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tour SAINT PAUL west end



Head of navigation Cradle of commerce Making it home

Welcome

The West End is a community of caring connections. It maintains a wide diversity of class, culture, wealth, and lifestyle, while common concerns in development, health, and quality of life sustain forward movement and assure continuity for the generations to come.

THE WCST

The West End is Saint Paul's and Minnesota's first urban neighborhood. With West 7th/Fort Road as its spine, it extends from Seven Corners near downtown to the overlook on the east bank of the Mississippi River across from Fort Snelling. This was also the last stretch of the historic fur trade route from Eastern states and Canada.

From the arrival of Zebulon Pike in 1805 to the West End of today, a number of recurring themes shaped this community's development. Most symbolic of this process is the Mississippi, the Great River, which has been the integral connector for all the encounters we have experienced, understood, forgotten, and recovered.

Fort Snelling (constructed 1819-25), at the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers, was built to protect our northern borders from the British and to control development in the territories. It served as the mechanism for successive treaties and distributions of former Dakota lands, which eventually resulted in supplanting the indigenous population and loss of control of their traditional lands.

Above: Many different modes of transportation can be seen in front of the Fort Snelling Hotel, ca. 1898. **Background:** Traveling down Fort Road, Red River ox carts from Pembina, 600 miles north of St. Paul, ca. 1862, Joel Emmons Whitney

For a time in the 1820s and '30s, settlers from a Swiss colony at Fort Garry (Winnipeg), along with a mixed group of Dakota, Métis and French Canadians, were allowed to use lands adjacent to Fort Snelling. When their use of fuel and forage conflicted with the needs of Fort Snelling, they were expelled and first settled at Fountain Cave three miles downriver near what is now Randolph Avenue. A second expulsion pushed the mixed group of settlers, whiskey sellers, and ex-soldiers to begin to build around the area of the Upper Landing three miles further downstream. This settlement became the core of Saint Paul and the West End neighborhood. In the 1840s this group expanded, and with the arrival of a wave of Eastern settlers later in the decade, the growth of Saint Paul began in earnest.

Forming a Nucleus

As the heads of river navigation, the Lower and Upper Landings provided a destination not just for goods but also for entrepreneurs and adventurers who were ready for a new territory and the hope of a new start. Early Saint Paul's population expanded rapidly.

The settlement of Saint Paul was established in 1849, the same year as was the Minnesota Territory. Early settlers John Irvine, whose ferryboat dock was at the Upper Landing, and Henry Rice, a fur trader who quickly made a fortune in real estate, each donated lands for future parks. These donations may have been the first real sign that a community was about to grow here.

Saint Paul became an incorporated city in 1854. Rapid development centered at Seven Corners, the major intersection that included Third Street (the "third up from the river," now Kellogg Blvd.), Seventh Street and Eagle Street. As the population increased, the direction of development was westward along Fort Road through Uppertown. John Irvine's land donation became Irvine Park, and many newly rich land developers and businessmen began to build homes and businesses.



Immigration

Settlers' and land-seekers' endless pressure on the Federal Government rapidly displaced the Native Americans, eventually confining them in reserves with few of the promised payments or amenities. Migrants from the Eastern states, who had often made several moves before arriving in Saint Paul, joined new immigrants from Ireland and England, Germany and Prussia, Poland, Bohemia/Moravia, Slovakia, and Italy.

Italians

By the early 1900s, the river flats of Upper Landing gradually passed to the Italian immigrants from the region of Molise in south-central Italy. "Little Italy" was a thriving, almost selfcontained community on the Upper Levee, below the High Bridge, from the early 1900s to the 1950s. Serious flooding over many years finally led the city, in the mid-1950s, to begin condemnation and acquisition of houses on the levee. Several well known Italian family businesses (Bonfe's, Cossetta's, DeGidio's, DiSanto's, and Mancini's), continue operations on West 7th Street today.

