

District 13: Merriam Park-Lexington-Hamline

District 13, known as Merriam Park-Lexington-Hamline, is located in the west central part of St. Paul. The northern boundary extends west along University Avenue from Lexington Parkway to Cleveland Avenue, along Cleveland Avenue to Interstate Highway 94 and along I-94 to the Minneapolis-St. Paul border. The district is bounded by Lexington Parkway on the east, Summit Avenue on the south, and the Mississippi River (the city limits) on the west. In addition to a sizeable residential section, District 13 includes a large part of the Midway commercial and industrial area along University Avenue. It also includes several schools, St. Thomas and Concordia Colleges, various churches and public buildings and some commercial establishments located along the major streets. With the exception of Lake Iris Park and the oldest portions of Merriam Park, which date from the 1880's, much of the rest of present day District 13 was not settled extensively until the early twentieth century. District 13's residential architecture thus represents the panoply of architectural styles found in St. Paul from the mid-1880's to the 1930's, ranging from the Queen Anne to the Pueblo Revival.

One of the first routes through present day District 13 was the Red River Ox Cart Trail established in the 1840's. It ran roughly along what is now St. Anthony Avenue and Interstate 94. It was used by traders bringing pelts, buffalo robes, pemmican, and food to St. Paul and returning to the Red River settlements with oxcarts filled with groceries, hardware, medicine, and supplies. The Old Military Road, running north from Fort Snelling and renamed Snelling Avenue in the 1850's, was another major early route. Among the first settlers in present day Merriam Park were innkeepers such as Donald McDonald and Steven Desnoyer who catered to the Red River traders. They settled on or near the present Town and Country golf course in the area known today as Desnoyer Park, in the western part of District 13.

In 1880 the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad completed its "Short Line", a commuter line linking Minneapolis and St. Paul. It travelled through the north part of Merriam Park roughly along the path of the old oxcart trail. A further impetus to the area's settlement was the construction of the major streetcar lines in the 1890's. Lines were laid along University, Rondo (an avenue which was largely obliterated by the construction of Interstate 94), Snelling, Prior, and Selby Avenues. The Selby Avenue line travelled over the Short Line railroad on the Selby Avenue truss bridge. In 1905 it was extended from Fairview west on Marshall to the Marshall-Lake Street Bridge which had been completed in 1888.

The same year that the Short Line tracks were laid, 1880, Colonel John Merriam, father of Minnesota governor William Merriam, began plans to develop the area which he thought would make an ideal spot for a commuter suburb since it was located roughly between Minneapolis and St. Paul. In 1882 Merriam platted a one hundred and forty acre tract bounded by the Short Line on the north, Dewey Avenue on the east, Marshall Avenue on the south, and Cleveland (then Union) Avenue on the west. He built a depot where the Short Line intersected with Prior Avenue and built the first Longfellow School and established Merriam Park. Unlike the contemporary St. Anthony Park development, Merriam's streets followed a conventional grid-iron plan, and he did not build houses for prospective residents. Instead, he sold lots and stipulated that the houses which were to be built had to cost at least \$1,500 and that they had to be completed within one year of the purchase of the lot. Merriam's venture was quite a success and within two years four additions were laid out expanding the boundaries of the original community.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the oldest parts of Merriam Park have the largest concentration of 1880's houses in District 13. Unfortunately a number of the houses have suffered from both lack of maintenance and insensitive alterations, but enough of the original architectural character survives that consideration should be given to establishing a Merriam Park Historic District. Almost

