The Buildings of Saint Paul

The MEARS PARK Area

A collected assortment of facts, figures and miscellaneous interesting and otherwise meaningful information about the Companies that were in business in the Mears Park area and the buildings that housed them and encompassing a period some twenty five years on either side of the turn of the century. An introduction to the feeling of the surrounding Architecture as One stands at and surveys the ambiance of Mears Park.

The Intersections:

Fifth and Sibley
Sixth and Sibley
Fifth and Wacouta
Sixth and Wacouta

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Building Census

Noyes Brothers & Cutler Building, 1889
400 Sibley St./219-225 East Sixth Street
Architect: J. Walter Stevens

Konantz Saddlery Co./
Railroad Printing House, 1893
227-231 East Sixth Street
Architect: J. Walter Stevens

Koehler and Hinrichs, 1891
235-237 East Sixth Street
Architect: J. Walter Stevens

G. Sommers Company, 1905
245 East Sixth Street (NE cor., 6th & Wacouta)
Architect: J. Walter Stevens

Finch, Van Slyck & McConville Building, 1911
366 Wacouta Street
Architect: James F. Denson

Conrad Gotzian Shoe Company, 1892
242 East Fifth Street (SE cor., 5th & Wacouta)
Architect: Cass Gilbert

Powers Dry Goods Company, 1892
230-236 East Fifth Street
Architect: J. Walter Stevens

Fairbanks-Morse Company, 1895
220 East Fifth Street
Architect: J. Walter Stevens

John Wann Building, 1882
350-364 Sibley Street
Architect: Unknown

Gordon and Ferguson Building, 1913
331-341 Sibley Street (SW cor., 5th & Sibley)
Architect: Clarence H. Johnson, Sr.

Bishop Block, ca. 1882-1883
365-375 Sibley Street
Builder/Contractor: A. Bassford
Demolished: 1979

J. P. Allen Building, 1888
379-381 Sibley Street
Builder/Contractor: George J. Grant
Demolished: 1979

Name of building(s) unknown
SW corner, Sixth and Sibley Street
Architect: Unknown
Demolished: 1927, 1971

Merrill, Greer, Chapman Company, 1895
397-411 Sibley Street
Architect: Unknown
Demolished: 1974

Introduction

The buildings that surround Mears Park represent one of the finest collections of Commercial Style architecture from the 1880-1920 period that can be found anywhere in the United States. With the exception of the northwest corner, the facades facing the park remain fundamentally intact. This includes two that were incorporated, with modifications, as part of the east face of the Galtier Center complex.

One can sit in Mears Park and almost feel the ambiance and activity that surrounded the day to day business in the center of the largest wholesale district in the Northwest. Dry goods, shoes, pharmaceuticals, leather goods, scales and many more high demand items were traded in great quantities from the companies that occupied these buildings during that period.

The buildings of Mears Park are part of the Lowertown Historic District, a sixteen block area on the east side of downtown Saint Paul and north of the Mississippi River. The majority of the buildings in the district date from the 1880's to 1910 and most were built as warehouses and wholesale houses for businesses which were dependent on the railroad for shipping and receiving freight.

Stylistically, the buildings in the district include the Italianate, Queen Anne, Richardsonian Romanesque, Beaux Arts and Classical Revival styles. Most of the buildings in the district are faced in brick and are four to eight stories tall. In general, those buildings which were constructed before 1900 are under seven stories tall and were built with storefronts on the first floor and storage or manufacturing space above. Many of the pre-1900 structures have cast iron storefronts that were manufactured in local foundries such as the St. Paul Foundry and most incorporate Victorian ornamentation.

Unlike the pre-1900 buildings, which often accommodated both warehouse space and wholesale and/or retail storefronts in the same building, the majority of the structures in the district which were built after 1900 were built for a single purpose, i.e., freight storage, offices, etc. Generally, the post-1900 structures are immense, utilitarian buildings which incorporate Classical Revival detailing. They are generally taller and more massive than the Victorian period structures and were built employing reinforced concrete and structural steel.

A View of Architecture

In that infinite sequence of events that encompass us, very few are truly dependable without limit. Three categories of definable entities are however, reliable in their permanence. While life is shifted by the vicissitudes of people, politics and social systems, one can gain solace in the constancy of the natural and built environments that surround us, and the fact that events, once they have occurred, remain as documented history forever.

It is comforting to know that weather will occur, trees and grass will grow and more than likely have a green color, at least in part, and that the sky will be blue, if not now, then at some time in the near future, and that if we walk outside, we will experience these phenomena of nature.

It is also reassuring to know that events that occurred yesterday, or a week, year or decade ago, did in fact occur and except for the alterations that they sometimes accrue through differing interpretations, the fundamental event did, in fact, occur.

We don't have much control over the natural environment, especially the weather and frequently we don't care for the heat or the cold. But, like it or not, we have to tolerate it, relaxing in the knowledge that it will change eventually. Likewise, we can't change the events of history. As comforting as they are in their permanency, many of them are disquieting or disturbing.

The built environment, specifically buildings as opposed to residences, provides an element of balance to the idiosyncracies of permanence. It is reasonable to assume that the buildings that we pass by each day, in which we work and in which, when we leave to return home, something of ourselves remains, will be there when we return to work tomorrow.

