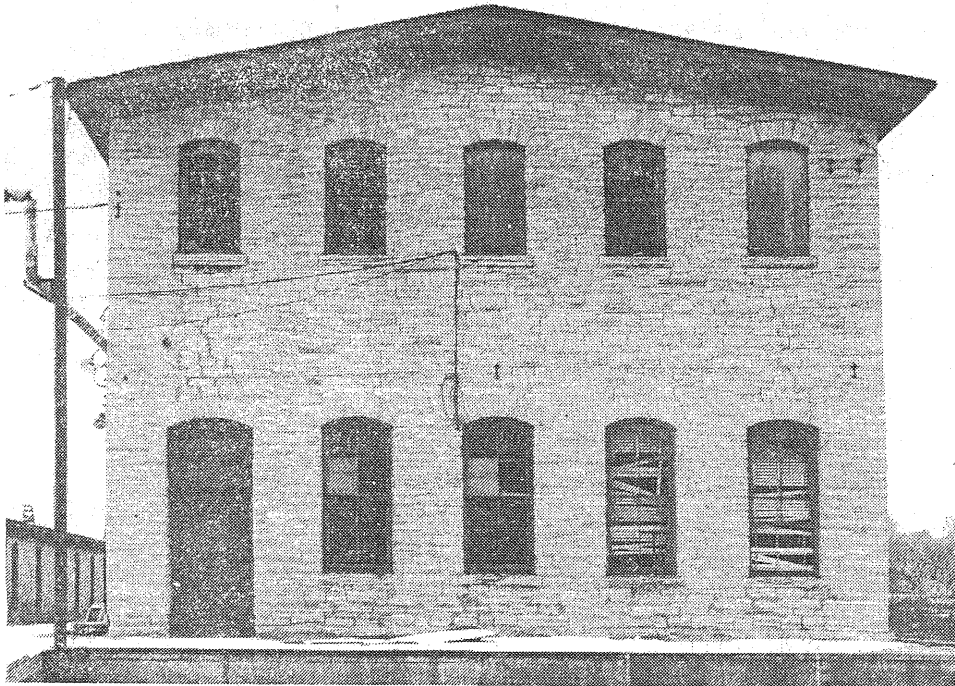


## District 7: Thomas-Dale

District 7, known historically as Frogtown and officially as Thomas-Dale, is located northwest of downtown St. Paul in the north central part of the city. The district is bounded by Lexington Parkway on the west, Interstate 35 E on the east, University Avenue and a one block section of Aurora Avenue on the south, and the Burlington Northern railroad tracks on the north. Although primarily a working and middle class residential neighborhood it contains a substantial number of industrial and important business districts.

The Frogtown area is one of St. Paul's few "inner-ring" neighborhoods, so called because it was settled between the 1860's and the 1880's as the tiny city expanded and settlement spread beyond the limits of present day downtown. A major impetus to the area's settlement was the construction of the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad, now Burlington Northern, which was built across the northern edge of present day District 7 in the early 1880's. Minnesota's first successful locomotive run occurred on these tracks in 1882. That



16. N. Jackson Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, Jackson Street Railroad Shops, 1882. (Photo by Brad Daniels)

same year the Jackson Street railroad shops were established at their present site at Jackson Street and Pennsylvania Avenue (no. 16) near the northeast corner of the district. The railroad shops, abandoned in the early 1970's, provided employment for residents of Frogtown and the nearby North End for over one hundred years. The Jackson Street shops were joined by railroad-related industries established along the same railroad line. The largest and most important of these was the St. Paul Foundry, built in 1901 on the north side of the tracks (technically in District 6) near Como and Western Avenues. The foundry is still in existence under the name Maxson Corporation, and its headquarters building stands at 500 W. Como Avenue. A second set of railroad shops was built by the Great Northern Railroad (successor to the St. Paul and Pacific) at the northeast corner of Dale Street and Minnehaha Avenue around the turn of the century. The Dale Street shops are still in operation at 619 W. Minnehaha Avenue.

Residential development of Frogtown followed an east to west pattern as Poles, Scandinavians, Germans, and Irish found jobs in the railroad shops and related industries and built closely-sited modest woodframe and brick houses. The oldest of these, dating from the 1860's and 1870's, are found south of the Jackson Street Shops along Sherburne, Charles, and Como Avenues east of Rice Street. Considerable urban renewal has obliterated much of the early neighborhood. The Historic Sites Survey staff identified the Greek Revival Henry Morin House at 611 N. Rice Street and the houses at 536 and 545 N. Park Street and 129 W. Como Avenue as the oldest and most intact. The staff discovered the streets extending westward between Rice and Dale Streets are lined with a concentration of working class housing built primarily in the 1880's. These houses are sited on narrow lots, with many examples of two small houses built behind one another on the same lot. They represent many of St. Paul's most important examples of Victorian working class construction, and many have dog-eared and segmental arched window

and door openings, brick window hoods, and frilly intact open porches. Although many of these houses have suffered from insensitive alterations and neglect, a large number are basically intact.



