

District 15: Highland

District 15, known as Highland, is located in the extreme southwestern corner of St. Paul. It is bounded on the north by Randolph Avenue, on the east by Interstate 35E and on the south and west by the Mississippi River. Highland Park is a residential area developed after World War I although a number of notable much older houses survive. A shopping area is clustered around the intersection of Cleveland Avenue and Ford Parkway. It also includes an area of light industry south of West Seventh Street and the large Ford Motor Company plant at Mississippi River Boulevard and Ford Parkway. The Highland area is also the home of several well-known private schools including Derham Hall, Cretin High School, St. Paul Academy/Summit School and the College of St. Catherine.

Ironically, what is now District 15 contained Ramsey County's first would be permanent settlements, but was one of the last residential areas in the city to be densely populated. This quirk resulted from conditions relating to Fort Snelling and its military reservation. Fort Snelling was established in 1819. Colonel Henry Leavenworth, its early commander, brought with him from Prairie du Chien Jean Baptiste Faribault, a Metis trader who occupied Pike Island with his family from 1822 to 1826 in the first, short-lived, attempted settlement in Ramsey County. A number of Swiss families from the Selkirk Colony settled around Fort Snelling and at least six of them moved across the river to near the present intersection of Elsie Land and Ford Parkway in Highland Park. This group, which included the legendary Pierre (Pig's Eye) Parrant, was expelled in 1840 when the fort's commander expanded the reservation's boundary north to present day Marshall Avenue and east to the vicinity of what is now known as Seven Corners, totally engulfing the Highland area. Historian Edward Neill states that nevertheless some French families continued to live in the area and a ferry operator lived in a home along the Mississippi River opposite the fort.

The 1849 survey of the reservation land was an impetus for settlement. In 1850, Irish immigrant William Davern made an unofficial claim on one hundred and sixty acres south of current day Montreal Avenue and north of the river bluffs between Snelling and Fairview Avenues. Davern's imposing Italianate style wood farmhouse, circa 1862, still stands at 1173 S. Davern Street. Another early claimant for land in the area whose house is also standing, though in much altered form, was Frederick Rudolph Knapheide. Knapheide and his wife Catherine Wilhelmina acquired a one hundred and twenty-four acre tract of land and built the house at 2064 Randolph Avenue in 1857.

Davern was among the first to organize schools in Reserve Township, as the area became known in 1858 when Ramsey County was divided into six townships at the time Minnesota became a state. The first school was built at Randolph and Snelling in 1860 and was known as Webster School No. 9. It was replaced in 1870-71 by the limestone Mattocks School which has since been moved to the grounds of the Highland Park High School. The population of the area grew very slowly during the early years -- it increased from two hundred and forty-nine to only four hundred and ninety in 1880. Although Fort Road between Fort Snelling and downtown St. Paul was completed in 1859, no bridge spanning the river between Fort Snelling and Reserve Township was built until 1880. A small resort hotel trade was gradually established along the river banks across from the Fort and flourished until the turn of the century. Among the early industries in the area was the Union Stock Yards, established in 1875, near the present sites of the Shell Oil tank field and the path of Interstate 35E.

Reserve Township was annexed by the city of St. Paul in 1887. Shortly thereafter, in 1891, streetcar tracks were laid from Tuscarora to the river along West Seventh Street and from West Seventh Street along Randolph to the river. The projected 1890's boom in the area never occurred, largely because of the Panic of 1893.

In 1894 dairy proprietor Charles Sattler built the house at 643 S. Hamline Avenue -- the first house constructed on the west side of Hamline, south of Randolph Avenue.

During the first two decades of the twentieth century Edgecumbe Road was graded from south of Summit Avenue to Mississippi River Boulevard and it became the center of a fashionable residential area. A handful of houses were built along Mississippi River Boulevard during this period, including the house at 1590 S. Mississippi River Boulevard, built in 1906, the site of an elegant prohibition era speakeasy known as the Hollyhocks Inn. A few houses were also built near Fort Road/West Seventh Street and the Mississippi River. One of the more intact such places is the tiny 1½ story gabled roof house at 1856 Graham Avenue built in 1908. During this same period Derham Hall and the College of St. Catherine on Randolph Avenue at Cleveland Avenue were established. Many of these building were constructed between 1904 and World War I from designs by John H. Wheeler. The Tudor inspired St. Paul Academy at 1712 Randolph was constructed in 1916 while Cretin High School at 555 S. Hamline was built in 1927 in an adaptation of the Collegiate Gothic style.

