

Payne-Phalen

Located northeast of Saint Paul's downtown, the Payne-Phalen neighborhood developed into two distinct sections based on the area's hilly topography: Lower Payne-Phalen and Upper Payne-Phalen. Trout Brook once ran along the neighborhood's western boundary, while Phalen Creek ran across the middle, dividing Lower Payne-Phalen from Upper Payne-Phalen. Development of the Payne-Phalen neighborhood can be directly attributed to the late nineteenth century rapid and expansive industrial growth along the valley of the former Phalen Creek. After Phalen Creek was filled in and the railroad was constructed, the key transportation feature needed for industrial development was established and the wide valley between Lower Payne-Phalen and Upper Payne-Phalen was soon lined with industrial facilities.

Discharged soldiers from Fort Snelling and fur traders established the neighborhood's earliest settlement in the Phalen Creek valley of Lower Payne-Phalen. Soon after, Swedish immigrants also began settling there, and by the mid-nineteenth century this part of Lower Payne-Phalen became known as Swede Hollow. As the early settlers to Swede Hollow established themselves, they moved to other locations in the Payne-Phalen neighborhood and the next wave of new immigrants moved in. This pattern continued in Swede Hollow until the mid-twentieth century, when all buildings in this area were razed and the area was designated as a park. Gentile Yarusso, grandson of one of the early Italian immigrants to settle there, described two- and three-room houses with attached sheds that had outside ovens in which to bake bread. None of the houses had running water, electric lights, or plumbing, and each one had an outhouse, or "bifee," on stilts overhanging the creek that flowed through the hollow. Residents drew water from clear water streams running from the surrounding hills through Swede Hollow.

West of Swede Hollow was Railroad Island. The area received its name in the years following the Civil War when railroad tracks were laid over the infilled Trout Brook and Phalen Creek, and the area became completely surrounded by railroad tracks. Virginia Kunz describes the early, pre-railroad (and pre-Railroad Island name) area as a wealthy residential district prior to the Civil War. Some of Saint Paul's oldest buildings can still be found in this area. By the late nineteenth century Railroad Island had evolved into a working class neighborhood of Swedish, Italian, and Irish immigrants employed in nearby industries.

As Swede Hollow and Railroad Island were built out and industries developed along the railroad corridor that ran through the former Phalen Creek valley, settlement spread to Upper Payne-Phalen. Development of Upper Payne-Phalen continued to extend northward until most of the neighborhood was settled by the early-to-mid-twentieth century. Much of the neighborhood's late nineteenth and early twentieth century development coincided with the establishment of the streetcar lines in this area. Commercial businesses were established along the streetcar lines, as well as along Payne Avenue, the neighborhood's major north-south street.

While Lower Payne-Phalen has extant examples of houses dating to its early history as a wealthy residential area, such as the Benjamin Brunson house at 485 Kenny Road, the neighborhood's residential building stock is typically more modest in size and stylistic influence and dates primarily to the 1870 to 1890 period. Simplified Queen Anne style houses, including pattern-book houses with characteristic square corner bay windows, and vernacular, front gable houses were most commonly built in this section of the neighborhood. Single-family houses were typically one-and-one-half stories of wood-

frame construction. Multi-family dwellings, including two-story flats and apartment buildings, were also typically of wood-frame construction. Very few dwellings in this section of the neighborhood were constructed in brick. Stone structures were primarily outbuildings located behind houses.

Churches and social organizations were established in the Payne-Phalen neighborhood by various ethnic groups who settled there. The churches included the St. Casimir Catholic Church, located at Forest and Jessamine Street; Holy Trinity Russian Serbian Orthodox Church, located at 958 N. Forest Street; and East Immanuel Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church at 1019 N. Jessie Street.

In addition to parochial schools associated with the neighborhood's churches, the first public school in the neighborhood was the Lincoln Elementary School. Constructed in 1874 and enlarged several times, it was located on Collins Street between Burr and Bedford Streets. To further meet the needs of the growing neighborhood, two more elementary schools were constructed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A new high school, built at the southern edge of Upper Payne-Phalen and called the Cleveland School, was added to the public school system in 1894 due to overcrowded conditions at Central High School at 10th and Minnesota Streets, Saint Paul's only high school at the time.

The neighborhood's commercial businesses, which were developed primarily by Swedish immigrants who had moved out of Swede Hollow, were centered on Payne Avenue. In its initial development in the 1880s Payne Avenue was a mix of commercial and residential uses. However, as the commercial corridor further developed in the 1890s, large business blocks were built and the residential character of the street faded. Grocers, flour and feed stores, shoemakers, saloons, furniture stores, bakeries, jewelry stores, and other retail services were found along Payne Avenue. Separated from downtown Saint Paul by the natural topography and railroad lines, the Payne Avenue commercial businesses running through the heart of the neighborhood became known as "the downtown of the East Side." The streetcar system encouraged commercial development along its three north-south streetcar lines: the Mississippi line, the Payne line, and the Forest-Phalen Park line.

Commercial corridors and nodes also developed in the neighborhood along other streetcar lines. The Mississippi line, established in 1890, ran from downtown Saint Paul along Mississippi Street, where it terminated at Edgerton Street. This line passed through industrial areas and railroad yards of the Phalen Creek valley to the residential neighborhood located north of Maryland Avenue. While the line was popular for residential traffic, a small amount of commercial development occurred along Arkwright Street at Magnolia Avenue.

Historic Context: Neighborhoods at the Edge of the Walking City 19 Mead & Hunt, Inc. / 2011