

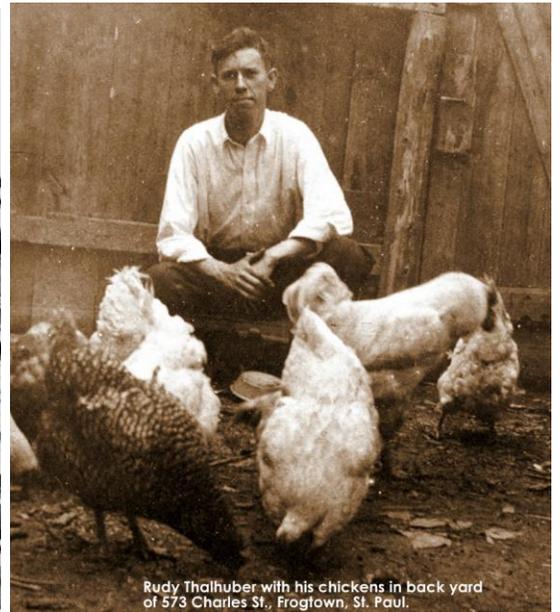


Katie Thalhuber in back yard of 573 Charles Ave., c.1920



Rudy and Katie Thalhuber family home, 573 Charles St. The house was built in 1886, as a one-story, frame dwelling. In 1925, in anticipation of the arrival of his third child, (of an eventual seven) daughter Marie, Rudy added the second story to the house.

573 Charles St., Frogtown, c.1974



Rudy Thalhuber with his chickens in back yard of 573 Charles St., Frogtown, St. Paul.

The Rudolph and Catherine Thalhuber House  
573 Charles Avenue, Frogtown, St. Paul, Minnesota  
by Jim Sazevich

The Thalhuber family home at 573 Charles Avenue was built as a one-story, frame cottage in 1885 by **August Pomplun** (1854-1895). Pomplun was born in Germany, and immigrated to the United States in 1872, with his widowed mother Caroline, and five siblings. The Pomplun family came directly to St. Paul, and settled in Frogtown that same year. The Pompluns were some of the earliest permanent residents in the entire Frogtown neighborhood. Much of the land surface of the neighborhood was still covered by marsh, ponds, and peat bogs at that time, and it took several decades to fill some of these low areas so they could be built upon.

August Pomplun built his first house on Charles Avenue in 1883, at No. 575, between Kent & Dale Streets. He had married **Mary Pilgrim** in St. Paul in 1879, and his house on Charles Avenue was the family homestead. The house he built next door at No. 573 in 1885, was used for rental income. August Pomplun had worked as a common laborer, a teamster, a plasterer, a house mover, and in 1885, the year he built No. 573 Charles; he is listed in records as a carpenter.

The house at No. 573 was sited on the easterly twenty feet of Pomplun's lot on Charles Avenue, and was just a single story high. It was set close to the front sidewalk, with a small open entry porch. The back yard was filled with a garden, and was accessed by a narrow walk on the east side of the house. The privy at No. 575 next door was shared with No. 573. The first renters at No. 573 were the families of **Albert E. Schuenemann**, a common laborer in 1886, **Jacob Koenig**, a carpenter in 1887, **William Hickey**, a common laborer in 1888, and **Ferdinand Scheunemann**, another common laborer in 1889. All of these renters were recent immigrants to the United States, both of the Schuenemanns and Koenig from Germany, and Hickey from Ireland.

In 1890, **Caroline (Pomplun) Pilgrim**, the widowed sister of August Pomplun moved into No. 573, as a renter with her children, Albert and Ida. Her husband Herman Pilgrim, whom she married in St. Paul in 1875, a brick mason by trade, had been instantly killed when struck by lightning in 1883, while working on road construction in Frogtown. Caroline Pilgrim purchased the property at No. 573 in 1894, and lived in her Charles Avenue home until 1906. In order to support her family, Caroline took in sick people to nurse back to health, advertising her nursing services in the city directory.

After Caroline moved out of No. 573, she rented the house first to **Charles Stich**, a laborer and bartender, from 1907 to 1911, and then to **William Peffer**, a single man, who was foreman of Como Park, for the St. Paul Parks Department, who rented the house from 1912 to 1918. In 1919, **Rudolph and Catherine Thalhuber** rented the house at No. 573, from Caroline Pilgrim, and then purchased it a year later. The couple married in 1917, and had lived with Rudolph's widowed mother at No. 577 Charles for the previous two years.

Rudolph Thalhuber was born in Frogtown in 1890, at 539 Sherburne Avenue, the eighth of ten children. Four of his siblings died in infancy. His wife, Catherine (Simota) Thalhuber was born in St. Paul in 1895, the daughter of Bohemian (Czech) immigrants, who also immigrated to the United States in the 1880s. Rudy worked as a pressman for Meyer Printing Company in downtown St. Paul, to make payments on, and furnish their new homestead. The couple celebrated the arrival of their first child in 1921, a daughter they named Dorothy, just a year after buying their home on Charles. Two years later, son Arthur was born, and two years later, a third child was on the way.

It was decided that the house was too small to shelter the growing family, so Rudy laid plans to add a second story to the residence. He took out a building permit in July 1925, estimating his building costs at \$300 on the document, and recruited his brothers to help with the construction. By November that year, the house with its new second floor, divided into three small bedrooms, and a bathroom, was ready for the arrival of daughter Marie. Within the next decade, four more children, Don, Bernice, Dick, and Jim, (for a total of seven) would fill the little house on Charles Avenue to near capacity.

In order to make ends meet, and feed and support his growing family, Rudy used every square inch of yard, and planted it with a fruit and vegetable garden. A large chicken coop was built at the back of the lot, and on Sunday, after attending mass at St. Agnes, the family regularly shared a chicken dinner at the kitchen table. The family used public transportation, so there was no need for a garage, until many years later. To supplement his income, Rudy had a printing press in the basement, and did custom printing for a wide variety of clients. In his later years, he worked as an engineer and janitor for the St. Paul School system.

The Thalhuber family lived in their Charles Avenue home for forty years, and were the longest owners and occupants of No. 573. Catherine Thalhuber sold her Charles Avenue home in 1959, to **Frank and Gertrude Schreiber**, a German immigrant family, who had escaped Communist oppression in East Germany, and fled to the United States with their children. The Schreibers raised their large family on Charles Avenue, while continuing many of their old world traditions of growing their own food, pickling and canning goods for future use, and butchering animals for food. Frank Schreiber was a highly skilled cabinetmaker, and was able to easily find employment with local lumber companies, and wood products manufacturers. The Schreibers lived on Charles Avenue until November 1979, and then moved to the northern suburbs of St. Paul.

Since 1980, the house at 573 Charles Avenue has had a series of short term owners and renters, including African American families, Hmong families, and most recently an immigrant family from Mexico. This modest frame house in St. Paul's Frogtown neighborhood has had a long tradition of sheltering immigrant families for nearly 125 years. Originally scheduled for demolition, the recently completed rehabilitation will allow the home to continue its important legacy.

