

Introduction

The Historic Sites Survey of St. Paul and Ramsey County is the first comprehensive inventory of historic buildings in St. Paul and Ramsey County. The project was begun in December, 1980, and completed in May, 1983. The aim of the Historic Sites Survey was to identify and document sites of historical, architectural, and cultural significance to the city and county. It was conducted as part of the Minnesota Historical Society's State Preservation Office statewide inventory of historic structures, consistent with the goals of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The Survey results will be invaluable to those interested in local history and architecture, historic preservation, urban revitalization, neighborhood conservation, urban planning and geography. The Survey provides necessary information to enable city, county, and other governmental officials to address historic preservation as part of the comprehensive planning process.

The Historic Sites Survey was sponsored by the Ramsey County Historical Society and the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission and was funded by several federal, state, and foundation sources. The project was directed by Patricia Murphy and Susan Granger with the assistance of volunteers, student interns, historical societies, neighborhood and church groups, scholars, librarians, architects, and others interested in local history and architecture. Any omissions and errors are the responsibilities of the authors.

A tremendous body of information was compiled during the project. Over 5400 survey forms were completed on individual structures and over 2500 forms were completed with information on the architects and contractors who constructed them. 423 rolls of film were used, and about 7500 photographs were made as part of the project. 204 sites were identified as being potentially eligible for designation by the National Register of Historic Places and/or the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission. Thirty-six of the sites are located outside St. Paul, in Ramsey County. Eighteen potential

historic districts were also identified, three of them located outside the St. Paul city limits. Several thematic National Register nominations were identified and prepared incorporating buildings related to one another by a historic theme, such as St. Paul Brewers' Mansions or Warrendale Houses. National Register nomination forms were also prepared for approximately one hundred sites, including three historic districts: Lowertown, the Como Railroad Shops, and the Jackson Street Railroad Shops. All of the above-mentioned survey results are on file and are available to the public at the Ramsey County Historical Society.

The methodology of the project was established by the Survey Director, Patricia Murphy, with the assistance of the Survey Steering Committee and the staff of the Minnesota Historical Society State Historic Preservation Office. Initial research and planning of the survey methodology and framework was conducted from December, 1980 to March, 1981. During this phase of the project, the Survey staff researched the city and county's history and architecture to identify known landmarks and settlements, and to determine the average age of buildings in different areas. Atlases and early histories were used to identify historic areas. Numerous lectures and slide presentations were made to neighborhood associations, church groups, civic organizations, and similar groups, to solicit citizen participation and to promote public awareness of the Survey. This phase of the project culminated with the Introductory Report issued in March, 1981.

Fieldwork, photography, research, editing, and cataloguing of the survey forms for individual buildings took place from March, 1981 to December, 1982. In November, 1981, an Interim Report was issued summarizing the findings of the project's first year. It also served as an introduction to the second year of the project.

The Final Report, issued in May, 1983, supersedes the information contained in the Introductory and Interim Reports, particularly the recommendations on sites which are potentially eligible for designation. It is suggested, however, that the previous reports

be consulted for additional information about the history and architecture of St. Paul and Ramsey County, more information on survey methodology, and an extensive bibliography on local history and architecture -- information which could not be included in the Final Report because of space limitations. Both the Introductory and Interim Reports are available at the Ramsey County Historical Society and the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission.

The field survey was conducted on a neighborhood by neighborhood basis, using the city's established planning districts and the county's municipalities. With a few exceptions, the city's planning districts follow traditional neighborhood distinctions. All seventeen of the city's planning districts were surveyed (see St. Paul Citizen Participation Planning Districts Map, p. 413). The following municipalities in Ramsey County were surveyed: Falcon Heights, Lauderdale, Maplewood, New Brighton, North St. Paul, Roseville, the City of White Bear Lake, and White Bear Township (see Municipalities in Ramsey County Map, p. 414).*

During the fieldwork portion of the survey, almost every street in St. Paul and many of the streets in the Ramsey County municipalities were covered on foot. Remaining areas were inspected with frequent stops made by car. Fieldworkers working under the supervision of Patricia Murphy and Susan Granger systematically combed each area, completing survey forms on buildings in the neighborhood. They selected buildings of outstanding architectural integrity and/or sophistication, those known or alleged to be of major historical significance, and those representative of the area. Also surveyed were buildings which appeared to predate or postdate others in the area, based on stylistic evidence, building materials, proportions, and knowledge of the area's history. The survey concentrated on buildings constructed before 1935. Although personal bias is bound to enter into the selection of what and what not to survey, efforts were made to interpret the criteria objectively.

* For the purposes of the survey, each municipality in suburban Ramsey County was assigned a number from 100 to 107 as follows: 101 - Maplewood; 102 - New Brighton; 103 - North St. Paul; 104 - Roseville; 105 - City of White Bear Lake; 105TWP - White Bear Township; 106 - Falcon Heights; 107 - Lauderdale.

