

District 16: Summit Hill

District 16, known as Summit Hill, is bounded by Ramsey Street on the east, the proposed Interstate 35E parkway link on the south-east to Jefferson Avenue, the Shortline (originally the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul railroad) on the west, and Summit Avenue on the north. Summit Hill is separated from the West Seventh Street neighborhood by the bluffs. Summit Hill is largely residential in character though it does include the Grand Avenue commercial strip, Linwood Elementary School, and Linwood Park. The residential sections of Summit Hill include Grand Hill and Crocus Hill and hundreds of houses of historical and architectural interest to the city. Much of the Summit Hill area is within the National Register Historic Hill District and a small portion is within the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission's Historic Hill District.

Although present day Summit Hill was part of the nine mile stretch of land along the Mississippi River that Lieutenant Zebulon Pike acquired in 1805 for the construction of a fort, little settlement occurred until 1854 when land was auctioned to the public and the area began to be settled by dairy and truck farmers who sold their produce in St. Paul. The city annexed parts of Summit Hill in 1854 and 1885.

By the 1860's Summit Hill began to develop as a fashionable residential neighborhood for wealthy St. Paul residents who wanted to move away from more central residential neighborhoods close to the business district such as Irvine Park and Lafayette Park in Lowertown. The Burbank-Livingston-Griggs House at 432 Summit Avenue, a National Register site, was one of the first mansions built on Summit Hill. It is an excellent example of the Italianate style, complete with cupola and ornate brackets.

Grand Avenue was platted in 1871 by William S. Wright and John Wann, officials of the St. Paul Railway Company who were responsible for the operation of the first horse drawn streetcar line on Grand Avenue in 1872. By 1890 the Twin City Railway Company built an electric streetcar line on Grand Avenue and the streetcars



40. 846 W. Lincoln Avenue, House, ca. 1880, architect and builder unknown. Site of the Babies Home of St. Paul beginning in 1891. This is an excellent example of the Italianate style. (Photo by Gary Phelps)

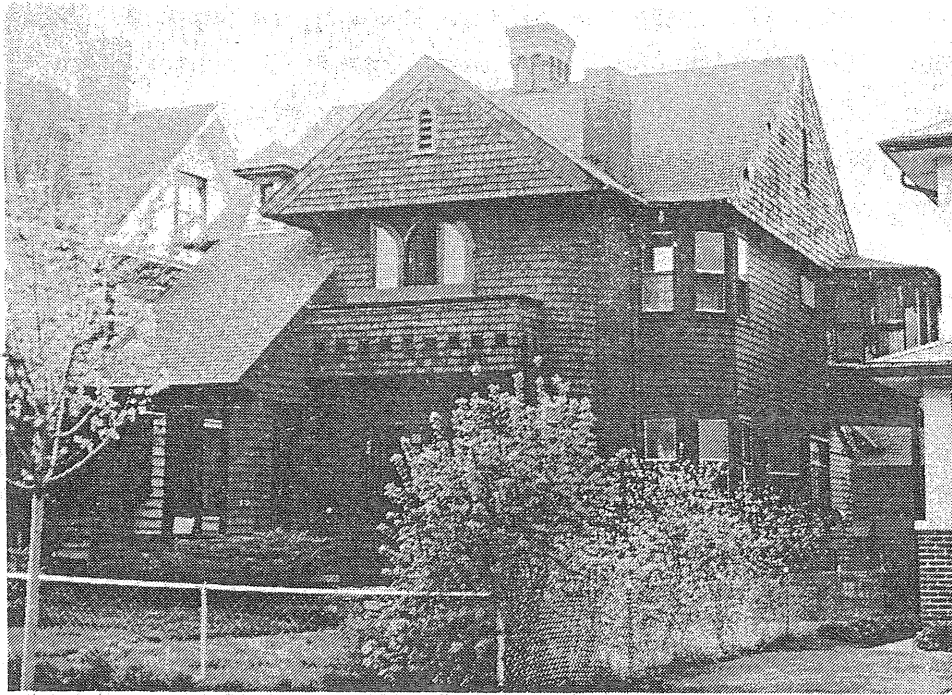
led to an influx of moderate income residents to the area. Like many St. Paul streetcar lines, Grand Avenue developed with commercial blocks at the major intersections interspersed with houses and apartment buildings. One of the oldest and most architecturally significant houses still standing on Grand Avenue in the district is the early 1880's 2½ story brick gabled roof house at 727 W. Grand Avenue. It has tall narrow windows and carved porch woodwork typical of the Italianate style. No commercial buildings on Grand Avenue in District 16 were found to be of major architectural significance.

Settlement of the Summit Hill area generally occurred first in the eastern part of the district along the bluffs and along the eastern end of Summit Avenue. Although substantial numbers of houses were surveyed in the eastern parts of the district which date from the late 1880's to the early 1890's, houses of that period are the

exception rather than the rule in the western parts of the neighborhood. In the late 1890's and early twentieth century many houses were built in the western parts of the Summit Hill area, and large brick apartment buildings and a few rowhouses were constructed along and near Grand Avenue.

As was expected, the Survey team found that architects who designed buildings in Summit Hill and the original residents of the area represent a virtual "Who's Who" of influential architects and the city's most prominent social, political and business leaders. Because such a high percentage of buildings in Summit Hill are intact and often outstanding examples of architectural styles ranging from the Italianate to the Georgian Revival styles, the survey of Summit Hill was very time consuming.

