

History

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St. Paul in celebration, 1924. This photo from the Gibson-Wright collection shows St. Paul during the years of labor turmoil that followed World War I. The 1880s city hall-county courthouse is on the left, with the St. Paul Athletic Club beyond it in this view looking east down Fourth Street. See W. Thomas White's account, beginning on page 4, of the 1922 Shopmen's Strike in the Northwest.

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A Message from the Editorial Board

The Spring issue of our magazine inaugurates a new feature that focuses on the personal experiences of individuals growing up in St. Paul or Ramsey County. Willard (Sandy) Boyd, who grew up in St. Anthony Park as the son of Dr. Willard Boyd, director of the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Minnesota's St. Paul campus, has written the first memoir that begins this new feature.

A graduate of the University of Minnesota Law School, Sandy Boyd was president of the University of Iowa from 1969 to 1981. He is now president of the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago.

Boyd writes about his youth in Ramsey County during the Great Depression. We learn first hand, for example, what the great droughts of 1934 and 1936 meant to him and his friends. Editorial Board members hope that others will share their experiences with our readers.

—John M. Lindley, chairman, Editorial Board

What's Historic About This Site?

The St. Anthony Park Branch Library

Editor's Note: This is the ninth in a series of articles on Ramsey County's historic sites.

The St. Anthony Park Branch Library at 2245 W. Como Avenue is one of 2,800 libraries throughout the country that were funded by Andrew Carnegie. Only three remain in St. Paul; the others are Riverview, at 1 E. George Street on the West Side, and Arlington Hills, at 1105 N. Greenbrier Street. All three are marking their seventy-fifth anniversaries in 1992.

A wonderfully ornate library building, the St. Anthony Park Branch has been for seventy-five years a focal point of the St. Anthony Park neighborhood, which it serves. Generations of the neighborhood's children and adults have whiled away hours of researching and reading in its high ceilinged rooms. (See the essay on growing up in St. Paul on page 18.) The Ramsey County Historical Society grew out of an earlier organization that began as a library program.

The founding of the St. Anthony Park Branch Library dates back to the turn-of-the-century when several St. Anthony Park residents began efforts to establish a local library. Involved in the drive was Mrs. Francis Parker, a teacher at the Murray School, and A. J. Frank, a real estate developer who built the English-style Old Fireside Inn at Carter and Como Avenues. Now a complex of shops and apartments known as Milton Square, the building contained two spacious halls—Fireside and Tamarack—where St. Anthony Park residents once gathered socially.

The establishment of the St. Paul campus of the University of Minnesota in the late 1880s was an impetus to the settlement of the St. Anthony Park area. Earlier efforts at settlement, however, had begun in the 1850s and 1860s when William Marshall, governor of Minnesota from



1866 to 1870, began buying large tracts of land between Como Lake and the present Minneapolis city line.

In 1873, Marshall hired Chicago landscape architect, Horace W. S. Cleveland, to develop a plan for the St. Anthony Park area. Although several major railroad lines ran through the area, making it easy for residents to commute to either downtown, settlement lagged until the 1880s when Marshall and his associates established the St. Anthony Park Company to divide the land into lots and build houses.

Early residents were employees of furniture manufacturing companies the St. Anthony Park Company attracted to the newly developing west Midway area. Others were the growing number of University of Minnesota faculty members and their families.

In July, 1905, Fiesler's Drug Store, located at Hampden and Raymond Avenues in the southern section of St. Anthony Park, began displaying a small number of books available for loan. Another such library was opened in June, 1913, in the Wallace and Franke grocery store in the northern section of St. Anthony Park, with the store's bookkeeper acting as its librarian.