A building was not excluded from the survey solely on the basis of its condition, however, alterations which destroyed the building's original architectural integrity may have eliminated it from consideration. Major public and commercial buildings were included in the survey, as were high style Victorian mansions. The common problem in dealing with these buildings was to determine which to exclude, particularly in neighborhoods such as Summit Hill which have block after block of imposing architect-designed Victorian and turn of the century houses. Since most of St. Paul and Ramsey County's houses are vernacular structures, emphasis was placed on selecting intact and representative examples of houses and other buildings which illustrate the historical development of each of the planning districts and suburban municipalities. Buildings rare or unusual in age, style, or function were also included. To determine whether a building was surveyed, see Appendix C - Street Addresses of Buildings Which Were Surveyed (pp. 263-335) of this report.

While at the site, fieldworkers prepared a basic architectural description including any historical information gathered from conversations with property owners and area residents. After the initial field forms were completed, research was conducted to learn more about the building's history and architecture, and to verify information collected in the field. The main information sources for the majority of the buildings surveyed were the city's building permits and city directories. Numerous other sources, such as atlases, early histories, obituaries, and tax and probate records, were also utilized. Documenting the history of buildings located outside the city limits and those within the city which were built before 1883 was quite difficult since no building permits exist for such structures. Also, the city of St. Paul's Building Permits Division stopped consistently recording the names of architects on building permits issued after about 1915, so frequently the architects of such buildings are unknown. After the research was completed, the forms were edited by the project directors, typed, and proofread.

3½" x 5" black and white photographs were attached to each form along with a negative file number. The completed form and photo negative was then filed.

The Historic Sites Survey form was devised with the architectural description on the front page, while the historical information, photograph, and statement of significance is on the reverse side (See Appendix A - Sample Copy of Survey Form, pp. 255-256). A typical survey form's architectural description includes type of fenestration, number of bays and stories, significant details, original and present use of building, and its setting. The form also lists information such as the building's common and historic name, architect, builder, original owner, cost of construction, construction date, legal description, a statement of significance, building permit number, general historical information, and sources used in compiling the form which can be consulted for additional information or to aid in assessing the significance of a particular site, whether or not it is mentioned in this report.

Given the time constraints and the availability of information, the amount of information on each form varies. Those seeking information beyond that on the survey and architect and contractor form might check with both the Minnesota Historical Society's Division of Archives and Manuscripts and their Audiovisual Library -- two treasure troves which the Survey staff was unable to utilize fully. Also, the Northwest Architectural Archives contain a wealth of materials on buildings of major architectural significance.

In addition to the survey forms on individual buildings, forms were completed on architects, builders, engineers, and others who designed and constructed the buildings documented by the survey. The architect and contractor forms list basic biographical information such as dates and places of birth and death, and educational background. They also list all buildings which the individual or partnership designed or constructed which were documented by the survey and other razed and extant buildings outside Ramsey County identified through sources such as newspaper clippings, early histories,

building permits, etc. The forms also list additional sources of information and names of firms and partners. Separate forms were devised for included individuals and firms so that, for example, a building designed by Cass Gilbert would be listed on an architect form, while a building designed by the firm of Cass Gilbert and James Knox Taylor would be listed on a partnership form. All forms are filed in alphabetical order by name of individual, firm, or partnership with the other survey documents. By examining the survey and architect/contractor forms, one can obtain a fairly comprehensive view of the significance of a site in the context of local history, and in its architect's career. (See Appendix B - Sample Copy of Architect/Contractor Form, pp. 259-261).

Once all the survey forms were completed, the significance of all sites within each planning district or neighborhood was assessed carefully in order to identify the most outstanding sites within each planning district or municipality and to compare the relative significance of surviving historic structures and areas. Following each Summary of Findings by Planning District and Municipality in this report, is a listing of the most outstanding sites in each area together with a map showing their approximate location. Each list is divided into the following categories: 1) Sites which have been designated by the National Register of Historic Places and/or the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, 2) Sites identified by the Survey staff as meeting the criteria for designation by the National Register of Historic Places and/or the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission (See Appendix F - Criteria for Evaluation of Sites Eligible for Designation, pp. 399-401. The list includes sites for which National Register nomination forms were prepared by the Survey staff, some of which have since been designated as historic sites.), 3) Additional sites of major significance to the area that merit historic preservation, although they may not meet the criteria for designation, and 4) Potential historic districts and thematic groups of sites identified by the survey.

The criteria employed to identify potential historic districts and thematic groups of sites were similar to those employed to determine the eligibility for designation of individual sites. Identified historic districts are distinctive. Each has a fairly intact concentration of historically and architecturally significant buildings representative of the city's development. Thematic groupings of sites related to one another through historical development were also identified, although they are not necessarily in close proximity to one another.