A small cluster of late 1880's to early 1890's houses is located in the southwestern part of Summit Hill, in the 900 block of St. Clair Avenue. This includes the Queen Anne style house at 962 St. Clair Avenue designed by local architect John H. Coxhead in 1888, and the Victorian Hiram H. Backus House at 956 St. Clair Avenue built in 1890. While many of the woodframe houses built in the neighborhood are variations on the Queen Anne and the Colonial Revival styles, there are a handful of excellent examples of the Shingle style which never achieved tremendous popularity in St. Paul. Among them are the Martha and William Horne House at 993 Lincoln Avenue (no. 41) built in 1890, and the John Cahill House at 1020 Lincoln Avenue which was built in 1900 according to the building permit, though stylistic evidence would suggest an earlier date of construction. Summit Hill also has a fair number of examples of the Tudor Revival style which was employed primarily between 1905 and World War I. An adaptation of the Tudor Revival style was used in the construction of Summit School, 1150 Goodrich Avenue, designed by Clarence Johnston in 1914.



41. 993 W. Lincoln Avenue, Martha and William Horne House, 1890, built by John M. Carlson, architect unknown. (Photo by Gary Phelps)

While the majority of the houses in the Summit Hill area are of woodframe construction, most of the rowhouses and apartment buildings were constructed of brick. One of the older multiple unit dwellings is the brick rowhouse at 21-27 St. Albans Street which was built in 1892-93 and features stepped gables, bow windows and Romanesque details such as rounded arched window and door openings. Extremely popular along Grand Avenue and the side streets which flank it were three story, three bay brick apartment blocks with open balconies. Such buildings were built from the late 1890's to 1910 and many have been converted to condominiums. An insensitive aspect of the renovation of many such buildings has been the removal of the three-tiered front porches, one of the distinguishing features of such buildings.



42. 45 S. Avon Street, Apartment Building, 1902, designed by Herman Kretz. Unlike many other apartment buildings of this vintage, these buildings retain their three-tiered open porches. (Photo by Gary Phelps)

The Summit Hill neighborhood has several sophisticated examples of Prairie style architecture dating from 1914-1922. One of the most striking examples is the Frank and Rosa Seifert House at 975 W. Osceola which was built in 1914 from designs by Charles Hausler and Percy Dwight Bentley. A more modest version of the style can be seen in the Malcolm McMillan House at 1058 St. Clair Avenue which was built in 1915 and designed by Ernest Hartford and Charles Hausler. Two late interpretations of the style are the duplex at 863-865 Linwood Avenue designed by W.F. Keefe and the house at 235 S. Lexington Parkway designed by C.E. Peterson.

By the mid-1920's the residential neighborhood in this district must have looked much as it does today -- since then few new buildings have been constructed. The Great Depression

marked the beginning of a four decade decline in the Summit Hill area. A number of houses were converted to boarding houses and duplexes while others were abandoned or suffered from lack of maintenance. During the 1970's the area once again became fashionable and considerable restoration work was undertaken -- both trends that continue today. Fortunately, most of the houses in the Summit Hill area underwent few drastic exterior alterations over the years and today the Summit Hill area and the Summit-University neighborhood to the north have the finest concentration of Victorian and early twentieth century residential architecture in St. Paul.

There are three sites in the Summit Hill area which have already been listed with the National Register of Historic Places, the Burbank-Livingston-Griggs House at 432 Summit Avenue mentioned above, the Frank B. Kellogg House at 633 W. Fairmount, and the Horace and Clotide Irvine House (now the Governor's Mansion) at 1006 W. Summit Avenue.

Substantial portions of the Summit Hill neighborhood are within the National Register Historic Hill District which means that buildings within it cannot be nominated to the National Register individually. The Heritage Preservation Commission's Historic Hill District encompasses only a small portion of the Summit Hill area. Rather than suggesting individual sites for designation within the National Register district for listing with the HPC, it is strongly recommended that the HPC expand the boundaries of its Hill District to match those of the National Register since Summit Hill has block after block of outstanding, architect-designed Victorian and Colonial Revival style houses of outstanding historical and architectural importance. Because it is recommended that the HPC expand its district boundaries, the Survey has recommended for individual designation only those sites which are outside the National Register district.

Following is a list of sites in Summit Hill which have already been designated followed by a list of sites outside the National Register Historic Hill District which were identified as being potentially eligible for designation and a list of additional sites outside the National Register district which are of major architectural or historical significance to the area. The accompanying map indicates the approximate locations of the sites.

DISTRICT 16

Sites Already Designated

1. 633 W. Fairmount Avenue, Frank B. Kellogg House
2. 432 W. Summit Avenue, Burbank-Livingston-Griggs House
3. 1006 W. Summit Avenue, Horace H. and Clotide Irvine House

Sites Eligible for Designation (includes only sites outside of National Register District)*

4. 975 W. Osceola Avenue, Frank and Rosa Seifert House

Additional Sites of Major Significance (includes only sites outside of National Register District)*

5. 1150 W. Goodrich Avenue, Summit School
6. 727 W. Grand Avenue, House
7. 235 S. Lexington Parkway, House
8. 993 W. Lincoln Avenue, Martha and William Horne House
9. 1020 W. Lincoln Avenue, John Cahill House
10. 863-865 W. Linwood Avenue, Duplex
11. 21-27 S. St. Albans Street, Rowhouse
12. 956 W. St. Clair Avenue, Hiram H. Backus House
13. 962 W. St. Clair Avenue, House
14. 1058 W. St. Clair Avenue, Malcolm McMillan House

*It is strongly recommended that the H.P.C. expand the boundaries of its Hill District to match those of the National Register Historic Hill District within Planning District 16. There are hundreds of outstanding, architect-designed, intact Victorian and Colonial Revival style houses of historical and architectural significance in the National Register District which are not in the H.P.C. District. Many of these could be potentially eligible for H.P.C. designation. Therefore, the list above includes only those buildings that are outside the boundaries of the National Register District.

MAP 16

DISTRICT 16