Germans

German immigration brought with it the need for beer. Fortunately, the West End—with its extensive sandstone cave networks and spring water—was ideal for establishing breweries. The Schmidt Brewery was the largest and longest operating brewery and remains the most valued historic resource in the West End.

The names Banholzer, Brueggemann, Emmert, Schmidt, Stahlman and Yoerg represent brewing activity in the West End for over 100 years. Meanwhile, the art of brewing continues in the neighborhood with Summit (1989), Vine Park (1995), and Flat Earth (2008) brewing companies.



Bohemians

Bohemian influence in the West End also began early. From the 1860s to the 1880s, Czech (Bohemians, Moravians and Silesians) and Slovak immigrants engaged in a period of intense commercial and cultural development. Alongside Germans and Poles, Jews and Scandinavians, they worked the breweries and railroads, quarries and icehouses, and many retail establishments, making West 7th a busy commercial center and the "cradle of commerce" for Minnesota.

Left: Czech Slovak Protective Society, 2010, Joe Landsberger

Left from top to bottom: View of the Italian neighborhood from the High Bridge, 1938. Cossetta Food Market, 226 Ryan, ca. 1952. Beck's Grocery, 1171 West Seventh, 1902.

As skilled tradespeople and artisans, the community was involved in shoe and boot making, cigar making, tailoring, butchering, brewing, blacksmithing, carpentry, gunsmithing, and masonry trades. Most Bohemian workers, however, were "common laborers."

The Czech Slovak Protective Society (CSPS) was formed in 1872 and opened its first hall in 1879. CSPS continues to provide a cultural touchstone for the Bohemian community, with fraternal, educational, social, charitable, and recreational activities, associated with a religious liberalism and/or free thought position.

Religious and Social Life

Each component of the arriving populations had its particular religious needs. Religious life in Saint Paul from its earliest days was fertile, with Baptist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Jewish, African Methodist Episcopal and others established as soon as enough persons of the same religion gathered.

In 1872, the Saint Stanislav Kostka Church was established, serving both Polish and Czech parishioners but with services in Czech. The Poles established Saint Adalbert's Church. In 1886, the Cyril Congregational Church was formed, which conducted its services in Czech until 1945. Saint Francis de Sales church and school for the German Catholic community started in 1884. Saint James' Irish congregation opened its church in 1884, but the school building was delayed until 1913. The Italian Catholic community worshiped at Holy Redeemer, located in downtown Saint Paul.

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fine STEAKS COCKTAILS Saloons in the West End formed a complex network of social support "agencies." Local bars served as places to leave messages, sources of employment information, and social networking sites. New arrivals would go to their country's saloons to make connections and find family.

Left: Mancinis, 2004, Cassie Jacobson



Above: Railroad yard near the NSP power plant, ca. 1970, Henry Benbrooke Hall. **Below:** City House & Upper Landing Development, 2010, Jerry Rothstein

River and Rail Commerce

Infrastructure and commercial development proceeded rapidly, supported by the intense river trade that brought all kinds of goods and people to the area. River commerce that seemed invulnerable was really at the start of its long decline and defeat at the hands of the railroads. Riverboat companies and their commercial advocates ashore managed to convince

the Federal Government to undertake an escalating series of river channel improvements from 1866 to 1925. By 1925, when the six- and nine-foot channels were being developed, only one riverboat service remained, while 23 railroads hauled passengers and freight every which way.

In the 1870s, railroads also began to offer local passenger service to developing areas outside the city core. These "railroad suburbs" provided land developers with a new field for marketing property. A Short Line from downtown Saint Paul to Minneapolis had a station at Grace and Oneida, which helped open that part of the West End to development. With local streetcar lines expanding from horse-drawn to fully electrified by the 1890s and reaching Fort Snelling on the West 7th route, the Summit Hill neighborhood became more attractive for community leaders to build their personal palaces. As a result, Irvine Park and Uppertown lost their early cachet, and many of their large mansions were converted to rentals.

