

RAMSEY COUNTY  
**History**  
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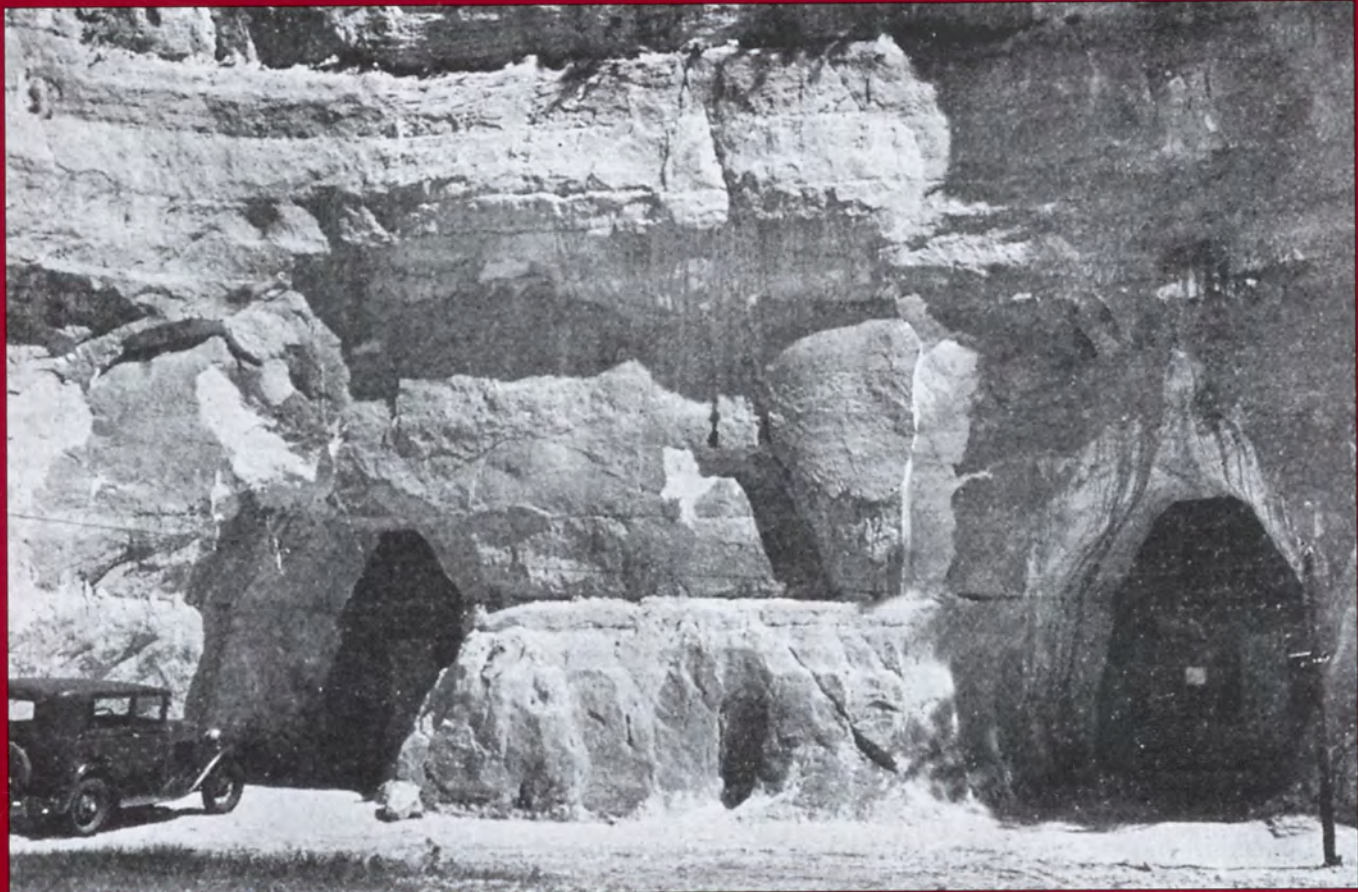
Alfred Adler and his 1937  
Lecture at the St. Paul  
Women's City Club