17. 548 W. Van Buren Avenue, Charles Nitz House, 1889, architect and builder unknown. This house is not far from the Dale Street Railroad Shops. (Photo by Gary Phelps)

Much of the residential development west of Dale Street occurred in the 1890's. The Historic Sites Survey identified a number of vernacular versions of the Queen Anne, Eastlake and Colonial Revival styles, and many remain basically intact. On streets west of approximately Victoria Street, the Survey staff discovered houses of slightly later vintage, including bungalows and one fine Prairie Style house at 516 N. Lexington Parkway.

District 7 contains a large number of churches and schools, most of which have ethnic origins and many of which are architecturally significant. Most important is the Church of St. Agnes, which was

founded by German Catholics and was designed by George J. Ries showing the influence of Middle European Baroque churches. It was built between 1909 and 1912 and stands at 550 W. Lafond Avenue. It has been placed on the National Register, but is not a St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission Site. Other Catholic churches important to the history of the community include St. Adalbert's Church at 256 Charles, founded by Polish immigrants and built in 1909-10, accompanied by the neighboring St. Adalbert's School; and St. Vincent's Church at 651 Virginia Street, constructed in 1889, accompanied by the neighboring St. Vincent's School (now the American Indian Movement's Red School House). Important Protestant churches identified by the Survey include the University Avenue Congregational Church at 868 W. Sherburne, designed by Clarence H. Johnston, Sr. and built in 1909; the Beaux Arts Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church at 105 W. University Avenue; the Gothic Revival Trinity Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church at 515 N. Farrington Street; and the Gothic Revival St. Matthew's Lutheran Church at 507 N. Dale Street.



18. 573 N. St. Albans Street, St. Albans Grocery, 1898, designed by George Ries. The original owner, occupant, and proprietor of the grocery was Andrew Ries. (Photo by Patricia Murphy)

Commercial development in District 7 was linked historically to the establishment of streetcar lines, between 1881 and 1906 on University, Como, and Thomas Avenues, Rice and Dale Streets, and Lexington Parkway. The busiest of these streetcar routes was the University Avenue line, and it became St. Paul and Minneapolis' first interurban streetcar line in 1890.

University Avenue remains one of St. Paul's most important commercial streets. It contains a number of Victorian and turn of the century commercial buildings, most of which have been altered at street level. Among the most intact and architecturally interesting are the Ford Building at 117 W. University Avenue, the M. Schott Building at 935-937 W. University Avenue, and the Victoria Theater at 825 W. University Avenue. See the Survey findings in District 8 for a discussion of commercial buildings on the south side of University Avenue between Rice Street and Lexington Parkway, technically in Planning District 8. Rice and Dale Streets, two additional important business thoroughfares, also contain concentrations of late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial buildings. These include buildings at 516-518, 520, and 550-552 N. Rice Street and



19. 500-502 W. Sherburne Avenue, Commercial Building, 1887, designed by Carl Vogel. (Photo by Gary Phelps)

the building at 639 N. Dale Street. Other basically intact neighborhood commercial buildings, most of which were built at the intersections of streetcar lines, include the nearly identical corner blocks at 629 N. Kent Street and 573 N. St. Albans Street (no. 18) and the buildings at 434-438 W. Lafond Avenue, 500-502 W. Sherburne Avenue (no. 19), and 720 Western Avenue.

The Historic Sites Survey staff also identified examples of Roadside Architecture and miscellaneous building types in District 7. These include the Period Revival gas stations at 631 N. Dale Street and 703 W. University Avenue; Night Train, a pair of railroad coaches converted into a bar, at 289 W. Como Avenue; two turn of the century open truss bridges at the intersection of Como and Western Avenues; the W.P.A.-built Minnehaha Playground Building at 685 W. Minnehaha Avenue; and the barn at 619 N. Rice Street, one of the largest and most interesting out-buildings in St. Paul beyond the Historic Hill district.