Origins of City House

Farmers and their allies supported improving the river's shipping capacity once it became clear that railroad dominance meant higher shipping rates. The Equity Co-operative Exchange was formed in 1911 and built its first grain elevators on the Upper Levee in 1915. The Minnesota Farmers Union took over Equity and expanded the Upper Levee elevators (1927-31), eventually including 60 grain silos, a mill, the head house for loading grain onto barges, and the sack house for bagging grain. Restoration of the latter two buildings, under the name City House, was completed in 2009. City House is now listed in the National Register of Historic Places and has been restored as a park pavilion and event venue, situated on piers and cantilevered out over the Mississippi River.

Growth of the Neighborhood

Upper Landing

As close to transportation as any part of town, the Upper Levee flourished through the early years. The landing was not only where early settlement occurred, it also housed a number of important industries. Martin Delaney's Northwest Stockyards became James McMillan's Meat Packing Plant (1891-1932). Stonemasons exploited deposits of limestone and other building materials in the bluffs above the landing. Saint Paul became a transportation center early on, as goods were transferred from steamboats to carts and later to trains, providing work for less skilled laborers. Buildings were erected rapidly using balloon frame construction, a new technology that had emerged from Chicago.

Uppertown

By 1850, the area above the Upper Landing became known as Uppertown, and developed as a separate business and residential section of the village distinct from the Lower Landing or Lowertown. Eventually, largescale commercial and warehouse activities developed in Lowertown, which evolved into downtown Saint Paul, while Uppertown flourished as the residential section of town.

From Uppertown, the Fort Road followed the top of the bluffs (presently Cliff Street and Stewart Avenue) to the east bank of the Mississippi River at Fort Snelling, while West Seventh Street took a more direct route. From the intersection of Fort Road, Eagle, Third and Seventh Streets, the hub called Seven Corners was the gateway to West Seventh Street, with its smaller scale retail, service businesses, and extensive residential development. By 1863, Uppertown supported seventy-two different businesses, including hotels, breweries, saloons, grocery stores, blacksmiths, drug stores, a gun factory, and a bowling alley.

Right: Faiad's Grocery, Pioneer Business Block, 767 West Seventh Street, 1937, A. F. Raymond. **Below:** Children playing on The Green Chair in High Bridge Park, 2001, Dick Anderson



Cover photos from left to right: West End Bakery, 451 Bay, 1924, Hubold Studio. Interior of Fountain Cave, ca. 1875, William Henry Illingworth. Andrew L. Rothmeyer's Saloon, 949 West Seventh Street, 1910. Two Rivers Overlook, 2004, City of Saint Paul Department of Parks and Recreation. **Background:** Aerial view of Schmidt Brewery, 1938, Kenneth Melvin Wright

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This guide was developed by Historic Saint Paul as part of the "Tour Saint Paul" interpretive guide series highlighting the cultural and historic resources of the city's neighborhoods. Visit **www.historicsaintpaul.org**.

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Visit **www.fortroadfederation.org** for more information.

Grant Recipient

Community Development

Beginning in the 1950s, urban renewal and interstate highway construction became central issues for cities. The design of Shepard Road as the central link from downtown to the airport and points west and south required that the Upper Levee, home to vital components of the West End community since the 1850s, be cleared, infilled and prepared for potential industrial use. At Seven Corners, the Civic Center project went forward with the clearance of block after block of buildings, without much attention to whether any of them merited preservation.

Community development efforts over the last sixty years illustrate the tenacity and dedication of different elements of the community. From the 1950s and 1960s to today, a collaboration of active community organizations has devoted time and energy to education, social services and support, project development and, in some instances, resistance to proposals deemed bad for the community.

The West 7th/Fort Road Federation, formed by active and organized citizens in 1973, has been instrumental in ensuring the community's growth, redevelopment, and sustained success over the years. A number of volunteers and outreach projects such as West End Arts, the West End Neighborhood Gardeners, West 7th Community Center, *Community Reporter* monthly newspaper, West 7th Business Association and its neighborhood enhancement group, have all responded to the needs and emerging issues facing the West End community.