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*St. Paul Underground*

The University Farm Experimental Cave and  
St. Paul as the Blue Cheese Capital of the World

—Page 4



Caves like these in the Twin Cities bluffs along the Mississippi River were used for ripening the Roquefort-like cheese that almost caused an international incident with France. See article about Minnesota's Blue Cheese beginning on page 4. Photo from the National Butter and Cheese Journal, January 10, 1935.

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# RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 36, Number 3

Fall, 2001

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## A Message from the Editorial Board

This issue of *Ramsey County History* opens with Greg Brick's absorbing examination of how and why agricultural researchers at the University of Minnesota produced a Roquefort-like blue cheese in the caves on St. Paul's West Side from the 1930s to the 1950s. Many local people know that in the days before modern refrigeration, St. Paul's pioneer brewers had taken advantage of the constant cool temperatures in the caves to store beer, and some people knew the caves had been used for raising mushrooms, but author Brick introduces us to the little-known world of blue cheese production in these caves.

Additional articles in this issue present Roger A. Ballou's account of a 1937 lecture by the famous psychologist Alfred Adler at the Women's City Club and Susan C. Dowd's research into the mysterious 1902 death of an unidentified, beautiful young woman near the railway station at Dayton's Bluff.

Fall is always a great time for apples. To honor this year's apple season, Ralph Thrane, the resident horticulturalist at the Society's Gibbs Museum in Falcon Heights, contributes a summary of his work in choosing and growing the Heritage apple varieties that have been planted at the Museum. This issue closes with author DeAnne Cherry adding another piece to our ongoing series, "Growing Up in St. Paul," with her recollections of her teenage years living on St. Paul's Avenue in the 1950s.

The Editorial Board of this magazine also wants its readers to be aware that Paul Nelson's article about St. Paul's smallpox epidemic of 1924 that appeared in the Summer issue has caught the eye of a present-day researcher at the Medical School of the University of Minnesota and is being used in conjunction with contemporary studies of this dread disease. Our thanks to Paul for his timely work that may, in a small way, contribute to the future betterment of all.

*John M. Lindley, Chair, Editorial Board*

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## *Growing Up in St. Paul*

### A Stroll Down Memory Lane: Payne Avenue in the 1950s—“It Was Like Living in a Small Town”

*DeAnne Marie Cherry*

In the fall of 2001, my high school friend Judy and I attended the Payne Avenue Harvest Festival Parade. As I stood on the sidewalk of my teen-age residence at 973 Payne Avenue, I listened to the sounds of the music, took in the aroma of carnival-type food, and watched the commotion of people interacting in an evening of fun. At first I found myself caught up in the moment, but later I found my mind wandering back to the 1950s. Back then, Judy Malmgren and I wore maroon corduroy pants, Johnson High School sweatshirts, and white bucks to the parade. As I remember, we did not stand still too long. We ate food, watched the parade, but spent most of our time looking for our friends, and, of course, looking for boys.

Growing up on Payne Avenue was like living in a small town. My family knew all the merchants, and Payne Avenue was where we spent our money. Some of the businesses had names such as Anderson, Borgstrom, Olson, Jacobsen, and Swenson. There was a furniture store, barber shop, meat market, bakery, funeral home, hardware store, and a drug store, just to name a few. Some of the businesses are still around almost fifty years later, and others house antiques and new businesses. I invite you to stroll down my avenue of fond memories. Remember that my memories are those of a teenager's time, and the reader should try to imagine or maybe even remember what it was like to be wrapped up in a world that on one hand was carefree and on the other hand often fraught with adolescent pain.