The Frogtown or Thomas-Dale neighborhood has been largely unappreciated for its architectural value. This is unfortunate since the area continues to be one of the city's most intact working class neighborhoods with a large number of historically and architecturally significant buildings deserving preservation.

At present, the Church of St. Agnes is the only building in District 7 which has been placed on the National Register. Following is a list of sites which the Historic Sites Survey staff believes are potentially eligible for listing with the National Register and/or the Heritage Preservation Commission, followed by a list of sites of major significance, and a listing of a potential Frogtown Historic District. Approximate locations of the sites are shown on the accompanying map. It is also suggested that the Jackson Street Railroad Shops be designated as an historic district.

DISTRICT 7

Sites Already Designated

1. 550 W. Lafond Avenue, St. Agnes Church (see #10)

Sites Eligible for Designation

2. Como Avenue Bridge at Western
3. 129 W. Como Avenue, House
4. 481-483 W. Edmund Avenue, Double House
5. 567 W. Edmund Avenue, Charles F. Buetow House
6. 515 N. Farrington Street, Trinity Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church
7. 620 N. Farrington Street, Joseph Kiefner House
- designated 8. N. Jackson Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, Jackson Street Shops
9. 271 W. Lafond Avenue, House
10. 550 W. Lafond Avenue, St. Agnes Church (now on N.R., potentially eligible for H.P.C.)
11. 698 W. Lafond Avenue, Hermann A. E. Trapp House
- demo 12. 611 N. Rice Street, Henry Morin House
13. 543 W. Sherburne Avenue, House
14. 566 W. Sherburne Avenue, Herman Maas House
15. 868 W. Sherburne Avenue, University Avenue Congregational Church
16. 683 W. Thomas Avenue, House
17. 105 W. University Avenue, Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church
18. 707 N. Virginia Street, House
19. Western Avenue Bridge at Como

Additional Sites of Major Significance

20. 538 W. Blair Avenue, Houses
21. 559 N. Capitol Boulevard, Bethesda Hospital
22. 112 W. Charles Avenue, House
23. 121 W. Charles Avenue, House
24. 231 W. Charles Avenue, House
25. 243 W. Charles Avenue, St. Adalbert's Church
26. 282 W. Charles Avenue, Peter J. Bjerke House
27. 337 W. Charles Avenue, House
28. 514 W. Charles Avenue, House
- turned — 29. 289 W. Como Avenue, Miller Coaches (now Night Train)
30. 507 N. Dale Street, St. Matthew's Lutheran Church
31. 631 N. Dale Street, Gas Station
32. 639 N. Dale Street, Commercial Building
33. 260 W. Edmund Avenue, St. Adalbert's School
34. 614 W. Edmund Avenue, House
35. 702 W. Edmund Avenue, House
36. 629 N. Kent Street and 573 N. St. Albans Street,  
Gardner's Cigar Factory and St. Albans Grocery
37. 434-438 W. Lafond Avenue, Commercial Building
38. 516 N. Lexington Parkway, Martin M. McNulty House
39. 645 N. Mackubin Street, Thomas Foley House
40. 619 W. Minnehaha Avenue, Dale Street Shops
41. 685 W. Minnehaha Avenue, Minnehaha Playground Building
42. 537 and 545 N. Park Street, Houses



43. 516-518 N. Rice Street, Commercial Building
44. 520 N. Rice Street, Commercial Building
45. 550-552 N. Rice Street, Commercial Building
46. 619 N. Rice Street, Barn
47. 500-502 W. Sherburne Avenue, Commercial Building
48. 538 W. Sherburne Avenue, House
49. 571 W. Sherburne Avenue, House
50. 514 W. Thomas Avenue, House
51. 526 W. Thomas Avenue, House
52. 579 W. Thomas Avenue, Commercial Building
53. 117 W. University Avenue, Ford Building
54. 703 W. University Avenue, Miller Motors
55. 825 W. University Avenue, Victoria Theater
56. 935-937 W. University Avenue, M. Schott Building
57. 548 W. Van Buren Avenue, Charles Nitz House
58. 643 N. Virginia Street, St. Vincent's School
59. 657 N. Virginia Street, Church of St. Vincent de Paul
60. 601-603 N. Western Avenue (also 385 W. Thomas Avenue),  
Dietche's Hall
61. 610 N. Western Avenue, Wilhelm Kliese House
62. 720 N. Western Avenue, Commercial Building

Potential Historic Districts

Frogtown Historic District (to be bounded by Minnehaha Avenue,  
Rice Street, University Avenue, and Dale Street)

Jackson Street Railroad Shops Historic District

DISTRICT 7