all are Queen Anne inspired, woodframe houses. Among the most important are the Elam D. Parker House at 2016 W. Merriam Lane, built in 1885; the Annie Martin House at 2018 W. Carroll Avenue, built in 1885; the house at 1996 W. Carroll Avenue, constructed in 1886; the Mark and Mary Fay House at 1921 Carroll Avenue, built in 1886; and the house at 2024 Iglehart, also constructed in 1886. An unusually ornate house which shows Italianate influences is located at 1905 Iglehart. It was built in 1885 and designed by accomplished local architect Augustus Gauger. Also within and near the oldest parts of Merriam Park are a number of impressive Victorian houses dating from the 1890's. The woodframe house at 1941 Selby Avenue, and the brick house next door at 1937 Selby, both built in 1894, are among the most impressive and oldest houses in the area south of Marshall Avenue. Another imposing brick house is located at 1853 Marshall Avenue. It was built in 1896 and designed by Louis Lockwood. The Colonial Revival style Oscar Shepardson House at 1954 Iglehart must have been one of the grandest houses built in Merriam Park in the 1890's though subsequent alterations have marred its character. The identical pair of houses at 1799 and 1803 Dayton Avenue, both built in 1890, are among the most intact Queen Anne patternbook style houses in the area. Each has a polygonal corner tower with a bulbous cap.

A number of sophisticated 1880's and 1890's houses are scattered throughout the eastern end of District 13. The pressed brick Anthony Ambrosini House at 127 N. Lexington Parkway, built in 1886, is one of the oldest houses in the neighborhood directly west of Lexington Parkway. The Esther Grisson House at 1507 Selby Avenue, built in 1890, is by far the most intact of a handful of surviving Victorian houses on this section of Selby. The 1300 block of Summit Avenue has a small group of sophisticated and wonderfully intact 1890's houses including the Colonial Revival style Thomas Yerxa House at 1373 Summit (no. 32), 1890; the Colonial Revival Julia Dibble House at 1317-1319 Summit, built in 1895; and the eclectic, brick Walter and Pierce Butler Double House at 1345-1347

Summit Avenue, designed by Clarence H. Johnston, Sr., in 1895, and recently nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

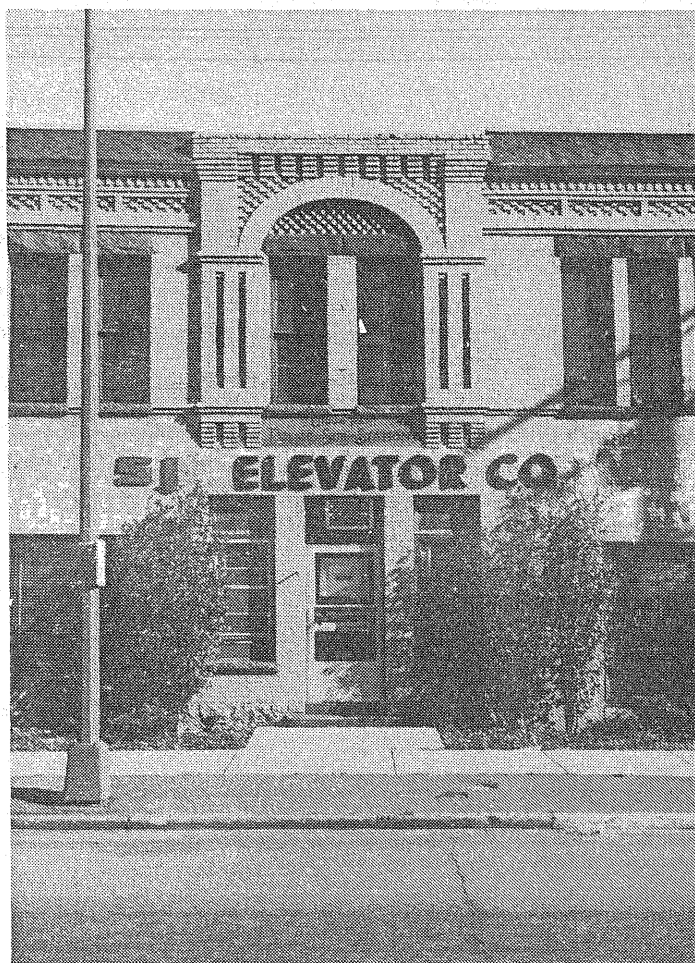


32. 1373 W. Summit Avenue, Thomas E. Yerxa House, 1890, built by Malcolm McKay. (Photo by Gary Phelps)

