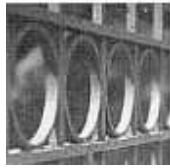


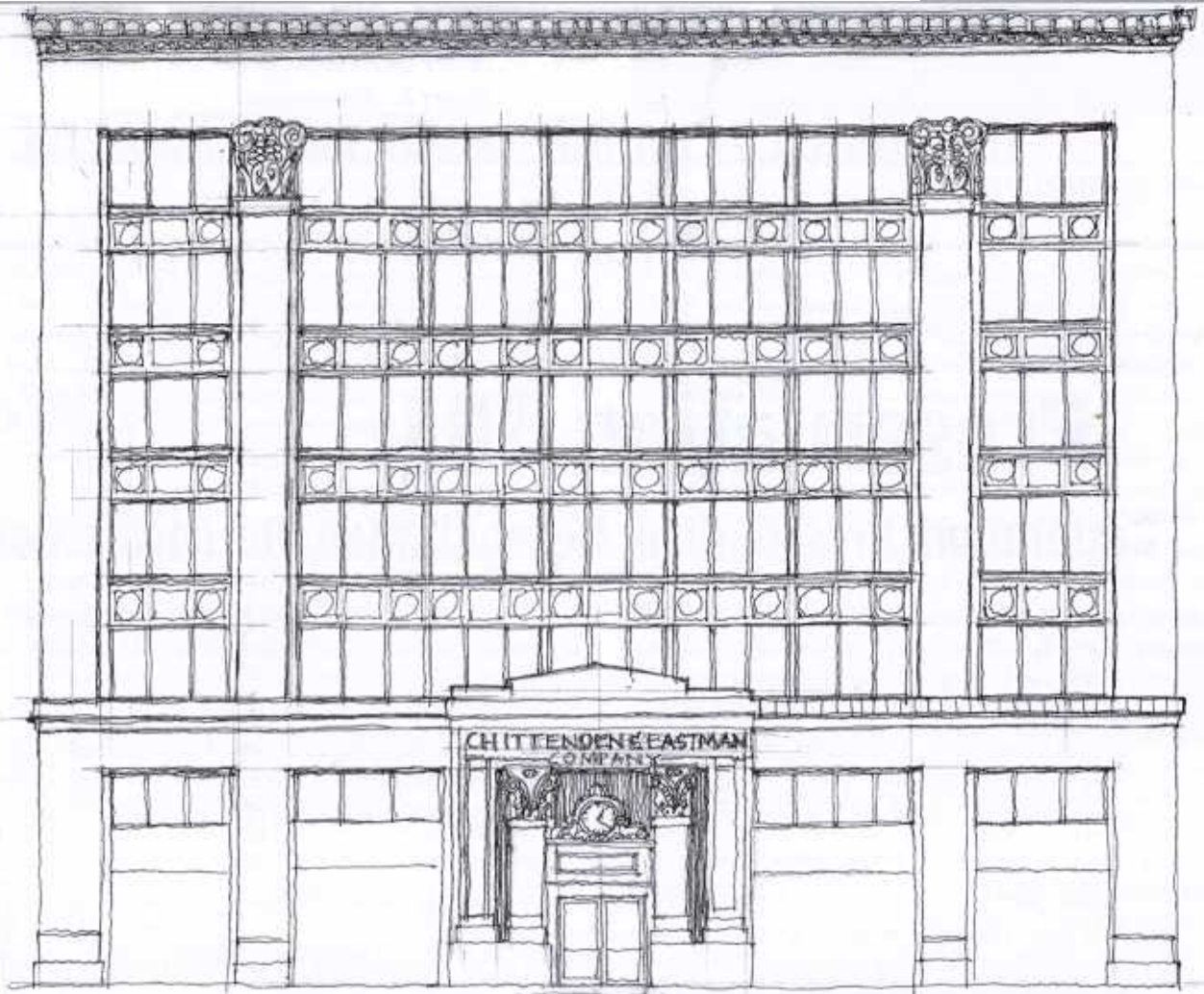
# PRESERVATION JOURNAL OF SAINT PAUL

A PUBLICATION OF HISTORIC SAINT PAUL



CELEBRATE HERITAGE    RENEW NEIGHBORHOODS    STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1



SKETCH & TEXT BY ROBERT ROSCOE

## REBIRTH AT UNIVERSITY and RAYMOND

A CUTTING-EDGE ART GALLERY, a gourmet truffle shop, industrial buildings holding artists' studios and galleries, recently-opened restaurants, a 50s era furnishings store, dozens of specialty shops, and a new age spiritual center have been redefining the urban environment around the intersection of University Avenue and Raymond Avenue, near the western edge of Saint Paul, for the past several years. A popular annual event is the Raymond avenue art crawl, made possible by the many artists studios scattered throughout the area. What has prompted this revitalization is the dense streetscape of older