We can move within buildings or from one structure to another depending upon our mood , desires or needs of the moment. An "Atrium frame of mind" or perhaps a "sandstone and arched window attitude" can easily be accommodated.

A building, in a very real sense, is alive. It has a lifespan and it has a personality. It also has more than a sense of history; it is history. A building encloses a microcosm of the universe. History occurs in buildings. As I view or enter a building, I get a feeling that I am part of a continuum of time

that this structure has witnessed.

Buildings can be psychologically warm or they can be bitterly cold. I enjoy buildings that are made of stone - earth materials - as opposed to steel and glass. This includes stone, brick and, with some limitations, concrete. They physically absorb heat and are warm to the touch even, if in the sunlight, on the coldest of days. And they retain this warmth long after the sun has set.

There are steel and glass buildings that I enjoy, just as there are stone buildings that are less than desirable. And stone buildings are not built to the total exclusion of steel and glass. Virtually every building has windows of glass, and almost all stone buildings built in this century have a steel frame.

But I have a special place inside of me for those stone buildings that have character and a place in history. They represent my roots, the history that has passed before that brought the society in which I live to its present place in time.

These structures are very special but unfortunately they have a lifespan that is driven by our need for "newness". As a result, most of our structural heritage is gone. They are our friends, protecting us from the harsher elements while providing a playground for our daily activities. Hopefully, we will be selective in the future before more of our heritage is lost.

The Period

In the fifty year period that spanned the advent of the twentieth century from 1870 to 1920, were laid the foundations of modern America. The country changed in all respects, from its physical proportions to its foreign policy. Population swelled, and the land stretched itself to full size with the closing of the frontier. The economic revolution wrought by the Civil War ushered in a remarkable period of industrialization which changed America from an agricultural economy to an industrial power.

Great social unrest and transition occurred as the latter part of the nineteenth century passed. The Granger movement, founded in 1867, influenced changes during the 1870's that dramatically altered interstate commerce. Agriculture was given Cabinet status in 1889. After several attempts any varied success, organized labor began to emerge as a force with the forming of the American

Federation of Labor during the 1880's. Commerce and labor became a cabinet level function in 1901. Politically and economically, the period covered the administrations of Hayes, Garfield, Arthur, Cleveland, Harrison, McKinley, Roosevelt, Taft and Wilson. Severe depressions occurred in 1876-77 and 1893.

Discussions of emancipation, and of the city, came to their fever point in the years that bracketed the beginning of the twentieth century. Rejection of Europe and of the past was but a face of the contest between the transcendental sword of self-reliance and the historical shield of the genteel tradition.

Population doubled between 1880 and 1913. In 1880 only one city could claim one million people; by 1910 there were three. The twenty cities of over 100,000 people became fifty. Chicago's population doubled in the single decade 1880-90; the Twin Cities trebled.

The ethnic composition of the cities was important. Up to 1880 they had almost all been British, Irish, German, Scandinavian or French. By 1900, almost all of the newcomers were Italians, Greek, Hungarian, Polish, Czech or Baltic. Between 1891 and 1914, sixteen and one-half million immigrants entered the country.

The cities were not however, the result only of this torrent of immigration. There had also been a substantial migration of Americans from the farms. Agricultural valuations accounted for a third of the national wealth in 1880 but by 1912 they were only a fourth. Half of those gainfully employed had worked in agriculture in 1880 but by 1910 they were down to a third. A little over one fourth of the people had lived in "urban territory" in 1880; by 1910 it was nearly half.

In the sciences, it was the period of X-rays and the quantum theory, the Bohr atom and the theory of relativity, Darwin's theory of evolution and the psychology of Freud.

The internal combustion engine, the pneumatic tire and the automotive gearbox all became realities between 1886 and 1895. Henry Ford made his initial road test in 1893. The 8000 registered cars of 1900 became two and a half million by 1915.

The Wright brothers flight occurred in 1903. Electric power was becoming commonplace. Communications technology was born.

A flood of technical changes and innovations

rendered obsolete the traditional arrangement and structure of commercial buildings, while simultaneous changes in conceptions of how a building should look affected their form and articulation of parts. Steel, which had been available in limited quantities since Bessemer's discoveries in 1856, began to be produced in large quantities by means of the open hearth furnace developed in 1856, but significantly improved in 1878, so that the price per ton was low enough by 1884 to allow entire buildings to be framed with steel members.

At the same time, business was rapidly adapting to the telephone which had been developed in 1876, the typewriter in 1868, the mimeograph of 1876 and inexpensive and reliable incandescent lighting beginning in 1879. Business communication and illumination changed dramatically as a result of these innovations.

Electric lighting allowed people to work beyond daylight hours with a more reliable and safe source of light beyond candles and gas. It also permitted the construction of buildings without light courts, thus providing significantly more rentable first floor space.

The introduction of electric elevators in 1891, and the consequent acceptance for general passenger usage, brought about the possible use of all building floors for easily accessible office space. Up to this time, buildings produced reasonable revenue from those spaces that were directly accessible from street level store fronts.

In Saint Paul, commerce developed between the upper and lower landings, or between Robert and Chestnut Streets. Saint Paul began to emerge as the transportation hub of the Northwest, and several depots that had dotted downtown were joined together into the Saint Paul Union Depot in 1879.