Not far from the oldest part of Merriam Park is the Iris Park neighborhood, located north of Interstate 94, east of Prior Avenue, south of University Avenue, and west of Fairview Avenue. It was also planned as a middle class residential neighborhood in the 1880's. It was built on the site of a former amusement park, Union Park. Unlike Merriam Park, its winding streets followed the contours of the land and were built around Lake Iris, which was little more than a pond. Lake Iris Park has many fine Victorian houses though most are in poor to fair condition, and many have undergone considerable alterations. Among the most intact are the William and Ada Chamberlin Double House at 1827-1829 W. St. Anthony Avenue, built in 1885; the Reverend Leander Lane House at 403 N. Dewey Street, also built in 1885; the house at 1893 St. Anthony Avenue, constructed in 1887; and the

house at 1917 W. St. Anthony Avenue which was built circa 1890. Though not of the same vintage, another of the more intact and sophisticated houses in the Lake Iris neighborhood is the George H. Carsley House at 451 E. Lynnhurst Avenue, built in 1902 in the Dutch Colonial Revival style, and for a superintendent of construction for Cass Gilbert.

A handful of small brick commercial and public buildings remain from the era when Prior Avenue (which linked Merriam Park and Lake Iris Park) was a major commercial street. The oldest building is



33. 478 N. Prior Avenue, Union Park Police Substation, 1886, designed by Henry R.P. Hamilton. (Photo by Brad Daniels)

the former Union Park Police Substation built in 1886 and designed by Henry R.P. Hamilton who was commissioned by the city to design this building and three other police substations at the same time (no. 33). Though the one in Dayton's Bluff is still standing it has been altered beyond recognition while the Union Park station retains much of its original charm and ornate patterned brickwork. Closer to the former site of the Merriam Park depot is the three story brick Crosby Block at 1956 Feronia Avenue which features a polygonal shape adapted to its unusual lot shape. It has elliptical arches over the windows and a crenelated parapet. South of Interstate 94, also along the east side of Prior Avenue are two small, one story, flat roofed early twentieth century brick buildings -- both built as doctors' offices. The one at 366 N. Prior Avenue was built in 1904 and designed by prominent St. Paul architect Louis Lockwood while the one at 348 N. Prior Avenue was built in 1912 and designed by Peter J. Linhoff, architect of a number of Summit Avenue houses.

One of the prime movers behind the settlement of western parts of present day District 13 was St. Paul's influential Archbishop John Ireland who also played a major role in establishing both the St. Paul Seminary at the end of Summit Avenue (in nearby present day District 14) and the St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary, which was established in 1885. It was the predecessor to St. Thomas College at 2115 Summit Avenue, now one of the major educational institutions in the area. Although St. Thomas was founded in the nineteenth century, its buildings all date from the twentieth century. The oldest building on the campus was originally the infirmary. It was built in 1905 and is now the Catholic Digest building. The Ireland Dormitory, constructed in 1911, is another of the oldest buildings on the campus. The college chapel features a Renaissance inspired design. It was designed in 1916 by Emmanuel Masqueray, architect of St. Paul's Cathedral located at the opposite end of Summit Avenue from St. Thomas College. St. Thomas's major

World War II era buildings, such as Albertus Magnus Hall, 1946, and the O'Shaughnessy Stadium, 1947, are constructed of limestone and feature adaptations of the Collegiate Gothic Revival style, following the style of Aquinas Hall, the administration building which was constructed in 1931. Although it dates from 1958, the O'Shaughnessy Library follows the same stylistic pattern. Consideration should be given to creating an historic district at the campus.

The entire District 13 area was annexed by the city of St. Paul in 1885. Archbishop Ireland hoped in the late 1880's and early 1890's that the St. Paul Cathedral would be built in the area -- the beginning of major efforts to unify Minneapolis and St. Paul with Merriam Park as its city center. The Minnesota legislature announced plans to build a new state capitol, in 1891, during the tenure of Governor William Merriam, son of the promoter of Merriam Park, Colonel Merriam. Colonel Merriam hoped that the new state capitol would be built in Merriam Park and even offered a twenty acre site where the Town and Country Club golf course is now located.

