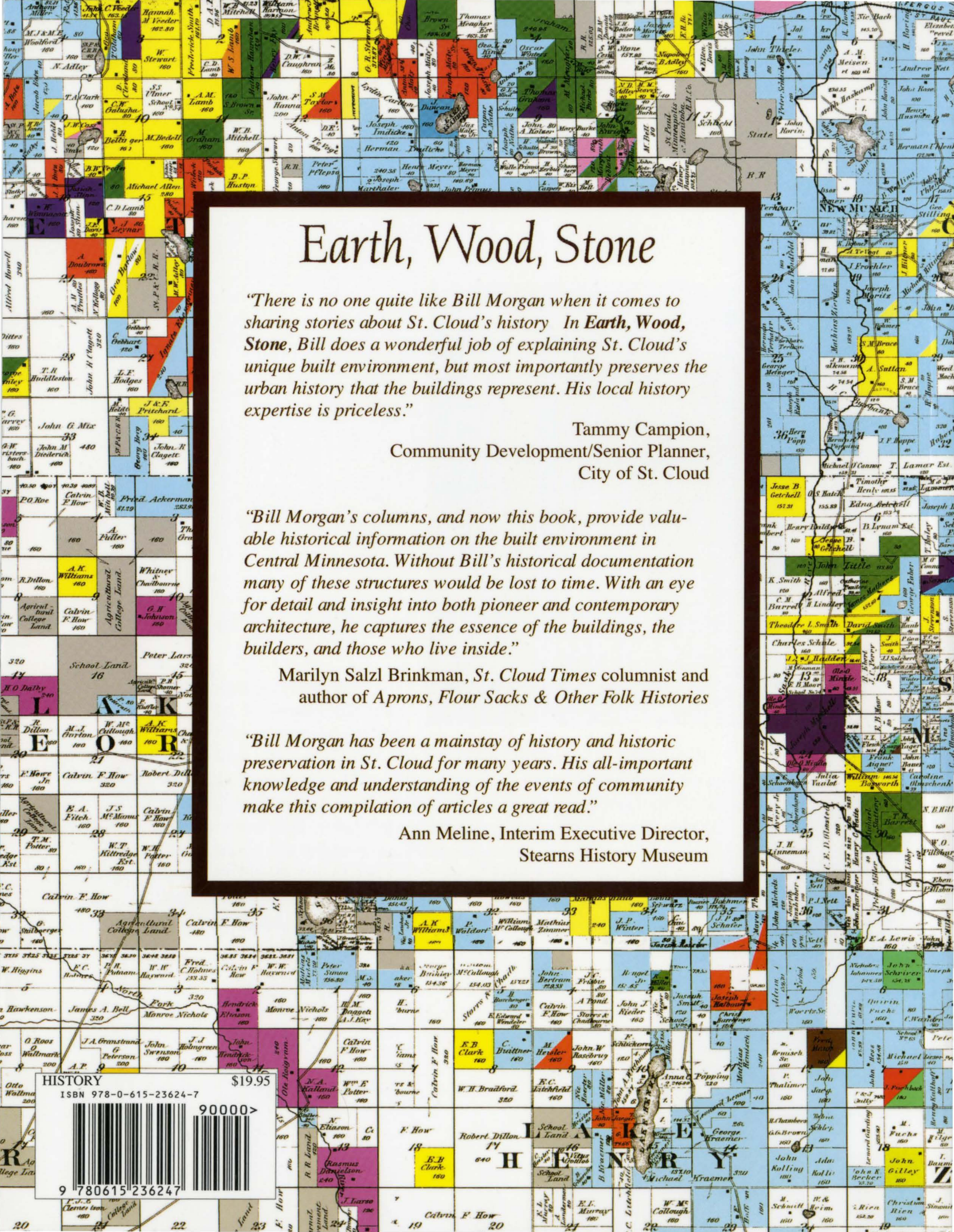


Photo by Denise Gagner, Studio "D" St. Cloud, MN.

About the Author

Bill Morgan was born in Pipestone, Minnesota. He holds a B.A. from Macalester College, and an M.A. and a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota. Bill taught American Studies at St. Cloud State University from 1978 to 2000. He returned to SCSU in 2001, and has taught every year since as an adjunct. Bill is co-author of *Light From the Hearth. Central Minnesota Pioneers & Architecture*, St. Cloud, Minn.. North Star Press, 1982, and author of *Salt Lantern. Traces of an American Family*, Iowa City· University of Iowa Press, 1997 Bill and his wife, Judy, live in Sartell, Minnesota. He continues to write a monthly column for the *St. Cloud Times*.



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