By 1893, the railroads had reached the west coast. A major part of the goods and materials that were needed to support the development of the western states was manufactured, assembled or in some other fashion passed through Saint Paul. By 1900, a full twenty-five percent of all of freight track mileage passed through Saint Paul. An average of almost 200 trains were arriving in Saint Paul each day.

The rail center developed at the location, and to the east, of the present Union Depot. In between this rail yard and the vast area between the commercial center of Saint Paul and the Pacific ocean was the area now known as Lowertown. It was the assembly point for these goods. By any

measurement, tons, carloads, items or dollars, millions passed through the buildings of this thirty-odd block area of Saint Paul.

Buildings were built primarily as masonry structures or around a timber and/or cast iron frame. Masonry buildings had reached their limit in height at 16 stories with the Monadnock Building in Chicago. There was also a concern with fire as, when in the Chicago fire of 1871, cast iron was found to not be protection against fire as originally thought.

The steel frame structure, with its inherent provision for fireproofing and "unlimited" overall heights was rapidly obsoleting masonry and cast iron supporting members. Although reinforced concrete was referenced in 1832, it was not until 1895 that it began to be used for building structural frameworks.

A major contributor to the development of reinforced concrete was the Minneapolis engineer Claude Allen Porter (C. A. P.) Turner. He developed a structural process called the "Mushroom System" that was rapidly recognized as a method much less susceptible to structural failures than in other methods utilizing concrete. It was also advertised as less expensive than wood frame construction and providing more interior light than beam systems. Two of the buildings visible from Mears Park are built with the "Mushroom System" of reinforced concrete.

The Architects

Cass Gilbert

Cass Gilbert was born on November 24, 1859 in Zanesville, Ohio. He is considered by many to be the most famous of the Minnesota architects. His notable projects include the Minnesota State Capital Building, the Woolworth Building in New York and the United States Supreme Court Building in Washington D. C.

Early in his distinguished career he wrote as follows: "To become an architect, in the right sense of the word, means that a man shall give his life to it and nothing else, and shall study the

work he has to do with enthusiastic interest in every detail pertaining to it and content himself with nothing less than complete success".

The fulfillment of this creed is the story of Cass Gilbert's life. His plea "for beauty and sincerity, for the solution of our own problems in the spirit of our age illuminated by the light of the past" speaks to the most fundamental yet powerful legacies that the essence of the practice of architecture conveys to the future.

A transition in Mr. Gilbert's practice occurred when he won the design competition in 1895 for the Minnesota State Capital. Prior to receiving that commission, he was the Architect for the Northern Pacific Railroad. Operating without a written contract for his services, the railroad refused to pay him and at the time that he was awarded the State Capital project he was in a relatively dire financial position, augmenting his income through writing and painting.

With the acquisition of the Minnesota capital commission, Gilbert achieved fame in the midwest. But to establish a reputation in the east, he had to win recognition in New York City.To accomplish this, he entered, and won, the competition for the design of the New York Customs House. Encouraged by the eastern prestige resulting from his victory in the Customs House competition, Mr. Gilbert moved to New York City in 1899 and opened an office there. He maintained his St. Paul office for almost a decade, travelling back and forth constantly until finally turning it over to his staff.

Mr. Gilbert died on May 17, 1934.

Clarence H. Johnston, Sr.

Clarence Howard Johnston, architect for Minnesota state institutions from 1901 to 1930, practiced architecture in Minnesota for fifty years. He was born in Okaman, Minnesota in Waseca County on August 26, 1859, and acquired his early education in Hastings and Saint Paul.

His education in architecture was diverse, studying in the office of A. M. Radcliff for three years and, for a year, as a special student at the Massachussetts Institute of Technology. He studied in Europe in 1881 and upon returning to the United States he spent a year in the Saint Paul office of E. P. Bassford, then two years in New York City with the Herter Brothers. He set up a private practice in Saint Paul in 1886.

He was one of the founders and served as a director and president of the Minnesota Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. In 1889 he was designated as Fellow (FAIA), having served as a Director at the national level of the organization.

In addition to designing virtually all state institution buildings built between 1901 and 1930, he became a recognized expert in the design of criminal facilities. Among his many commissions were all of the buildings constructed on the University of Minnesota campus between 1904 and 1937, Stillwater Prison, the State Historical Society Building, the State Office Building, the Lowry Medical Arts Building, the Empire Building and several residences including the Congdon residence (Glensheen) in Duluth.

Mr. Johnston died on December 31, 1936.

John Walter Stevens

John Walter Stevens was born in Wakefield, Massachusetts on June 13, 1856. He moved to Saint Paul at the age of 23 and began the practice of architecture. Although Mr. Stevens was a prolific architect, designing over thirty major commercial buildings and over twenty residences of significance, very little documentation exists on either the man or his practice.

Mr. Stevens was the major architect of the buildings of Mears Park, and he was a significant contributor to the architecture of Lowertown in general. Six of the buildings that face Mears Park today were designed by Mr. Stevens. A seventh is attributed to him, at least in part, as the builder. His buildings convey an elegant simplicity that has weathered the tests of time, today serving a broad range of functions from commercial space through residential conversions.

He was a close friend of Cass Gilbert, and in similar fashion to Mr. Gilbert, he was dedicated to his profession. He was very concerned about the professionalism that was demonstrated by practicing architects. He went so far as to submit his resignation to the Minnesota Chapter of the AIA in protest of those who were guilty of unprofessional conduct and in violation of the principles set forth by the organization. His resignation was not accepted.