The new state capitol was eventually built in downtown St. Paul and Merriam Park never became the great civic center which Ireland and Merriam envisioned. However, the entire Merriam Park-Lexington-Hamline area prospered in the early twentieth century when block after block of simple, box-like, Colonial Revival style houses were built close to one another on the major east-west streets in the eastern and central parts of the district. Interspersed in this area are occasional aberrations from the Colonial Revival -- such as Tudor Revival, Craftsman, and Prairie styles.

A number of the most interesting early twentieth century houses in the district employ variations on the Tudor Revival style, sometimes with Craftsman elements. Among the most sophisticated, imaginative, and intact examples of the Tudor Revival style are the Frank J. Waterous House at 1591 W. Summit

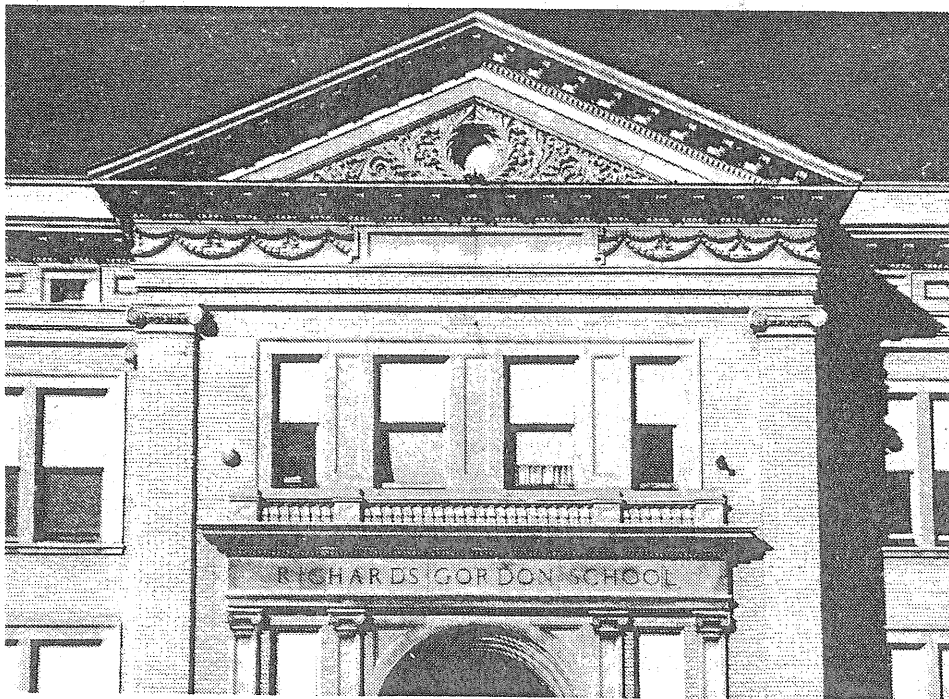
Avenue, 1904; the Herbert Green House at 63 N. Lexington Parkway, 1905; the Albert J. Nason House at 2135 Iglehart Avenue, 1908; the George St. Ledger House at 143 N. Lexington Parkway, 1908; the W.D. Jamieson House at 1908 Selby Avenue, 1912; the house at 2148 Iglehart Avenue, 1912; and the Alton G. Ray House at 2177 Iglehart, 1915. Excellent examples of the Craftsman and Bungalow styles include the house at 1730 W. Dayton Avenue, 1908; the house at 1852 Ashland Avenue, circa 1910; the Henry Hankee House at 2040 Ashland Avenue, 1910; and the house at 2000 W. Marshall Avenue, circa 1915. A unique house combining English Arts and Crafts contours with Prairie School detailing is located at 1460 W. Ashland Avenue. It was built in 1925 and designed by Charles Saxby Elwood. The Albert Wunderlich House at 1599 Portland, built in 1915, is the finest Prairie style house in the district. Also of note is the Prairie style duplex at 1205 Summit Avenue, built in 1922 and designed, owned, and occupied by William Keefe who designed a similar duplex at 863-865 Linwood Avenue in present day District 16. Eclectic designs from the early twentieth century include the shingled Fred Banister House at 2127 Marshall, built in 1908, and the formal, Spanish inspired B.M. Hirschman House at 1855 Summit Avenue, built in 1916.