On the day we moved to Payne Avenue, my family and I ate supper at Sui

Yep, a café that still operates on the avenue. My parents Eugene and Melvina Borndale rented an apartment over the East Side Grocery, located in the middle of the block between Case and Jenks Streets. My bedroom window faced the alley, and in the summer the smell of fresh baked bread and rolls woke me up before sunrise. The baker from Jacobsen's Bakery loaded his truck each day to transfer baked goods to their other store up the avenue. One night a girlfriend stayed overnight, and like always we woke up to the wonderful aroma of bakery. We were hungry, and could not resist. We put on our bathrobes and went outside. After some conversation with the baker, we were given a treat. How wonderful that warm dough tasted.

Next to the grocery was F. W. Woolworth where my brother Dennis and I shopped for Christmas gifts, such as socks for our grandfather. As a young teen, I earned money babysitting and later I earned money working in an office. At Woolworth, I bought white collars to wear on my sweaters, an ankle bracelet, Evening in Paris perfume, Fire Engine Red lipstick and other popular items of the time.

On the corner of Case and Payne Avenue was the First State Bank of St. Paul. I had my own savings account and each time I put a dollar or two in the bank, the clerk would hand write the amount in my bankbook. Above the bank was the office of Dr. Joel Peterson, our family doctor. The bank also holds one other memory for me. The 1950s was a time when teenage girls had pajama parties. In our baby doll pajamas, we spent the night



*DeAnne Cherry standing with her brother Dennis on the roof overlooking the alley and Jacobsen's Bakery. Photos with this article are from the author.*

eating junk food, playing our 45-rpm records, doing each other's hair, and calling boys on the phone. We also called the local radio station and requested songs such as "I Spoke Too Soon" and "Only You." One night, very late, we left my friend's pajama party, three blocks away from the First State Bank. We ended up in front of the bank and took pictures of us in our pajamas. Giggling all the way, we hurried back to



*Best friends DeAnne Borndale (Cherry), left, and Judy Malmgren at age fifteen.*

my friend's house before someone could see us. We felt as though we were thieves in the night, and had just pulled off a great prank.

Borgstrom's Pharmacy was located at 964 Payne Avenue, across the street from the bank. This corner has an empty lot, and Borgstrom's is now re-

located down the block on the corner of Jenks and Payne. Often Judy and I stopped at Borgstrom's after school for a cherry coke from the soda fountain and a five-cent bag of potato chips. We sat at the counter and talked about school, our dreams, and our problems. After leaving the store, and just minutes

into our own homes, we were on the phone talking to each other again. Judy and I were there for each other during each time that we experienced another broken heart.

Life for a teen-ager often was a circle of disappointed relationships. Often we had a crush on someone who liked someone else who also liked someone else. We did, however, change our minds over and over again, and when a new boy entered our lives, we referred to him as a "dream." On the wall outside our apartment, I carved my name with the plus sign, followed by the name of the guy that I was crazy about at the time. Later when the romance died I scratched off his name. Five years ago I went down the alley to see the wall, and the carved graffiti 1950s style. The name DeAnne Borndale was still visible, and so I took a picture for remembrance sake.

Judy and I walked to Johnson High School, located on York Street, just four blocks from my home. We were typical teenagers who attended all the school activities. We caught the bus on Payne Avenue and traveled down Rondo Street to the football games at Central Stadium. Rondo Street was the heart and soul of the African-American community, a community of homes and businesses that was displaced to make room for a new freeway in the 1960s.

We were at the hockey game when the Johnson Governors' team faced Minneapolis Southwest and won the state tournament. A young Herbie Brooks, of "Miracle on Ice" fame, was a member of this championship team. My friends and I did not miss a dance at school, and there were plenty of them with names such as the "Homecoming Dance," the "Sock and Sweater Hop," the "Hobo Dance," and the "Sweetheart Swing." We danced the "Bunny Hop," the "Stroll," the "Bop," and the "Slow Dance." Most dances ended with the song "Goodnight Sweetheart." Of course the biggest dance of all was the "Junior Prom." The boy I was dating at the time did not ask me to the prom. All my friends were going and this was a

time of teenage pain for me. In the end, I went with someone I had only met once. He was a friend of a friend, and now, I cannot even remember his last name.