Stevens designed four homes on Summit Avenue that remain today at the addresses of 335, 776, 821 and 1994. Commercial structures include the Saint Paul Building of 1888 (Germania Bank Building), Pattee Hall (1889) at the University of Minnesota and the original cell buildings (1889) at the St. Cloud Reformatory.

Mr. Stevens died on April 26, 1937.

James F. Denson

Mr. Denson was a local affiliate of the Chicago architectural firm of Postle and Mahler from 1908 to 1910 when he designed the Finch Building, prior to its construction in 1911. From 1911 to 1917, he was listed in the Saint Paul city directory as having his own practice, first for three years in the Germania Life Building and in 1914, in the American National Bank Building.

During his stay in Saint Paul, he lived at several different residences, including Fairmount, Laurel, So. St. Albans. and Grand Avenues. He was not listed under the heading of "Architects" in the 1914 directory, nor was he listed prior to 1908. In 1917 he moved to Chicago.

There is no record of any other building in St. Paul as being attributable to him.

The Neighborhood

Baptist Hill

Until 1877, the land between Jackson, Broadway, Fourth and Seventh Streets, encompassing all of the area referenced in this brochure, and in addition, most of Lowertown, was a large rocky hill, the top of which was more than fifty feet above the present street level of Mears Park. The highest point on the hill was along Sibley at the present site of Mears Park and from this point, cannon salutes were fired during the Civil War in honor of Union victories.

The hill was known by several names. One referral was as Mount Pisgah after the infamous Pig's Eye Parrant; another was Burbank Hill after James C. Burbank whose home was located on the top of the hill. More commonly, the hill was called Baptist Hill, named after the Baptist Church that was built on the hill.

Smith Park

The land was donated to the city for use as a "public square" by Illinois land speculator Robert A. Smith sometime before the area was platted in 1849. The land was not developed into a park until the 1880's however, and several houses were located on the site between 1851 and the 1880's.

Between 1876 and 1878, Sibley, Wacouta, 5th and 6th Streets were cut through Baptist Hill. When these streets were graded, the block that was to be Smith Park consisted of a hill with houses and some commercial buildings.

Between 1883 and 1888, the "public square" was finally graded and landscaped as a park. The park, as originally designed, was probably similar to Irvine Park and the original design of Rice Park, with paths leading diagonally to a cast iron fountain in the center of the square. The park was struck by the cyclone of 1904 and was heavily damaged.

Mears Park

Smith Park was rebuilt in 1973 after designs by William Sanders and renamed Mears Park after Norman B. Mears, a man who provided a major impetus for the redevelopment of Lowertown.

Mears Park was officially dedicated in its present form on July 24, 1992.

The Buildings

The Buildings of Mears Park are viewed in sequence, counter-clockwise starting from a position facing north.

Noyes Brothers & Cutler Building,
400 Sibley Street/219-225 E. Sixth Street.

The Company was a drug, paint and cigar jobber in addition to being a physicians' supply company with an eyeglass manufacturing facility.

Sibley Street, west side between Fifth and Sixth Streets, looking north, ca. 1909. Illustrated are the original Bishop and Allen buildings, occupied at the time the picture was taken by Goodyear and Gordon and Ferguson. The reproduced facades that are currently part of the east face of Galtier are similar.

Mears (Smith) Park ca. 1916 looking northeast. At the left is the Noyes Brothers and Cutler Building. Immediately adjacent to the east is the Konantz Saddlery Building and the Koehler and Hinrichs Building. The Sommers Building is on the northeast corner of Sixth and Sibley. On the right is the Finch Building before the addition of 1923. In between the Sommers and Finch Buildings, on the southeast corner of Sixth and Wacouta, is another view of the Park Hotel. With the north addition to the Finch Building, and the demo of the Park Hotel, this view remains essentially intact today. Photo courtesy of John Mannillo.

Mears (Smith) Park ca. 1916, looking northwest. This view shows the complete Bishop Block with the three bays at the corner of Fifth and Sibley that were demolished in 1941. The water tower is on the Allen Building. At the center of the picture is the Merrill, Greer, Chapman Building at Sixth and Sibley. To the left is the Noyes Brothers and Cutler Building with part of the Konantz Saddlery visable at the extreme right. Photo from the archives of the St. Paul Public Library.

Southeast corner, Sixth and Wacouta, ca. 1917, showing the three story Park Hotel.

A reproduction of an etching of Lyons Block, later known as the Merrill, Greer, Chapman building.

Advertisements promoted the company's capability in manufacturing chemicals and claimed to be the second largest drug supplier in the United States.

This imposing five story building was constructed of red pressed brick with rockfaced red sandstone trim at a cost of $110,000. It is the oldest of six buildings designed by prominent St. Paul architect J. Walter Stevens which are still standing on Mears Park. This Romanesque inspired building was constructed for Noyes Brothers and Cutler, founded in 1865, previously located in the John Wann building on the opposite side of Mears Park. The firm's offices and sales area were located on the first floor while the upper floors were used for laboratories and storage. In 1908, the easternmost three bays along Sixth Street were added from designs by J. Walter Stevens and blend so well that it is difficult to detect the addition.