Mississippi River Boulevard and nearby residential streets in the far western part of the district were the last part of the area to be developed. There can be found many excellent examples of the various Period Revival styles common in the 1920's and 1930's. Unfortunately the city's building permit records for this period are incomplete and architects of few of the houses in this area were identified, although the scale and splendor of many of them suggest that they were probably designed by the city's most talented architects. Two of the most impressive Tudor inspired fantasies are the A.C. Jefferson House at 71 Otis Lane, 1925, and the imaginative house at 54 Otis Lane. A number of the houses in the area feature Spanish Colonial and Mission Revival designs,

such as the house at 472 Otis Avenue, built in 1919, and the house at 422 N. Mississippi River Boulevard, circa 1925. An exotic and charming addition to the area is the Pueblo inspired house at 510 W. Frontenac Place, circa 1925. The Brooks House at 176 N. Mississippi River Boulevard, designed by Clarence H. Johnston, Sr., in 1921 and now known as Eastcliff, is the home of the University of Minnesota President. It is among the more recent versions of the New England Colonial Revival style in the area.

It is not surprising that many of the non-residential landmarks in present day District 13 were built during the area's growth years -- the opening decades of the twentieth century. The Olivet Congregational Church at 1850 Iglehart Avenue was built from 1907-15 and features Tudor Revival, Craftsman, and Gothic Revival elements. The Merriam Park Presbyterian Church at 203 N. Howell Street, 1912, features an adaptation of Gothic and Tudor styles. The Central Baptist Church, 420 N. Roy Street, 1913, is one of very few Prairie style churches in St. Paul. The eclectic St. Mark's Rectory at 2001 Dayton Avenue, 1917, combines Tudor Revival and Jacobean elements. Two clubhouses in Merriam Park have remained in continuous operation and have undergone no exterior alterations -- the Triune Masonic Lodge at 1898 Iglehart, built in 1910 and listed with the National Register of Historic Places, and the Charles Thompson Hall at 1824 Marshall, 1916, which serves as a social center for metropolitan area deaf people.

Several significant early twentieth century public buildings remain in the district, including the Beaux Arts inspired Richards Gordon School at 1619 Dayton Avenue (no. 34), 1911; and the St. Paul Water Department Store Houses at 289 N. Hamline Avenue, built in 1913-14 and designed by City Architect Charles Hausler and his then partner, William Alban. The Henry Hale Merriam Park Branch Library, 1831 W. Marshall Avenue, 1930, is very similar to the Hamline branch built at the same time.



34. 1619 W. Dayton Avenue, Richards Gordon School, 1911, designed by Ray Gauger. (Photo by Brad Daniels)

In addition to the previously mentioned commercial buildings remaining on Prior Avenue, a cluster of commercial structures remains on Marshall Avenue, between Hamline and Snelling, including the Midway Lime and Cement Company at 1400-1410 Marshall, 1914; three non-standardized gas station and garage designs dating from the late 1920's to 1930 -- two at 1344 Marshall and one across the street at 1345 Marshall; and the Spanish Colonial influenced A.J. Koch Company at 1535 Marshall, built in 1934. One of the largest and most elegant buildings in the district on University Avenue is the St. Paul Casket Company, built in 1922 at 1222 University Avenue, and now the home of a design firm. The North Star Driving School building at 308 N. Snelling Avenue, circa 1935, is one of the smallest and probably the finest examples of the Art Deco style in the area.

In addition to the above mentioned identified potential historic districts -- the College of St. Thomas, Merriam Park, and the Mississippi River Boulevard area -- it is suggested that the existing Historic Hill Districts be extended west along Summit Avenue to the Mississippi River. Following is a list of sites already nominated to the National Register of Historic Places (both have yet to be designated by the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission); a listing of sites identified by the Historic Sites Survey staff as being eligible for designation with the National Register of Historic Places and/or the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission; a list of additional sites of major significance; and a list of the recommended potential historic districts. Approximate locations of the sites are shown on the accompanying map.