buildings whose architectural features espouse the sturdy character of thick brick walls projecting simple classical motifs. These shops and art-making places originally were constructed in the 50 year period between 1891 and 1941 as machine shops, industrial assembly buildings, and wholesale warehouses. In the 1950s, they were gradually transformed into offices as well as specialty services and wholesale distribution facilities.

At this time, the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission is recommending designation of what would be

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HISTORIC SAINT PAUL

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VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1

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# Preservation 101:

## Restoration, Preservation, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction

BY ROBERT ROSCOE

*Various terms are often used to describe how work is done to improve historic and older buildings. The particular circumstances determine which of the terms are most appropriate. The following definitions are described below, with the most strict described first and ending with the most general.*

### Restoration

depicts a property at a particular period of time in its history, while removing evidence of other periods. This work begins with analysis to determine original elements and parts later added. Emphasis is given to repair to original elements, using replacement only when such material is too deteriorated to repair, then using materials that are exact matches to original.

### Preservation

focuses on the maintenance and repair of existing historic materials and retention of a property's form as it has evolved over time. This work typically emphasizes restoration of principal defining elements, with allowance for highly similar changes when absolutely necessary. The architectural form of the structure may be altered slightly in non-defining areas if the alteration is closely sympathetic to the overall form.

### Rehabilitation

acknowledges the need to alter or add to a historic property to meet continuing or changing uses while retaining the property's historic character as it has evolved over time. Rehab is used when the property has no historic designation or is of generalized historic importance.

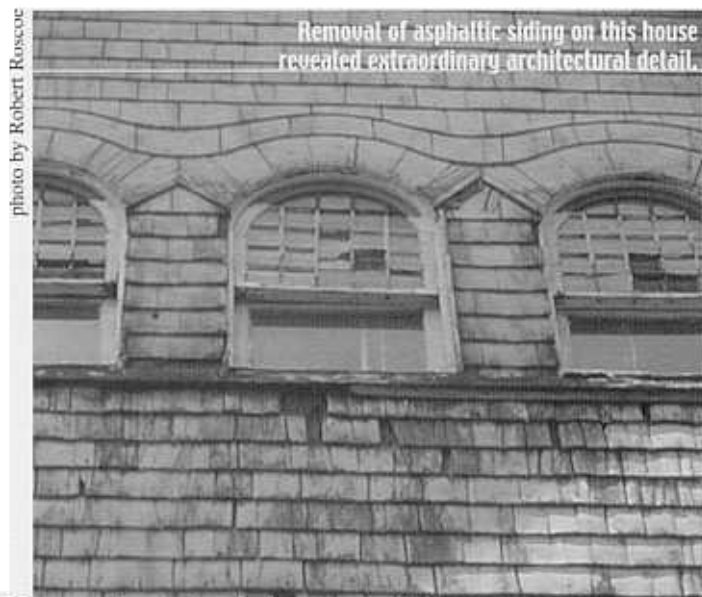
### Reconstruction

recreates vanished or non-surviving portions of a property for interpretive purposes. This work is typically done when a historic resource has been demolished, but the need arises to build a facsimile of the original.



**IN MANY NEIGHBORHOODS** throughout Saint Paul, homeowners are removing cement-asbestos shingle siding or other similar cladding covering their houses' original siding. Whether the work is performed by remodeling contractor crews or by the homeowners themselves, the result is the surprise of discovering the original narrow lap siding that can once again express the house's original appearance. An added surprise in most cases is that almost all of the original siding is in much better condition than earlier expected.

Most Saint Paul houses, typical of other wood-framed houses in the Midwest, were built with wood lap siding and trim, but sometime in these dwellings' history, the siding has been covered with various claddings such as stucco, asphaltic rolls with imitative brick patterns, cement-asbestos shingles, aluminum and vinyl siding. During the twentieth century, American technology dedicated itself to formulating ways to giving us a better tomorrow by improving what we have today. In the case of house siding, the repetitive



## New Trend in Older House Siding is Taking Off

BY ROBERT ROSCOE

painting and repainting of wood surfaces could be made obsolete by the no-maintenance appeal of manufactured easy-to-apply panels.