Advertisements for the Company in the City Directory show the building to be symmetrical along Sibley Street with the original (1889) facade on Sixth Street. The northern bays shown in the advertisement, whether actually planned or shown only for effect, were never built.

The building is of timber frame construction with cast iron posts on the first floor. Masonry exterior and interior load bearing walls range in thickness from 24" on the first floor to 16" on the upper level. An ornate office building with massive pressed metal cornices, the Noyes Brothers and Cutler Building has large rounded arched openings topped by molded brick arches on the first floor; rockfaced stone lintels, stone pilasters, stone modillions, brick corbelling and molded brick arches over windows in the upper stories.

In 1926, the building was occupied by the B. W. Harris Company, a fur dresser and fur and leather garment manufacturer, and by McKesson and Robbins, also known as the St. Paul Drug Company. In 1971-73, the building was converted to retail shops, restaurants and offices. The building is now called Park Square Court.

Konantz Saddlery Co./
Railroad Printing House,
227-231 East Sixth Street.

This five story Victorian Romanesque style commercial building was built in 1893 at a cost of $30,000 as a warehouse and factory.

The Konantz Saddlery Company was probably the first occupant of the building. The company was described in Northwest Magazine in 1888 as "an old and widely known St. Paul concern with a reputation for making fine goods in both the harness and saddlery line". The company was founded ca. 1871 in Quincy, Illinois as W. H. Konantz and Brothers and established their St. Paul branch in 1876. In St. Paul, the company had a factory from which they sent travelling salesmen throughout the Northwest and to the west coast.

This company was one of a number of St. Paul concerns which entrepreneur Henry Castle was able to entice to establish factories in the short-lived boom town of North St. Paul in the late 1880's. The Railroader Printing House was located in the building from 1902 until the 1980's.

This building and the adjacent Koehler and Hinrichs building provide an excellent opportunity to study the subtle detail variations that Stevens employed to give each structure a unique character. From a distance, these buildings seem similar. Upon closer examination, over forty variations, other than the fenestration, can be found that strikingly distinguish the facades.

The load bearing walls are masonry ranging in thickness from 24" to 16". The internal frame consists of cast iron columns and timber beams throughout.

The building is now referred to as either the "Railroader" or the "Kramer" building.

Koehler and Hinrichs,
235-237 East Sixth Street

The first tenant of the building was the firm of Koehler and Hinrichs, wholesale suppliers for butchers and meat packers. This firm, composed of partners George W. Koehler and Ferdinand Hinrichs was founded in about 1884. In 1886, it was described as "the largest house in the special lines of butchers' supplies" located in St. Paul. They also specialized in the "fancy groceries line".

The firm also dealt in "High class bar outfits, bowling alleys, billiards and pool tables, cheese and foreign delicacies, Edison & Victor talking machines and ice machines".

Before commissioning J. Walter Stevens to design this building, the firm was located at the corner of St. Peter and 4th Streets and at 231 E. 3rd Street.

This building is typical of the wholesale buildings constructed in the late nineteenth century when Lowertown was a thriving commercial district.

Architecturally, this building features Romanesque inspired rounded arch window openings and a series of rock-faced sandstone blocks which are set on a diagonal at the cornice level, and which are located in a horizontal band, similar to modillions, above the small and narrow series of rounded arched windows on the second floor. The first floor features two intact store fronts. A fire escape remains on the front of the building, although the lower section has been removed.

Structurally, the building is similar to the Konantz Building with the exception that wood columns are used above the first floor.

The building is known today as the Margoles Building.

George Sommers Company,
245 East Sixth Street.

This building is the most recent of the six buildings which John Walter Stevens designed and which still stand on Mears Park. It was built as a warehouse for the George Sommers Company, which occupied the building until well into the 1940's. This firm was established in 1882, and dealt in "wholesale notions, toys and cheap counter supplies", according to the 1886 publication "Industries of St. Paul". This book also describes the firm in this way: "The great characteristic of this firm, which distinguishes it from every other house in the Northwest, is that it deals directly with its customers without the aid of travelling salesmen, claiming that the ten percent saved in expenses by so doing enables it to undersell the old time houses with their scores of expensive agents".

Architecturally, there is a projecting stone band at the top of the roofline and brick piers between the windows. There is brickwork to stimulate keystones over the windows and there is a stone cornice over the first floor windows.

Exterior and load bearing interior walls are masonry, ranging in thickness from 32" on the first floor to 24" on the upper two floors. The interior frame is mill construction with timber columns and beams.

In 1926, the building was occupied by the Western Electric Company, a manufacturer of telephone

equipment.

In the mid-1970's, Control Data acquired and renovated the building at a cost of several million dollars, providing a major stimulus to the revitalization efforts in Lowertown. The building is now the Lowertown Business Center.

Sixth and Wacouta, southeast corner, 390-392 Wacouta/240 - 254 E. Fifth St.

From 1883 to 1922, a nondescript, three story building occupied this corner that served primarily as a hotel but was also at various times referred to as a "Saloon and Hotel" and as a "Hotel and Pool Room". It was, over three distinct periods, named the Park Hotel; 1896 - 1903, 1907 - 1912 and 1915. At other times it was referred to as the Gothenberg Hotel (1883 - 1886), the DuNord Hotel (1887 - 1890), the Norden Hotel (1891 - 1895), the Eagle Saloon and Hotel (1904 - 1906), Theodorff's Hotel and Pool Room (1914) and Karagoff's Pool Hall and Hotel (1916 - 1917).

