

RAMSEY COUNTY
History

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Chamber and Community

The Midway and Its Colorful History—Page 4



University and Snelling Avenues around 1916. Streetcars were in their heyday and their barns occupied the entire corner. See article beginning on page 4. Minnesota Historical Society photo.

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A Message from the Editorial Board

This issue of *Ramsey County History* focuses exclusively on the Midway area of St. Paul. We have done this because the Midway Chamber of Commerce is celebrating its seventy-fifth anniversary in October. As you will find in reading this issue, the story of the Midway area is rich and varied, ranging from the early days of settlement and statehood to the present period of industrial, commercial and residential vitality. The Editorial Board thanks the Midway Chamber of Commerce for its help in producing this issue of our magazine and congratulates the Chamber on its many contributions to the Midway area over the past seventy-five years.

John M. Lindley,
chairman, Editorial Board

Spill-overs: The Midway and the 'Farm' Campus

The western neighborhoods of St. Paul's Midway area were once dotted with pioneer farmsteads, plowed fields and pastures with grazing livestock. The Ramsey County Historical Society's Gibbs Farm Museum at Cleveland and Larpenteur Avenues in Falcon Heights is one reminder of those early days.

The Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 helped establish colleges of agriculture and mechanic arts throughout the nation. Minnesota would have many false starts before its own School of Agriculture would become reality. The School of Agriculture opened its doors in the Fall of 1888. Since then, University faculty and staff have had a long relationship with the Midway Club, now the Midway Chamber of Commerce, and with many of the Midway's agri-businesses and industries. For several years the club had a standing Agricultural Committee, which involved many faculty members, including professors Andrew Boss, A. J. McGuire and Thomas H. Canfield.

Andrew Boss's sons also had a long history of involvements with the Chamber. Kenneth Boss served as club president in 1957-1958, and Wallace Boss also was active.

Andrew Boss headed the University's Agricultural Experiment Station. He set up one of the first University meat departments in the nation. The current department building bears his name. The Midway area's three meat packing companies worked closely with the University. Professors Woodrow Aunan and Richard Eply and their students often used Superior Packing Company as practice grounds for the beef carcass judging teams.

Andrew Boss also established the St. Anthony Park Bank just a few years before the Midway Club was formed. His grandson, W. Andrew Boss, is now bank president.

William Boss was head of the University's Department of Agricultural Engineering. He established the Specialty Manufacturing Company at University and Fairview Avenues. A. J.



The Horse and Beef barn at the University of Minnesota's St. Paul campus in 1905. Photo from the St. Paul campus archives.

McGuire, University Extension dairy specialist, helped organize Land O'Lakes Creamery in the 1920s. Land O'Lakes had an office at University and Raymond Avenues in the early 1920s, and used Central Warehouse for storage.

University professors also worked closely with several other Midway industries, including the Northwest Co-op Mills on Fairview Avenue and the Twin Cities Milk Producers Association (TCMPA), which had its offices on Territorial Road. Ralph Wayne, Williams Combs, Sam Coulter and other dairy department faculty members were active with TCMPA. Some of the milk served with Midway family breakfasts came from the University's dairy herd. Milk was sold to the Midway Creamery Company on Como Avenue until about the 1930s.

Many University professors served as judges and superintendents for the Minnesota State Fair, which has been a Midway fixture since 1885. Harold Arne-man, Henry Zavoral, Clinton Turnquist, Leonard Harkness, Gerald McKay, Thomas Canfield and Al Harvey are just a few of the University faculty and staff who worked with the fair.

One State Fair family with strong ties to the Midway Chamber is the Frost family. Harry Frost served as president

from 1936 to 1938. He went to work for the State Fair in 1924, overseeing the space rentals department. Prior to that, he was secretary-treasurer of the Curtis Northwest Airport at Snelling and Larpenteur. His son, Gale Frost, still remembers the time his father had to supervise the unloading of ninety Curtis Jenny airplanes at the Minnesota Transfer Railway yards. The planes then had to be trucked along neighborhood streets to the airport.

Harry Frost also managed the old Hippodrome ice rink and arena where the internationally famous Ice Follies got its start in 1926. The Hippodrome had yet another unique use during World War II when it served as a propeller factory.

While Frost's State Fair duties kept him busy, he also managed the Coliseum Ice Rink near Lexington Park and concessions at the baseball field. Gale Frost remembered spending many of his childhood years at some of the Midway's past landmarks.

When Gale Frost began his own State Fair career in the 1920s, he worked as an office boy. After he retired from his career as a traveling salesman, he was instrumental in creating Heritage Square at the State Fairgrounds in the 1970s. He is now writing a book about the fair.



Hamline Park Playground candidates for one of the Midway's Winter Carnivals, probably 1929 or 1930. Can anyone identified these young women? Midway Chamber of Commerce photo. See article beginning on Page 4.

R.C.H.S.
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