Today however, many homeowners are removing these claddings and are restoring the original wood surfaces that have been hidden for generations. Why is this happening? The answer lies in an interrelationship of authenticity and historic preservation. For the most part, these homeowners are looking for ways to express the authentic character that their house was built with, along with the sense their residence can share the elements that represent historic preservation.

Just as the twentieth century developed the technology to give us the future, the twenty-first century is providing improved processes to renew the past. Residential building contractors that have converted their practices to remodeling older houses are developing skills to facilitate removal of added siding layers. Most building code requirements for removal of siding with asbestos content no longer require expensive removal and disposal methods, and chemically-improved paints have greatly increased durability.

Along with removing these added siding materials, aluminum cladding over wood trim becomes part of the removal process. When this happens, more original detail, often serving to articulate the house's architecture, is revealed. Sometimes, however, the unwrapped surfaces show "ghost marks" of missing trim elements that probably were removed to make the aluminum cladding job easier.

Removing added cladding is mostly a labor process, using claw hammers and flat steel bars to pry off the material, then pull the nails that held the pieces in place. Asphaltic-based materials can be thrown in a dumpster along with other discarded building materials, but cement-asbestos shingles must be deposited in a separate dumpster at curbside for pickup. Once the siding has been removed, the original siding must be examined for cracks and missing members, or gaps between various trim members or between trim and siding, followed by carpentry repair. If the cracks or gaps are small, putty is applied. Then the surfaces are ready for what is called "spot sanding," followed by painting.

What about painting, then repainting? "Maintenance-free" is the term emphasized in the sales pitch to homeowners years ago for the cement-asbestos shingles, and is used today more than ever by vinyl siding sales firms. The cement-asbestos shingles have lasted for many years without needing any maintenance, but the effect most often has been a bland appearance to otherwise handsome houses. Cement asbestos shingle installation has practically disappeared from the remodeling market, as aluminum or vinyl lap siding combined with aluminum-wrapped trim, probably accounts for a vast majority of new home construction and has an increasing acceptance in the overall market of older home remodeling. But vinyl siding has plenty of detractors. Historic preservation advocates hate the stuff because its most common form – lap type pattern- looks "phony" in its attempt to mimic wood lap siding. Preservationists' case against the product is backed up by various studies that indicate the vinyl traps moisture emanating from interior or external sources and eventually causing the potential for rotted framing. There are additional considerations. Critics claim vinyl and aluminum isn't really maintenance-free; its surfaces can roughen, fade or discolor, causing need to add paint. The color palette of vinyl siding is only available in very light colors, mostly beiges and gray tones, as more solid colors, as found in traditional houses, have a tendency to warp under intense sun exposure.

Probably the most serious disadvantage of the vinyl siding – aluminum wrap combination is the "dumbing down" effect, when siding applicators remove detail protruding from flat surfaces. With vernacular houses, it is the trim features that provide a visual frame to the house's exterior and give it its identity, if not its personality.

Costs to remove added cladding and refinish original lap siding and trim vary widely, depending on house surface area, amount of nailing per clad member, ease or difficulty of scaffolding, and amount of remediation of original material. Of course, the biggest cost factor is whether the homeowners are doing the work or if it is done by a remodeling contractor. In units of per square foot costs. Shingle removal ranges from 50 cents to \$1.50 per square

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the University-Raymond Commercial Historic District, composed of 30 buildings. HPC views this area's historic significance for its past and present role as the "commercial heart of the Saint Paul Midway... the city's largest industrial area and a national transportation center." HPC's nomination description, based on the research of Carol Zellie, of Landscape Research, delineates the area's development as an outgrowth of the large transportation network of local service railroads and trucking terminals that still dominate a sizable part of the city between Raymond Avenue and Snelling Avenue.

Although the overall appearance of these industrial structures exudes the architecture of service rather than aesthetics, Zellie notes that a closer look reveals many excellent examples of factory, warehouse, office and storefront buildings designed by important architects of the Twin Cities. While the great width of University Avenue provided these architects with a broad, almost panoramic setting for expansive building facades of considerable architectural possibility, the rear of these structures was almost wholly devoted to the functions of transport access. An interesting comparison here is the brick and stone multi-storied structures of Saint Paul's Lowertown, built mostly in the 19th century, were designed for horse-drawn wagon loading and railroad access, while many of the University-Raymond buildings of 20th century construction accommodated trucks.