From 1916 to 1918, Abdo and George Kadrie operated a saloon at the corner address of 392 Wacouta. No record has been found indicating that the hotel continued to operate during this period. The hotel may have been in operation because the Kadries went on to open the Kadrie Hotel on the adjacent property at 258 East 6th Street when the Park Hotel building was closed in 1920. The 392 Wacouta location is listed as "Abdo Kadrie, Soft drinks" in the city directory of 1919, and the listing of 1920 for the Kadrie Hotel claims it to be a "First class Cafe and Soft Drink Parlor".

A Standard Oil Service Station occupied the location from 1923 until 1952. The station was listed as Standard Oil Station #69 at 254 E. 6th St. in the 1926 Green Book. The last reference found was in the 1952 city directory as the Wm. B. Harris gas station at 240 E. 6th Street.

Finch, Van Slyck & McConville Building, 366 Wacouta Street.

This immense eight story cream colored brick neoclassical building defines the eastern edge of Mears Park. The original portion of the building was designed in 1911 by James F. Denson, a Chicago architect, and was constructed by the prominent Saint Paul construction firm of George

Grant and Company. The building is one of C. A. P. Turner's reinforced concrete buildings. Wall thickness is 12" throughout.

The Finch, VanSlyck and McConville Company, for whom the structure was built, was established in 1856 as a small retail operation and developed into a wholesale firm by 1863. For many years, the firm, under the name of Auerbach, Finch & VanSlyke, was located in the building that once stood at the west side of Sibley between Fourth and Fifth Streets.

The construction of the huge Finch building was indicative of the tremendous success of the firm which, after its merger with Lindeke, Warner and Sons, became the largest wholesale dry goods firm in the city. This building also helped to establish Saint Paul's reputation as a major wholesaling center for the Northwest.

There was an eight story brick addition to this building at the rear dating ca. 1915 which has a street address of 381 Wall Street. A fifty foot extension to the north end of the building was added in 1923 after designs by C. H. Johnston, Jr.

This massive eight story, ten bay Neoclassical commercial building is fairly plain but cornice detail is repeated on the top of the seventh floor, and again between the first and second floors. The detail between the seventh and eighth floors emphasizes the eight bays of the principal facade, each bay finished by a segmented arched window.

The repetition of cornice detail gives a subtle definition of a distinct base, shaft and capital, or crown, of the building.

The building is presently named the Cosmopolitan and is used exclusively as a residential apartment and condominium property.

Conrad Gotzian Shoe Company, 242 East Fifth Street.

This five story Victorian Romanesque commercial building was designed by Cass Gilbert, who also designed the adjacent Paul Gotzian warehouse immediately to the south at 352 Wacouta. This building was built as the Gotzian shoe factory in 1892 at a cost of $65,000.

Conrad Gotzian was born in Germany and immigrated to Philadelphia in 1852, where he learned the shoe making trade. In 1855, he moved to Saint Paul, and in 1857 established a shop on Jackson Street between 5th and 6th streets. By the mid-1860's, the shop had grown into the Conrad Gotzian and Company business which moved to a new location on 3rd Street. He was a prominent businessman in the community and served in the state legislature in 1833.

This building illustrates the elegance of Gilbert's designs. Pronounced string courses between the 2nd and 3rd floors, and again between the 4th and 5th, add a strong horizontal visual element to a structure that is basically a cube. The order of the building is established with a clearly defined base of stone columns separated from an arched window featured shaft of three stories by a dramatic wrought iron beam on both facades. The crown of the building is established by rectangular windows, which link symmetrically with the rectangular windows of the first floor.

The masonry exterior walls range in thickness from 28" to 16" and the interior frame is of iron columns and wood beams. It appears that wrought iron beams were used between the first and second floors and one is visible in a commercial space that currently occupies the first floor.

The building is currently a residential property named the Parkside.

Powers Dry Goods Company,
230-236 East Fifth Street.

This six story, five bay building was built in 1892 at a cost of $85,000 by Noyes Brothers and Cutler Company who then rented it to the Powers Dry Goods Company. Powers specialized in dry goods, notions and men's clothing.

In 1886, the Powers Dry Goods Company incorporated, succeeding the previous Powers, Durkee & Co. Powers Dry Goods was reported to be one of the three largest dry goods businesses in the Northwest and in 1896 employed 105 people. When the company moved to this building in 1893, it was described in a book published by the Saint Paul Pioneer Press entitled "St. Paul" as a "model emporium of its kind".

In the early twentieth century, the building was also occupied by a second dry goods company, the firm of Tibbs, Hutchings and Co.

The building is constructed with iron columns and timber beams throughout. Load bearing walls vary in thickness from 20" to 16".

Powers subsequently, in recent times, became Donaldsons and more recently, Carson, Pirie, Scott. As of July, 1992, the company is owned by B. Bergner & Sons of New Jersey and operates under both the Bergner and Carson, Pirie, Scott names.

The building is presently the location of the Metropolitan Council and several other government agencies. It is connected internally to the Fairbanks-Morse building, and they are collectively referred to as Mears Park Centre.

Fairbanks-Morse Company,
220 East Fifth Street.