Above: Summer Rain in the Park, 2004, Michael Boeckmann

Irvine Park

John Irvine's gift to the young village had seen its zenith and a long decline, and so became a target for urban renewal. Many of the houses in the area were owned by absentee landlords and subdivided into minimal living units. Public acquisition of property for urban renewal was already underway when neighbors and planners began to acknowledge the area's historic significance. Neighbors organized and fought to save the park and its surrounding homes. After a long process involving owners and potential owners, the City's Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA), the Minnesota Historical Society, and the Ramsey



County Historical Society, the area was listed in 1973 on the National Register of Historic Places. In the past 40 years, Irvine Park has become the City's premier historic district and remains one of Saint Paul's most visited public parks.

Interstate 35E

Federal and state transportation authorities wanted to connect Highway 5 with Interstate 94 by running a six-lane freeway between the two, dividing the West End neighborhoods and cutting off the area from others further "uphill." In 1969, Residents in Protest 35E (R.I.P. 35E) sued the Minnesota Highway Department and the U.S. Department of Transportation, demanding an environmental impact study (EIS). With new conditions added—a 45-mph speed limit; banning of trucks; some sections sub-grade level; landscaping; and special attention to the slopes — construction resumed in 1984 with completion in 1990.

Education

Some of the oldest public and private schools in the City and State are located in the West 7th neighborhood. While some schools have come and gone—Riverside, Davis, and St. Stanislaus—the community has rallied to ensure that neighborhood-based schools remain strong in the West End. Monroe, Adams, Saint Francis de Sales, and Saint James, all established between 1880 and 1913, have transformed over the years to accommodate 21st century educational needs.

Health

In 1873, the City and County Hospital opened, followed in 1891 by the Ancker School of Nursing. City and County Hospital was one of the first in the country to have onsite residences and training for nurses. The whole complex, located at Jefferson Avenue and Colbourne Street, was renamed Ancker Hospital in 1923. In 1965, Ancker Hospital was replaced by Regions Hospital.

In 1971, the Helping Hand Health Center, under Dr. Tim Rumsey, carried on a community-based clinic in a holistic health mode. Evolving in 1992 to United Family Practice Health Center, it started the United Family Medical (UFM) Residency Program, providing medical education and training in family medicine with a focus on rural and under-served populations' health needs. In its 2009 facility at Randolph and West 7th, the Peter J. King Family Health Center, UFM continues its mission: to serve and to teach.

Above: Aerial view of Ancker Hospital and surrounding area, 1953, Kenneth Melvin Wright

Returning Down the River

Saint Paul Residents, Saint Paul Parks and Recreation, and the Saint Paul Riverfront Corporation have collaborated for years in developing guiding principles for the preservation of the Mississippi River valley. Great River Park, the Saint Paul section of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, aims to make the river corridor more natural, more urban, and more connected to the adjacent neighborhoods.

Two Rivers Overlook

From the bluffs of the Mississippi, overlooking Fort Snelling and the confluence of the Minnestoa and Mississippi Rivers, Two Rivers Overlook is a place of transition rich with history. A point of connection geographically, historically, socially and culturally, the public art installation commemorates the importance and celebrates the history of this site.

Samuel H. Morgan Regional Trail

Starting from the overlook, the Sam Morgan Trail follows the river almost six miles to downtown Saint Paul, passing historic sights like the Island Station Power Plant that was built in the 1920s and the 6-story Saint Paul Municipal Grain Elevator (City House).

Crosby Farm Regional Park

Two lakes, access to the Mississippi River, a marina, and over twelve miles of paths for walkers, hikers, and bikers create a unique urban experience. The abundance of bird life, wildflowers, cottonwood groves and river marshes make this a popular destination park for all.