DISTRICT 13

Sites Already Designated

1. 1898 W. Iglehart Avenue, Triune Masonic Lodge (on National Register; eligible for H.P.C.)
2. 1345-1347 W. Summit Avenue, Walter and Pierce Butler Double house (on National Register; eligible for H.P.C.)

Sites Eligible for Designation

3. 1619 W. Dayton Avenue, Richards Gordon School
4. 1956 W. Feronia Avenue, Crosby Block
5. 1850 W. Iglehart Avenue, Olivet Congregational Church
6. 1905 W. Iglehart Avenue, House
7. 63 N. Lexington Parkway, Herbert S. Green House
8. 127 N. Lexington Parkway, Anthony Ambrosini House
9. West Marshall Avenue at N. Mississippi River Boulevard, Marshall-Lake Bridge
10. 2000 W. Marshall Avenue, House
11. 176 N. Mississippi River Boulevard, Eastcliff
12. 1599 W. Portland Avenue, Albert Wunderlich House
13. 478 N. Prior Avenue, Union Park Police Substation

Additional Sites of Major Significance

14. 1460 W. Ashland Avenue, House
15. 1852 W. Ashland Avenue, House
16. 2040 W. Ashland Avenue, Henry Hankee House
17. 1921 W. Carroll Avenue, Mark and Mary Fay House
18. 1996 W. Carroll Avenue, House
19. 2018 W. Carroll Avenue, Annie Martin House

20. 1730 W. Dayton Avenue, House
21. 1799 W. Dayton Avenue, William O'Brien House
22. 2001 W. Dayton Avenue, St. Mark's Rectory
23. 403 N. Dewey Street, Rev. Leander Lane House
24. 510 W. Frontenac Place, House
25. 289 N. Hamline Avenue, St. Paul Water Department Storehouses
26. 203 N. Howell Street, Merriam Park Presbyterian Church
27. 1954 W. Iglehart Avenue, Oscar P. Shepardson House
28. 2024 W. Iglehart Avenue, House
29. 2135 W. Iglehart Avenue, Albert J. Nason House
30. 2148 W. Iglehart Avenue, House
31. 2177 W. Iglehart Avenue, Alton G. Ray House
32. 143 N. Lexington Parkway, George St. Ledger House
33. 451 E. Lynnhurst Avenue, George H. Carsley House
34. 1344 W. Marshall Avenue, Gas Station
35. 1345 W. Marshall Avenue, Tracy Oil Company
36. 1400-1410 W. Marshall Avenue, Midway Lime and Cement Company
37. 1535 W. Marshall Avenue, A.J. Koch Company
- Site 38. 1824 W. Marshall Avenue, Charles Thompson Memorial Hall
- demo 39. 1831 W. Marshall Avenue, Henry Hale Memorial Library, Merriam Park Branch
40. 1853 W. Marshall Avenue, House
41. 2127 W. Marshall Avenue, Fred J. Banister House
42. 2016 W. Merriam Lane, Elam D. Parker House
43. 422 N. Mississippi River Boulevard, House
44. 472 N. Otis Avenue, House

45. 54 Otis Lane, House
46. 71 Otis Lane, A.C. Jefferson House
47. 348 N. Prior Avenue, Doctor's Office
48. 366 N. Prior Avenue, Merriam Park Professional Building
49. 420 N. Roy Street, Central Baptist Church
50. 1827-1829 W. St. Anthony Avenue, William and Ada Chamberlin House
51. 1893 W. St. Anthony Avenue, House
52. 1917 W. St. Anthony Avenue, House
53. Selby Avenue Truss Bridge
54. 1507 W. Selby Avenue, Esther Grisson House
55. 1908 W. Selby Avenue, W.D. Jamieson House
56. 1937 W. Selby Avenue, House
57. 1941 W. Selby Avenue, House
58. 308 N. Snelling Avenue, North Star Driving School
- SW 59. 1205 W. Summit Avenue, William F. Keefe House
- SW 60. 1317-1319 W. Summit Avenue, Julia B. Dibble House
- SW 61. 1373 W. Summit Avenue, T.E. Yerxa House
- SW 62. 1591 W. Summit Avenue, Frank J. Waterous House
- SW 63. 1855 W. Summit Avenue, B.M. Hirschman House
64. 1222 W. University Avenue, St. Paul Casket Company