I do remember that for the prom, I bought him a boutonniere at the East Side Floral Shop on Case and Payne. The shop is still operating today, under the name of St. Paul Floral. My friend Judy and I skipped school and took the bus to downtown St. Paul and went shopping for my formal. I bought a yellow strapless formal and wore a crinoline slip that made the formal very full. In the end it was a nice enough evening, but there was not the romance in the air that I dreamed my high school prom would create.

Long before Burger King, Kentucky Fried Chicken, or Taco Bell drive-through restaurants arrived, there were drive-in restaurants. Once we learned to drive or had a boyfriend with a car, we started to expand our world, leaving Payne Avenue at times. We spent time at A & W Root Beer on Arcade Street, Jerry's on White Bear Avenue, and Porky's on University Avenue. Just think of all those classic Chevrolets and Fords that cruised in and parked, some with a pair of dice or a girlfriend's scarf hanging from the mirror.

With the wonderful fifties music blasting, we waited for the carhops to take our order. We never worried about fat grams as we devoured hamburgers, French fries and 5-cent root beers. Although families came to these drive-ins, the drive-in was mainly a youth environment where we could hang out. Teenagers flirted with the opposite sex in the car parked next to them. Wouldn't it be great to hop aboard a time machine and revisit the past, stopping off for a few minutes at a drive-in? We could look at the sites and listen to the music and the sounds of the mating game. The youth of the fifties did not think about world pollution, about world hunger, or nuclear disaster. It was just a time when the biggest worry was the opposite sex, and finding just enough change, yes loose change, to buy gas for the car in order to continue



*DeAnne and escort dancing at the Coronation Ball at the Prom Ballroom in St. Paul.*

to cruise the East Side.

In the summer, most teenagers gathered up enough money and went to a drive-in movie on the weekend. A good way to save money was to have the girls ride in the trunk, therefore getting them in free. We often went to the Minnehaha Drive-In on McKnight Road and Minnehaha Avenue. Some of the movies included: *Jailhouse Rock* with Elvis Presley, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* with Paul Newman and Elizabeth Taylor, *The Blackboard Jungle* with Glenn Ford, and *Where the Boys Are* with George Hamilton and Delores Hart.

In 1957 I was a queen candidate for the Payne Avenue Fall Harvest Festival. Sunberg Drug Co, located on the corner of Payne and Jenks, sponsored me and had a poster with my picture in the window of their store. Tickets were 50 cents

and for that price you had the chance to vote for a queen and a chance to win a 1957 Plymouth, and attend the Coronation Ball at the Prom Ballroom on University Avenue in St. Paul. I rode in the parade on the back of a convertible wearing a strapless blue formal. My family took a picture of me in the parade as we rode by the bank. It was, indeed, an exciting time. All of the queen candidates appeared on TV with Mel Jazz to promote the fall events for Payne Avenue. I was escorted to the Coronation Ball by the current love of my life at that time, but I did not become queen and go on to take part in the Winter Carnival. However, I had the wonderful experience of simply being part of the action in my neighborhood.

My first car was a 1959 Chevrolet Impala convertible. It was white with red

interior, and had a 348 cubic inch V-8 engine. With the top down, my friends and I would often cruise the East Side. We went up Payne Avenue, turning right on Maryland, then turning right on Arcade Street, right again on Minnehaha, traveling past Hamm's Brewery and then up Payne Avenue to start all over again. We sometimes cruised around Lake Phalen or down Seventh Street in downtown St. Paul. My radio was tuned to WDGY or KDWB with various deejays playing the top tunes. If you really listen you might even imagine that you hear the sounds of Elvis Presley, the Everly Brothers, Brenda Lee, or even Buddy Holly.