Construction of this building was financed by the Noyes Brothers and Cutler Wholesale Drug Co. It cost $45,000 to construct and was occupied for many years by Fairbanks-Morse Co., a manufacturer of scales, boilers, steam pumps, steam engines and windmills. The Fairbanks-Morse Co. was founded in 1830 in Vermont and branches were soon established in principal cities across the country. The St. Paul branch, established in 1878, served much of the Northwest and in 1886 had travelling salesmen who worked in Minnesota, Wisconsin and "Dakota." The firm was also housed at one time in a five story building at the corner of Third and Wacouta Streets.

The firm claimed in 1912 that "You can Depend as much on Fairbanks Scales as upon the Word of Your Family Physician".

Architecturally, this structure combines elements of the Renaissance Revival and the Romanesque styles. Elaborate polychromy with stone and brickwork on the top floor level of the main facade indicate the former style, while the dramatic arches of the three central bays illustrate the latter. Added visual texture is obtained with a stone string course between the 4th and 5th floors, stone window hoods and a classical cornice of pressed tin.

Structurally, the load bearing walls vary in thickness from 28" to 16". Internal framing is mill construction with timber beams and columns throughout. Again, this building provides a good opportunity to study the variations that Stevens

employed to distinguish it from the adjacent Powers Dry Goods Building.

John Wann Building,
350-364 Sibley Street.

This large cream colored building has been altered several times but is probably the oldest building facing Mears Park. It was built at a cost of $25,000 for John Wann, who came to St. Paul in 1865 from Belfast, Ireland after a term in the British Foreign Service in India. Wann also owned property further south in the same block. The first tenant of the building was Noyes Brothers and Cutler wholesale drug company.

The construction of the building is attributed to John Walter Stevens although the original building permit for the structure is lost. From a comparison against other structures by Stevens in the immediate area, this building is atypical of his work.

Originally, the main facade of the building faced Sibley Street and had three bays, a large bracketed cornice of Italianate Style and a central pediment from which a flag was flown. The first floor storefronts featured fixed sash windows within tall rounded arches. Around 1900, several alterations were made. The cornice was removed and the top floor was added. The southern portion of the building was added, possibly in two sections. The upper half of windows was filled in and the entrance was significantly altered.

The building still retains its segmental and rounded arched brick window hoods and brick banding. The building's design changes along Sibley Street from north to south. Seven different window hood styles are used along Sibley and the cornice becomes more elaborate. The southernmost addition to the building has only four stories.

The character of the building is somewhat confusing with the application of a distinctly different belt course between each floor on the Fifth Street facade. Pilasters accent an overall cellular effect of the fenestration.

Masonry walls vary in thickness from 20" to 12", with internal framing being timber except for iron columns on the first floor.

The building remains significant as the oldest structure on Mears Park and possibly the oldest in Lowertown. The building is presently known as the Spin-Knit Building or the Straus Knitting Mills Building.

Gordon and Ferguson Building,
331-364 Sibley Street.

This large straightforward cream colored brick building combines elements of the Classical Revival, such as its cornice, with the Commercial Style. It was designed by well known St. Paul architect Clarence Johnston, Sr., and built at a cost of more than $250,000 for Gordon and Ferguson.

The Gordon and Ferguson firm was established in 1879 and specialized in leather goods such as hats, caps and furs. In 1886, when the firm was located at 216-220 E. 4th Street, it was described in the publication "Industries of St. Paul", as "not only the largest establishment dealing in hats here, but also the largest manufacturing fur goods in the United States".

Due to its location on a hill, there are eight stories on the Sibley and 5th Street sides of the building and nine stories on the 4th Street side. The building is fairly unornamented. It has a pressed tin cornice with brackets and dentils. Between the second and third, and the seventh and eighth floors, elaborate belt courses add a more horizontal element to the building. The first floor has a classically inspired entrance.

This is the second of C. A. P. Turner's "Mushroom System" reinforced concrete buildings facing Mears Park. The wall thickness is 16".

The building is currently referred to as the Nalpak Building or more commonly as the "333 Sibley" building as it is graphically identified. It houses a number of businesses and non-profit organizations.

Bishop Block,
371-375 Sibley Street.

This building was constructed ca. 1882-83 as a rental property for Judson Wade Bishop, a former Civil War Brigadier General and engineer who served as the general manager of the St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad which eventually became part of the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railway system.

The building was constructed by Asher Bassford, a St. Paul builder who was the brother of prominent St. Paul architect E. P. Bassford. From 1883 until the start of the Galtier project, the building housed many important St. Paul companies such as the Nicols and Dean Hardware Company, Fairbanks, Morse and Company, Guiterman Brothers and the Goodyear Rubber Company. The last occupant was the Sperry Office Furniture Company.

Originally, this building was a five story, seven bay building which was divided by fire walls into two separate structures which shared a common facade. The building had three cast iron storefronts and at the center of the roofline, there was a large pediment that projected above an elaborate galvanized iron cornice. The six story, four bay building that remained at final demolition in 1980 featured horizontal banding decorated with incised carving in stone and decorative brickwork between stories. The first floor cast iron storefront was clad in vitrilite tile during the 1950's.

The southernmost three bays were demolished in July, 1941. A facsimile of the facade of the northern four bays has been saved and incorporated into the Galtier Center complex.