If any building can be called the focal point of the potential district, it is the Specialty Building at the southeast corner of the Raymond-University intersection. The late 19th century structure gains prominence from the rounded corner right at the intersection. The building was designed by Buechner and Orth, a Saint Paul architectural firm, produced drawings for many buildings in the

Raymond-University area. Probably the best example of the district's architecture is the Chittenden Building near the southwest corner of the same intersection. The architecture of the Chittenden derives influence from the Chicago School which incorporated the new innovation of steel framing into masonry walls, allowing wider window bays, which increased the horizontality of window openings. These window openings became dominant in architectural composition, which resulted in structural façade members such as piers, and spandrel beams more prominent. This placed ornament in tight but conspicuous areas, and the major aspect of the Chicago School was highly florid ornament motifs, as seen in many of Chicago architect Louis Sullivan's buildings.

Several years ago, several buildings at the northeast corner of the Raymond / University intersection averted demolition by neighborhood opposition to a proposed large scale development in that area. What has happened instead are building-by-building improvements, some recently occurring, others in the planning stage, many by new owners who see potential for the historic nature of the area to provide economic opportunity.



## A River Runs Through it – the Meeker Lock and Dam



BY ROBERT ROSCOE

**THE MEEKER ISLAND LOCK** and Dam site, just below the Mississippi River bluff at the edge of Saint Paul's Desnoyer Neighborhood, may gain improvement measures if the Minnesota State Legislature approves a City of Saint Paul request for \$388,000 of bond funds. The money for the historic site would improve access to the site by rebuilding a former wagon road, which disappeared into the wild tangle of the steep riverbank sometime after the lock and dam ended service in 1912, five years after its construction.

The Meeker Lock and Dam is an unusual historic site, in that only the top 1- 2 feet of a 200 foot long concrete wall can be seen above the river water, running parallel to the river edge

where the flanking wall is shrouded by trees and vines. The Meeker Lock and Dam was the first lock and dam ever built on the Mississippi River. Its 1907 construction was a "low lift" type, featured a lift of 13 feet. Downstream at the present location of the Ford Lock and dam, a second low lift facility was constructed to work in conjunction with the Meeker structure. Five years later, the opportunity for building a hydroelectric dam requiring a higher lift, incorporating a lock for boat transfer, made the Meeker obsolete., Dr. John Anfinson, Historian with the National Park Service, said the site would greatly be enhanced by a public pedestrian and bicycle access restoring the Old Wagon Road.







## IS IT MODERN ?

### The house in the middle of Mac-Groveland

BY ROBERT ROSCOE

ALMOST EVERYONE WHO passes by architect Ron Buelow's house on Sargent Avenue near Groveland School, never notices it; even many residents of Macalester Groveland neighborhood who don't know it's there. Ron and his wife Mary Ann's residence sits atop a steep and dense tree-tangled slope, its craggy limestone walls form a rambling composition of simple planes seemingly inspired by early modernism, punctuated here and there with deep-set windows and capped with a flat roof, all hidden from view by its lofty topography and vegetation. The house's main entrance is at one of the rear corners near an alley, and the public sidewalk access off Sargent is negotiated by climbing an irregular set of steps along the west property line.

Buelows' house is in excellent condition, having been extensively renovated by the couple during their ownership. Ron's architectural talents and Mary Ann's real estate acumen contributed a sensitive balance of updating basic features while maintaining the house's original character. The Buelows have the house on the market through Edina Realty.

#### **SIDING continued from p. 3**

foot, somewhat less if the cladding is asphaltic. Although asbestos is considered a hazardous substance, cement-asbestos shingles are considered "non-friable" if no particles become airborne resulting from its removal. Surface preparation also varies with material conditions, ranging from \$1.00 to \$2.00 per square foot, and painting adds an estimated \$3.00 per square foot.

The perennial complaint against painted wood siding has been the frequency required in repainting. Older siding without proper maintenance can mean repainting every 4 years or so. Today however, with more people committing themselves to living with wood siding, more techniques and materials are available to address the situation. Preservationists with hands-on experience in restoring their own homes claim 80% of the paint job is the surface preparation. A recent advancement is the development of longer lasting paint. Sherwin Williams offers a new paint called "Duration," which has a lifetime warranty, if two coats are applied over cleaned surfaces with no loose existing paint.