As another part of the survey, National Register nomination forms were prepared for approximately one hundred buildings and historic districts in St. Paul and Ramsey County. They are listed in Appendix G - National Register Forms Which Were Prepared as Part of the Historic Sites Survey of St. Paul and Ramsey County, on pp. 405-409, and are an excellent source of additional information on city and county historic buildings. The following considerations were employed in selecting which National Register nominations to prepare: architectural, historical, and cultural significance of the site or district within the city and county; variety of building types, architectural styles, architects and builders, and dates of construction; geographic distribution within the city and county; expressed interests of property owners, neighborhood groups, the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission and the Ramsey County Historical Society, public accessibility to the site, and perceived threats to the site or district.

As mentioned previously, a number of the city's most significant sites are closely related in original function and style, but are not necessarily adjacent to one another. For this reason, several thematic nominations were prepared for submission to the National Register such as St. Paul Carnegie Libraries, West Seventh Street area Early Limestone Houses, Downtown St. Paul Theaters, and Art Deco Movie Theaters. All are listed within Appendix G, on pp. 405-409. This report also includes a listing of the city's most outstanding examples of buildings representing a number of building types,

architectural styles, and themes, such as Buildings Constructed By the Works Progress Administration, Richardsonian and Victorian Romanesque Style Houses, and Bank Buildings. All are listed in Appendix D, Listings of Buildings of Major Significance by Type of Building, Architectural Style and Theme, on pp. 339-392. It is suggested that consideration be given to preparing additional thematic nominations to the National Register by adapting some of the categories. In addition, these lists provide a cross-referenced index to the survey forms and will help assess the significance of a particular site within the context of similar buildings. It should be noted that these lists only include buildings of major significance within each category, and do not include all buildings in the particular category which were surveyed. Though a building might be of major historical importance, for example, it would not be listed with a group of structures of a particular style, unless it was an outstanding example of the style.

This Final Report explains the methodology used in conducting the survey, summarizes its findings and serves as a guide to the information which was collected. The main body of the Final Report consists of brief summaries on the history and architecture of each of the planning districts and municipalities which were included in the survey. Each section gives some information on the area's development, to serve as a context for evaluating the area's historically and architecturally significant buildings. Also included are photographs of buildings in each planning district or municipality. The photographs are identified in the text by numbers referring to the numbered photo captions. Each summary also includes a listing of the area's historic sites, together with a map indicating locations. The appendices include: a copy of a survey form, a copy of an architect and contractor form, a listing of street addresses of buildings which were surveyed, a listing of buildings of major significance by type of building, architectural style, and theme, and maps in addition to those included with the lists of buildings in each area.

The completion of the Historic Sites Survey provides an excellent opportunity for the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, the Ramsey County Historical Society and local citizens interested in historic preservation to assess the city and county's historic resources and devise programs to protect and preserve them. It is suggested that the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission evaluate the findings of the survey, and determine which sites should be designated by the H.P.C., now and in the future, on the basis of criteria similar to those employed by the survey staff in deciding which National Register nomination forms to prepare. Also, it is strongly recommended that the H.P.C. and the State Historic Preservation Office both obtain complete sets of the survey forms and architect and contractor files, and that the H.P.C. incorporate information from the survey into the design review process.

In order to insure the preservation of the survey records, and to allow for greater dissemination of the information, it is suggested that the Ramsey County Historical Society and the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission arrange for an archival quality microfilm to be made of the records. The master negative could then reside in a repository with good vault conditions. User copies could be provided to local historical societies, the Minnesota Historical Society, the building permits and planning departments of the city of St. Paul and the suburban municipalities in Ramsey County, libraries, and other facilities. District council offices and neighborhood groups might also wish to obtain copies of the survey forms, or the microfilm.

Further, it is recommended that a mechanism be devised to append and update the survey forms and architect and contractor forms, without altering their integrity as a comprehensive body of information on historic buildings standing in St. Paul and Ramsey County in 1983. Such a mechanism would make it possible to add information on aspects of local history which could not be pursued thoroughly in a survey of this type, such as women's history, ethnic history, industrial archeology, and buildings constructed since 1935. In the interests of future generations of researchers, it is also suggested that the practice of consistently recording architect's names on building permits be resumed.

The Historic Sites Survey confirmed what many local residents have long known--that our area has a tremendous wealth of historic buildings. And yet, an examination of the survey records indicates that many of our most important surviving historic buildings are endangered, either through neglect or through development pressures. A look at the list of buildings of major significance which were razed during the survey, Appendix E, p. 395, also emphasizes the need to foster continuing awareness about our historic resources, and to develop a comprehensive preservation plan for St. Paul and Ramsey County. The survey is of value not only as a record of the city and county's historic buildings that are standing in 1983, but also as a tool for identifying endangered landmarks, and developing appropriate plans to protect and preserve the region's architectural and historical treasures.