Josias King —
First of the First

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St. Paul, photographed in 1885 by Henry Bosse. Photo from the St. Paul District, United States Corps of Engineers. See article beginning on Page 4.

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What's Historic About this Site?

The George Luckert House –
The Oldest Still Standing on St. Anthony Hill

The house George Luckert built in 1858–1859 at what is now 480 West Iglehart Avenue is one of the oldest and the most intact limestone houses still standing in St. Paul.

It may have been the first permanent residence on St. Anthony Hill, but it certainly is the oldest still standing in that area, as well as the last existing house in a neighborhood that once extended along the southern edge of the old St. Anthony Road, the overland stage and Red River ox cart trail which ran west of the Mississippi. From their vantage point on the hill, the Luckert family would have heard the "big squeal" of the Red River ox carts, their ungreased axles shrieking as they plodded along St. Anthony Road on their way into downtown St. Paul. The road ran through a wide stretch of the rolling prairie that once lay between today's University and Marshall Avenues, the route now of I-94.

Two or three carts would be strung together end-to-end. Their drivers trudged along just ahead of the carts. Called *bois brules* they were a mixture of Ojibway, Cree, Scotch, French and English ancestry. They wore coarse blue cloth, a profusion of brass buttons, red sashes around their waists, beadwork caps and soft moccasins. The Luckerts also would have seen their colorful caravans camped out on the open prairie near what is now University Avenue and Dale Street.

George Luckert was of German ancestry and he was a farmer at a time when most of the land stretching west from what is now Summit Avenue was farmland. A near neighbor was Jeremiah W. Selby who had arrived in St. Paul in 1849

George Luckert's farmhouse on Iglehart near Dale Street. Ramsey County Historical Society photograph.

and opened a farm on the hill where the St. Paul Cathedral stands today. Selby was a member of the 1852 Territorial legislature, a city accessor, served from 1861 to 1863 on the St. Paul Board of Education and was a member of the Board of Ramsey County Commissioners. He died in 1865 and Norman W. Kittson, fur trader and a partner of James J. Hill's in building what became the Great Northern Railroad, erected a mansion on the site of Selby's farm.

Back in the 1850s, a number of St. Paul businessmen had begun to purchase and plat large tracts in the St. Anthony Hill area, believing that the neighborhood had tremendous potential for residential development even though it was at that time somewhat remote from Lowertown and other downtown districts. They were right. Between 1854 and 1872, the city annexed successive

sections of the neighborhood. Dale Street became the city's western boundary in 1874. By that time, many families had moved into the area from their earlier homes closer to downtown.

As the neighborhood changed through the years, the Luckert family apparently stayed on. The 1926 *St. Paul City Directory* lists a George Luckert at that address. He operated a business installing and repairing warm air furnaces.

The Luckert house remained essentially unchanged, with the exception of a rather inappropriate enclosed porch that replaced the earlier original woodframe porch. This in turn now has been replaced by a hipped roof open porch with square columns and brackets, similar to the original porch. The house itself is a simple but impressive box-like structure of solid stone in the Federal/Italianate style.

Henry Bosse's photograph of St. Paul's old High Bridge after it opened to horse-and-buggy traffic in 1889. Because the bridge offered easy access to the Cherokee Heights neighborhood, settlement of this section of the West Side began in earnest. A modern bridge replaced the old bridge in 1985. See article beginning on page 4. Photograph from the St. Paul District, United States Corps of Engineers.