At this point, much of the house's history is yet to be unfolded, but the Buelows know this much: in 1929, construction of the house began, and its original owners intended to construct the house in the architectural style of Cottage Revival. Buelow has the original drawings, indicating the house was designed by Saint Paul architect Charles Saxby Elwood. The drawings depict a stone-walled first story intended to serve as a base for a second story clad in stucco with half-timber banding, capped with a steeply pitched roof. The house's entry and a tuck-under garage built into the basement level was on the front, or south elevation facing Sargent. But after the stone first story was constructed, the 1929 stock market crash halted further work. Sometime later, when construction resumed, a flat roof was built, presumably as a pragmatic measure to enclose the first floor spaces. The house then underwent transformation from Cottage Revival to a hybrid with Early Modern. The floor plan is more in keeping with early modern residences, and elements such as wood trim are plain faced and unornamented. Windows are steel industrial type sash, but contain small rectangular glass panes with clear, translucent and colored glass in the spirit of Cottage Revival. Skylights provide light to various spaces near the rear/main entrance.

Wall construction is unusual, with the thick limestone on the exterior, backed by 4 inches of clay tile, probably intended to provide a smooth substrate for interior wall finishes. The tile is sheathed in cork, with the final layer being plaster with textured surfaces.

As the tuck-under garage was never built, the spaces have become bedrooms, bath and a family room, with windows peeking between massive limestone abutments into the heavy wooded terrain. The garage is attached to the rear of the house near the main entry.

The exterior features flagstone walkways and a patio, arranged in a somewhat irregular layout to complement the stepping back and forth of the house walls and the overhanging trees that dominate the landscape. Much of the site to the east is a mini-forest of many species of trees that serves as a bird sanctuary for pileated woodpeckers, orioles, cardinals and several types of finches.

All in all, the Buelows' house is an individualistic and curious structure, representing what can happen when abrupt changes in history cause dramatic transformations in singular works of architecture.

The historic preservation of yesteryear that dwelt exclusively on buildings of monumental acclaim has arrived in recent years on the street where you live. We used to travel to historic districts in New England fishing villages or throughout the French Quarter in New Orleans and enjoy the patina of house that accrued over time, but then come back home and surround ourselves in shiny new environments. Over twenty years ago, social observer John Naisbitt noted in his book "Megatrends" that the near future would exemplify "high tech and high touch." "Today we depend on digital information to define how we live, but we are also learning the visual information of articulated surfaces, offering to treat our eyes with a sense of touch - telling us of the past that happened before us.



# Special Events for National Preservation Week

## MAY 3-9, 2004

*National Preservation Week, May 3-9, was launched by National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1971 as a way to showcase grassroots activity in communities nationwide. This year's theme, "New Frontiers in Preservation," underscores how the national preservation ethic is growing, broadening appreciation for modern architecture, safeguarding Native American sacred sites, recognizing the role preservation plays in downtown revitalization in the age of sprawl, heritage tourism, smart growth, and providing affordable housing. As the Twin Cities organizes to host the 2007 National Preservation Conference, the National Trust's annual conference, activities and initiatives highlighting our historic resources and cultural heritage take on an important role. In honor of National Preservation Week, area organizations are presenting an abundance of special events, including ...*

### **MONDAY, MAY 3**

#### **St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission Awards Ceremony.**

In conjunction with the St. Paul Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission will present its annual preservation awards. Louis and Maud Hill House, 260 Summit Ave. Doors open at 6:30 pm, program at 7 pm. Call 651-266-9078 for details. Suggested \$5 donation at the door (award recipients are free).

### **TUESDAY, MAY 4**

**Minneapolis Grain Exchange Tour.** The Minneapolis Grain Exchange was once one of the largest mercantile exchanges in the country. On this lunchtime tour you will visit the trading floor and learn about the history of the grain trade in the Upper Midwest. Free admission. Reservations not required. 400 S. Fourth St., Room 100, Noon to 1pm. Information available at 612-673-2996 ([www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/planning/sections/hpc\\_site/hpc\\_hp.html](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/planning/sections/hpc_site/hpc_hp.html)).

**Stillwater Heritage Preservation Commission Awards Presentation.** At the Stillwater City Council meeting. Stillwater City Hall, 216 N. Fourth St., 7:00 pm

#### **"Pass to the Past" Heritage Pass Release Party.**

Rice Park in downtown Saint Paul, 11am-1pm  
Local dignitaries will unveil the St. Paul Heritage Pass, highlighting historic sites and attractions in St. Paul, and the public is invited to enjoy refreshments and entertainment by Ordway Center, as well as costumed guides and historic children's games. Sponsored in part by the Rice Park Association and the City of Saint Paul. Call 651-292-3276 for further information.