J. P. Allen Building,
379-381 Sibley Street.

This building, which was constructed in 1888, was one of the most ornate and most sophisticated buildings in the Lowertown area. It was originally constructed as a warehouse for the James P. Allen Wholesale Drug Company and was built for a cost of $33,000. Although the architect is unknown, the attenuated clustered semi-circular brick bands are similar to those found on the St. Paul Building (originally the Germania Bank Building) which was designed by J. Walter Stevens with Harvey Ellis. Since 1922, the building housed the Young Mercantile Company, the Joestling and Schilling Hotel Supply Company and finally, the Butwinick Furniture Outlet Store.

The windows are aligned vertically within rounded arched divisions of molded brick. Very elaborate semicircular projecting lines of brick between window openings coupled with intricate layers of egg and dart molding above a cast iron storefront make this one of the most sophisticated buildings in Lowertown.

A facsimile of the facade of the building was incorporated into the Galtier Center complex. The fifth floor, which was the top floor of the building, has been altered to give the appearance of a sixth floor. This was done to integrate the facade aesthetically with the surrounding structure and the adjacent Bishop Block building. The changes were also necessary to allow the building to function internally with a reasonable purpose.

Sixth and Sibley, SW Corner,
Various buildings.

Very little information is available about the structures that occupied this corner. From the city directory, various businesses have been listed including a hotel, office building, saloon and service station.

From 1887 to 1904, a hotel occupied this corner at the address of 387 Sibley. It was known variously as the Scandia Hotel from 1887 to 1888, the Dahlquist Hotel from 1889 to 1902 and the Grand Hotel from 1903 to 1904. A saloon was built in April, 1898 at the address of 385 Sibley. Listed on the building permit as an "office building", a structure measuring 28' in width and 33' in depth was built in May of 1889. All three of these buildings were demolished in September, 1927.

In September of 1927, a filling station was built on the site and was referenced, at least in the city directory of 1929, as the John Sweeney Oil Co. Building permits indicate that the filling station was demolished in December, 1971.

The site is currently the northeast corner of the Galtier Complex.

Merrill, Greer, Chapman Company,
395-411 Sibley Street.

Merrill, Greer, Chapman Company was a distributor of crockery and chinaware. The company was registered to do business in Minnesota as a Delaware corporation on January 16, 1923.

The buildings that were referred to as the Merrill, Greer, Chapman building were two distinct structures. The building on the corner (395-399) was known as Lyons Block when it was constructed in 1895. The building at 401-411 Sibley was built in 1893 by Gilbert Hill and Company.

The only remaining visual representation of the building that has been found is the photograph of the first Mears Park that appears elsewhere in this brochure. The Merrill Building is directly opposite the viewer at the end of the walkway that leads past the fountain. From that illustration and a partial view of the Sibley facade, the building appears to have been possibly the most dramatically ornate of the buildings that surrounded Mears Park.

The building was six stories in height with apparently two bays of three windows each on the Sibley side and six bays of three windows on the Sixth Street side. Both facades had what appears to have been an elaborate cornice with pediments above the center bays. The partial photograph of July 2, 1947 show cast iron storefronts at the street level and arched center windows in the center of each bay on the second floor.

The window pattern changed on the sixth floor but the framing detail is not clear. What is clear on the photograph however is the elaborate patterning and scrollwork that was on lintels, piers and columns throughout the fenestration.

These buildings are visible in the center of the photograph of the original Smith Park. File photographs show the building on the site on January 23, 1967 and an empty lot on the site on November 9, 1967. Building permits indicate that there was demolition on the site in June, 1974. Photographs show a parking ramp on the site in 1975. The site is presently the location of the main entrance to the apartment complex of Mears Park Place which was constructed in 1979-80.

Definitions

Bay - A vertical division of the exterior or interior of a building marked not by walls but by fenestration, an order, roof compartments, etc.

Bracket - A small supporting piece of stone or other material, often formed of scrolls, to carry a projecting weight.

Corbel - A projecting block, usually of stone, supporting a beam or other horizontal member.

Cornice - Any projecting ornamental moulding along the top of a building that finishes or crowns it.

Course - A continuous layer of stones, bricks, etc. in a wall.

Dentil - A small square block used in cornices of various orders.

Egg and dart molding - A decorative pattern based on alternate eggs and arrow-heads. Commonly found on convex mouldings such as quarter rounds.

Facade - The front or face of a building.

Fenestration - The arrangement of windows in a building.

Italianate - A rectangular style with very wide eaves usually supported by large brackets.

Keystone - The central stone, sometimes carved, of an arch.

Lintel - A horizontal beam or stone bridging an opening.

Modillion - A small bracket, arranged in pairs separated by a square depression, of which a series is frequently used to support the upper member of a cornice.

Pediment - A low-pitched gable above an entryway, door or window.

Pilaster - A shallow pier or rectangular column projecting only slightly from a wall.

Polychromy - The combination of materials in various natural colors to effect articulation of wall surfaces and structure by color as much as by form.

Quoin - Dressed stones at the corner of a building, usually laid so that their faces are alternately large and small.

Renaissance Revival - A style of definite formalism; a tightly contained cube of symmetrical composition containing elements of sixteenth century Italian origin.

Romanesque - A style, the distinguishing features are bulky masonry effects and rounded arch windows.

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