On my twenty-first birthday my mother cooked a birthday dinner and two of my girlfriends came over to help my family celebrate. I went across the street to the liquor store and bought a bottle of champagne so that we could toast my birthday. My disappointment was apparent when the clerk did not ask for my identification. Had I become an adult with responsibilities just that quick? Would my carefree days be gone with the calendar of time? I had hoped not. In the evening, my friends and I met some of the boys we knew, and celebrated at Schwietz Bar that is still located on Payne Avenue between Case and Sims. We danced and had a good time. Recently my friend Sandy said, "It's amazing that I remember your twenty-first birthday so well, but I do not remember mine which was only two months later."

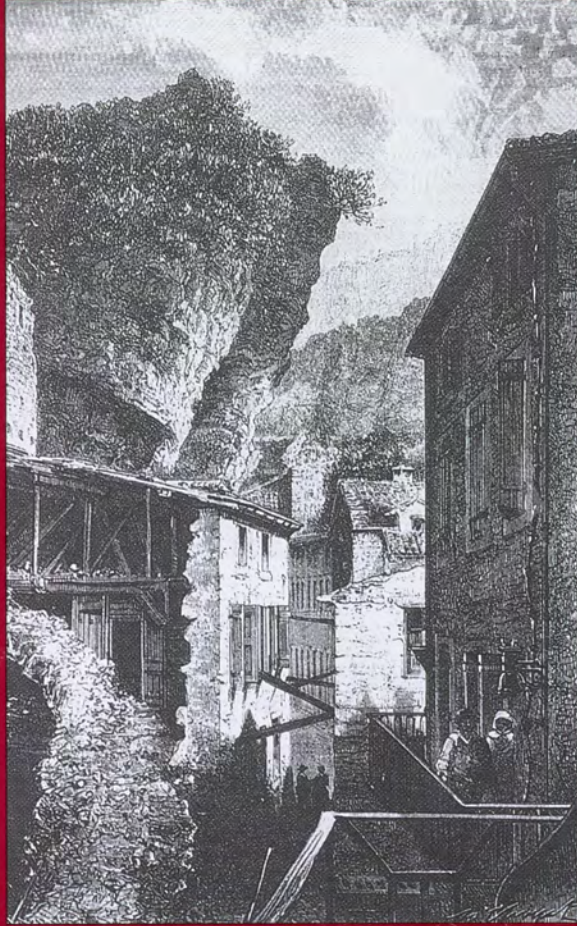
Payne Avenue offered me a wonderful place to grow up. It had friendly people saying "hello" on the avenue, merchants standing outside their shops, and people looking out for each other. At Christmas the avenue was decorated, and shoppers hurried about their business as the wind and the snow often blew across the street. Except knowing that an old boyfriend was involved in a BB gun window-breaking Halloween incident, I don't remember hearing about a lot of crime in my neighborhood. "Larry the Cop," called by everyone, always was visible on the avenue, walking the beat.



Queen candidate DeAnne Borndale waves during her parade.

I have touched on just a few of the memories of my life on Payne Avenue. My time in the history of avenue is long gone, and new generations have followed to make their own memories. Payne Avenue now reflects the diversity of our world. As new people move in, I hope the avenue will be in safekeeping, and will prosper. Fifty years from now someone should be able to write about the good old days on Payne Avenue, the good old days made by the memory makers of today.

*DeAnne Cherry is Director of Student Life at Minneapolis Community and Technical College. Her passion is researching her family's history and writing stories about her Norwegian and Polish families.*



*The celebrated Roquefort caves of France where Roquefort cheese has been ripened since antiquity. Development of a Roquefort-like cheese in the 1930s at the University of Minnesota's St. Paul campus, almost caused an international incident with France. See article about Minnesota's Blue Cheese beginning on page 4.*

**R.C.H.S.**  
RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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