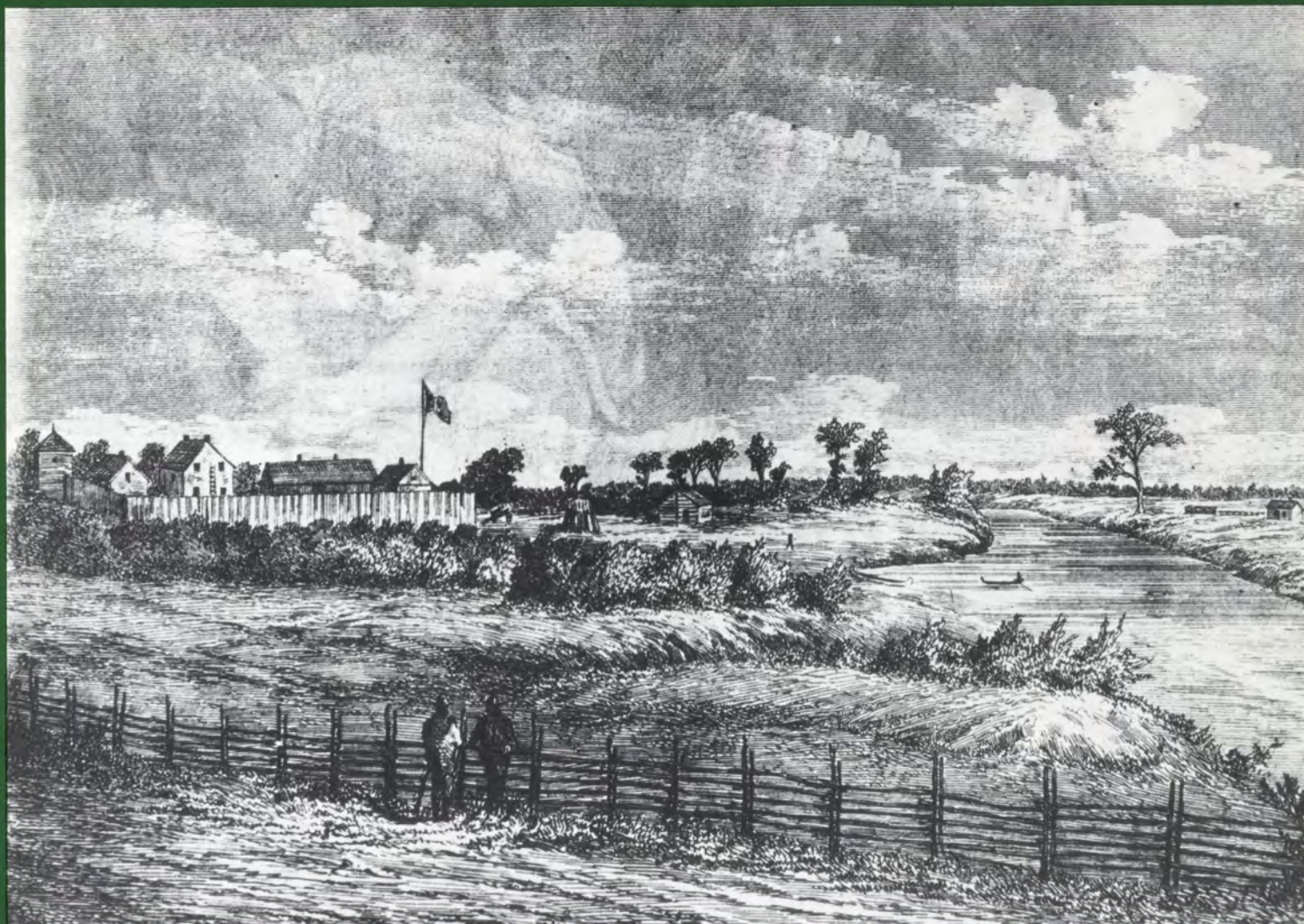
In 1917, the library in south St. Anthony Park was replaced by a library sta-

tion in the Baker School, still standing on Raymond Avenue. The station was open one afternoon a week and staffed by a public library assistant.

In the meantime, a local committee was formed, led by Mrs. Parker. The committee secured the present library site and presented it to the city. Andrew Carnegie provided the funds for the building itself.

Construction began in 1916. The library opened on July 28, 1917, with a collection of 5,000 books. The building was designed in the Beaux Arts style, a popular style for public buildings during the early decades of the twentieth century. The design is symmetrical, with an elaborate terra cotta cornice and scroll medallions, egg and dart molding and dentils with inserts of tiny bronze colored balls. There is a wide sandstone frieze.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, a group of St. Anthony Park residents became interested in the history of the neighborhood. They formed first as a group within the library but, led by Ethel Hall Stewart, who had long been interested in the neighborhood's history, they established the St. Anthony Park Historical Association in 1944. In 1949, the association became the Ramsey County Historical Society.



The Hudson's Bay Company Fort at Pembina, now in North Dakota, from the Canadian Illustrated News, 1871. See the article on the Selkirk Colony, beginning on page 23.

R.C.H.S.
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