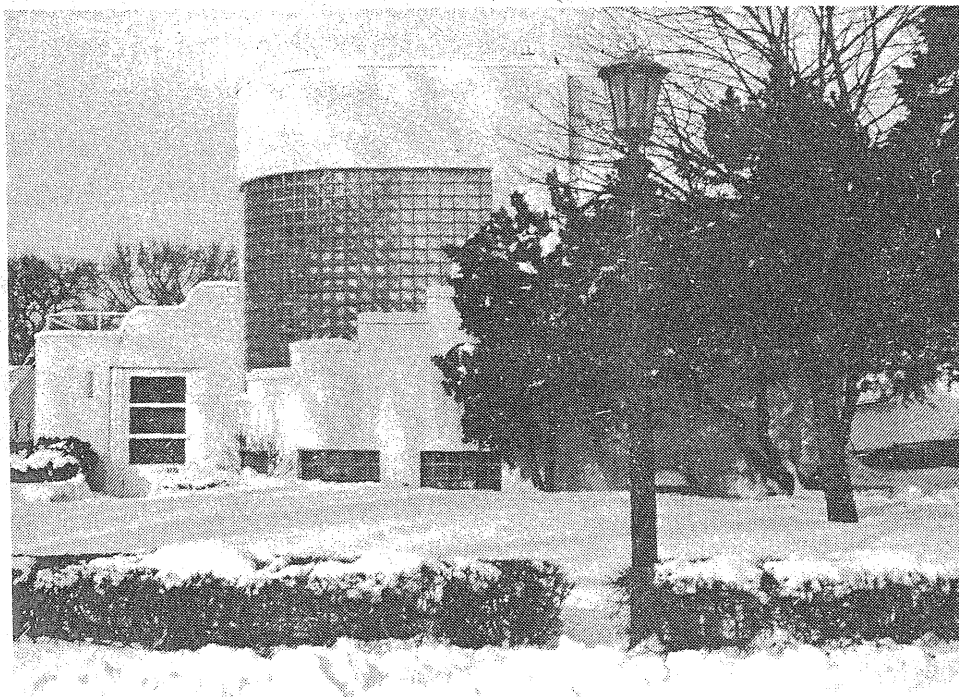
Highland Park grew tremendously beginning in the 1920's. In 1923 streetcar tracks were laid on Cleveland Avenue to Ford Parkway and down Ford Parkway to the river. The Ford Motor Company assembly plant began operation at 966 S. Mississippi River Boulevard in 1926, providing jobs for many area residents. The following year the Highland Ford Parkway Bridge was completed, and the Highland Park Reservoir was planned. The water tower was constructed in 1929. Several housing developments were planned and the Highland Park Pavilion, now the golf club, was built at 103 Montreal in 1929. Other amenities such as the pedestrian bridge over Montreal Avenue in Highland Park lured residents to the area.

During the Depression a number of new houses were built between Randolph Avenue and Ford Parkway along Edgecumbe Road. The sophisticated Art Deco style Horace Mann School at 2001 W. Eleanor Avenue was constructed in 1930-31. Hidden Falls Park was completed in 1932. The Highland pool, built by the Works Progress Administration, opened in 1936. The



38. 760 S. Cleveland Avenue, Highland Theater, 1939, designed by Myrtus Wright. (Photo by Brad Daniels)

Highland Village Shopping Center and Highland Village apartment complex southwest of the intersection of Cleveland Avenue and Ford Parkway both opened in 1939. Among the most distinguished buildings from this period are the wonderful Streamlined Moderne style Highland Theater at 760 S. Cleveland Avenue (no. 38), 1939, and the daring Streamlined Moderne style house at 1775 Hillcrest Avenue (no. 39) also built in 1939 and one of few houses ever built in the city



39. 1775 Hillcrest Avenue, House, 1939, designed by Lirmerger and Purtell. (Photo by Brad Daniels)

in this style. Less innovative architecturally but of historical interest to the community is the contemporary Edyth Bush Little Theater built in the Tudor Revival style at 690 S. Cleveland Avenue in 1940.

Following World War II the population of Highland increased tremendously, many new houses and apartment buildings were constructed, the Highland Village Shopping Center was expanded and the Sibley Plaza Shopping Center on West Seventh Street was erected. Voter approval allocated funding for Shepherd Road in 1953 and the highway, completed in 1966, provides downtown St. Paul with easy access to the Twin Cities airport, via Highland Park. Shepherd Road soon became a favored spot for light industry, and more recently for condominium developments.

To date no buildings have been designated as historic sites in Highland Park. Following is a list of sites which the Historic Sites Survey staff believes are eligible for listing with either the National Register of Historic Places and/or the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, and a list of additional sites of major significance. Approximate locations of the sites are shown on the accompanying map. It is also suggested that consideration be given to designating the buildings at the College of St. Catherine at 1800 W. Randolph Avenue and at the Sisters of St. Joseph Provincialate at 2004 W. Randolph Avenue as an historic district.

DISTRICT 15

Sites Already Designated--none

Sites Eligible for Designation

1. 760 S. Cleveland Avenue, Highland Theater
- Site 2. 1173 S. Davern Street, William Davern Farmhouse
3. 1775 W. Hillcrest Avenue, House
4. 1403 W. Montreal Avenue, Highland Park Pavilion
5. 1015 S. Snelling Avenue, Webster School #9 (now known as Mattock's School--has been moved so is eligible for H.P.C. but not National Register)

Additional Sites of Major Significance

6. 690 S. Cleveland Avenue, Edyth Bush Theater
7. 2001 W. Eleanor Avenue, Horace Mann School
8. W. Ford Parkway at S. Mississippi River Boulevard, Highland Ford Bridge
9. 1856 W. Graham Avenue, Hollering House
10. 555 S. Hamline Avenue, Cretin High School
11. 643 S. Hamline Avenue, Charles Sattler House
12. 616 S. Mississippi River Boulevard, Temple of Aaron
13. 966 S. Mississippi River Boulevard, Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant
14. 1590 S. Mississippi River Boulevard, Hollyhocks Inn
15. Montreal Avenue, Highland Park, Pedestrian Bridge over Montreal Avenue
16. 1712 W. Randolph Avenue, St. Paul Academy
17. 2064 W. Randolph Avenue, Frederick Rudolph and Catherine Knapheide House

Potential Historic Districts

1800 and 2004 W. Randolph Avenue, College of Saint Catherine and Sisters of St. Joseph Provincialate

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