### **Wednesday, May 5**

**Minneapolis City Hall & Courthouse Tour** (Co-sponsored by the Municipal Building Commission). Enjoy a lunchtime tour of one of the Twin Cities greatest landmarks, learn about local history and discover the architectural details that make this building a Minneapolis treasure. Free. Reservations not required. Noon to 1 p.m., City Hall Atrium (by the Fathers of the Waters statue), 315 S. Fourth St., Information at 612-673-2996 ([www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/planning/sections/hpc\\_site/hpc\\_hp.html](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/planning/sections/hpc_site/hpc_hp.html)).

**"Beyond Buildings: Discussions on Historic Preservation in a New Century" Forum, Exhibit & Reception of the "10 Most Endangered Historic Properties in Minnesota."** This community forum features a roundtable panel discussion focused on preserving the natural and cultural identity of the Mississippi river corridor as development efforts within the corridor continue to expand. The "10 Most Endangered Historic Properties in Minnesota" will be available for viewing at a special reception co-sponsored by the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota following the roundtable. Free. Call 651-292-3276 ([www.landmarkcenter.org](http://www.landmarkcenter.org)) for details. Courtroom 317, Landmark Center, 75 West Fifth Street, St. Paul. 5-7pm. *The Preservation Alliance of Minnesota's list of the "10 Most Endangered Historic Properties will remain on view at Landmark Center throughout May in the Ramsey County Historical Society's first floor gallery.*

#### **Lighting of the Chandelier: A Symbol of Preservation**

Observe the 99th anniversary of the Minnesota State Capitol with a special lighting of the rotunda chandelier. A tour focused on the preservation and restoration of the building will follow, and visitors will learn about the projects that have allowed the Capitol to continue as the working seat of state government into the 21st century. Information at [www.mnhs.org](http://www.mnhs.org). Minnesota State Capitol, St. Paul, 7 p.m.-8:30 p.m.

### **SATURDAY, MAY 8**

#### **Minnesota State Capitol Architecture Tour**

Guides will lead a special 90-minute tour of architect Cass Gilbert's 1905 masterpiece, one of the most spectacular buildings in the Midwest. \$7 for adults; \$6 for senior citizens; \$4 for children ages 6 to 12. Minnesota Historical Society members receive a \$2 discount. Reservations are required; call 651-296-2881 ([www.mnhs.org](http://www.mnhs.org)). 1:30 p.m.

# Historic Saint Paul Corporation gratefully acknowledges those who have supported our efforts with generous gifts of time, talent, and financial contributions in 2003.

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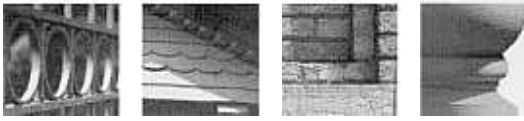
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#### **HISTORIC SAINT PAUL**

**318 LANDMARK CENTER  
75 WEST 5TH STREET  
SAINT PAUL, MN 55102**

# THREATENED!

In 1923, ten years after Henry Ford founded his car company in Detroit, the Ford Motor Company built a three-story building at 117 University Avenue near the State Capitol to be used as an automobile assembly facility. The next year, Ford opened a one-story plant in Highland Park near the Mississippi River, utilizing the newly-invented assembly line, making car manufacturing much more efficient and allowing greater quality control. This new process quickly rendered the year-old 117 University plant obsolete, so Ford used the building as a sales and service center.

By 1951, the building's function had changed even more drastically, as governmental administration offices moved into the space. Now, in 2004, it is threatened with demolition: the State of Minnesota, the current owner of this now-vacant building, claims that it is obsolete and too expensive to maintain, and should be torn down. University United, a business owners organization in the surrounding area, is mounting a campaign to persuade State government to find a way to re-use the building. A recent comprehensive life cycle study performed by LHB Architects and Engineers determined that the building met economic feasibility standards for office re-use, but the state continues its plans to raze the building.



**Ford Building, 117 University Avenue, near the State Capitol**

Preservation Journal will publish a more extensive article about the Ford Building in the next issue.

**What you can do: Call the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota at 651-293-9047.**