Potential Historic Districts

2115 W. Summit Avenue, College of Saint Thomas

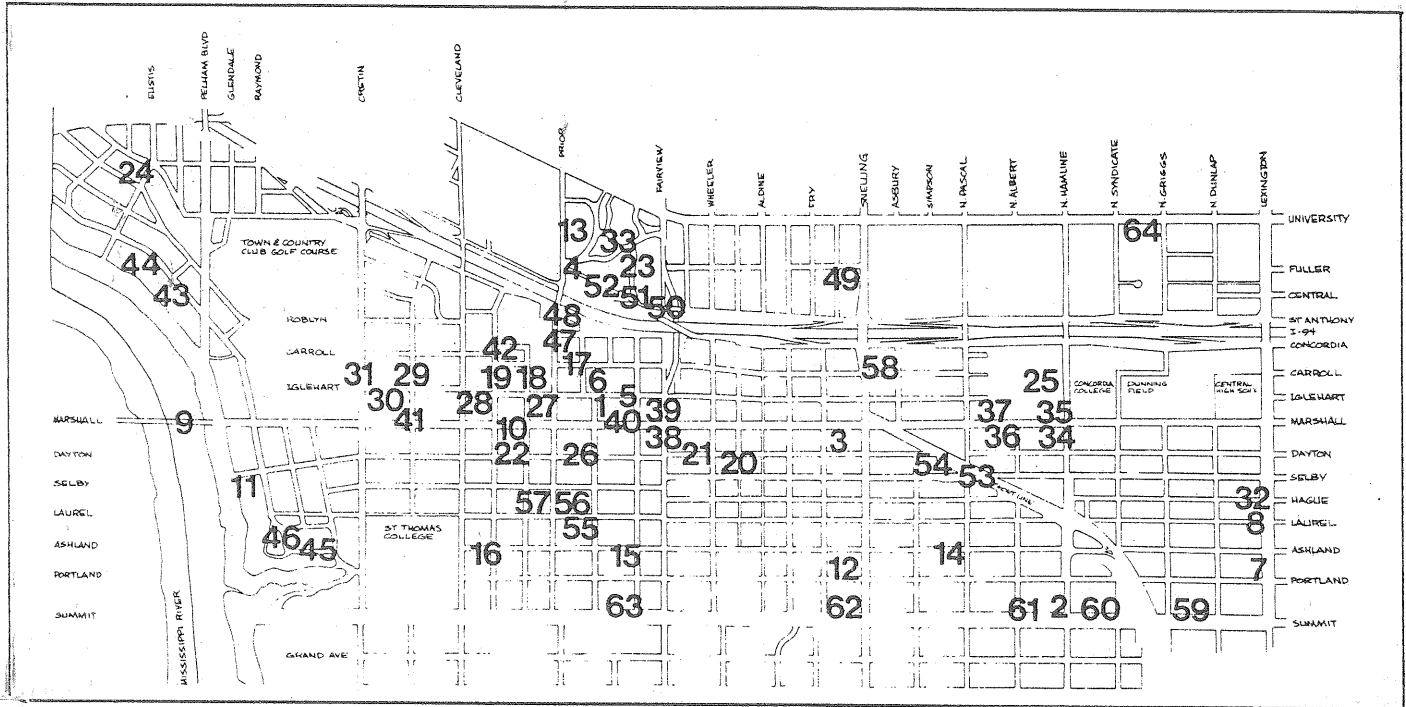
Merriam Park Historic District

Mississippi River Boulevard area Historic District

SW Potential expansion of Historic Hill District west along Summit Avenue

MAP 13

DISTRICT 13



1197 Selby Ave Anna Ramsey