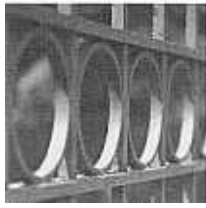


# PRESERVATION JOURNAL OF SAINT PAUL

A PUBLICATION OF HISTORIC SAINT PAUL



CELEBRATE HERITAGE | RENEW NEIGHBORHOODS | STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY

SPRING 2005

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1



## What's Brewing at Schmidt?

A cherished landmark faces an uncertain future. Will it be preserved?

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY DOUG MACK

The Schmidt Brewery is the castle of Saint Paul's West End neighborhood. It was once a major employer and the focal point of a community, but now, like so many real castles, its glory days are over, its status diminished. The structure still looms over West Seventh Street, the main artery feeding from the airport and points beyond to downtown Saint Paul, but its doors are shut and its facilities no longer operate.

For area residents, the brewery's decline is a painful reminder that their neighborhood has seen brighter days. As for

the future, it's generally agreed that new life at the brewery will be a boon for the surrounding area. This is why many neighborhood residents had the date February 18, 2005, circled on their calendars — on that day, the site was to be auctioned off, and many hoped that Sherman Associates, a developer with the support of the city, would be the winning bidder.

Sherman was, it turned out, the sole bidder, offering \$4 million, but the property's owner, Gopher State Ethanol rejected the bid as too low. Instead, Gopher State Ethanol decided to auction off the property and its components piecemeal, and scheduled this new auction for March 16. But that date

passed without an auction — it has been delayed indefinitely, extending the uncertainty about the brewery's future and fueling both the anxiety and hope among local residents and community leaders.

Gopher State Ethanol has fired the auction company, and is currently negotiating with Sherman, though exact details are not known. These negotiations offer a glimmer of hope, but the brewery's future, for the time being, is still very much in doubt.

For many neighborhood residents, a life without the brewery is unimaginable — it is one of the defining features of the West End's community identity.

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## CALENDAR

### APRIL

#### Modern Conveniences

#### Modern Technology at the Ramsey House

The Ramsey House had many state-of-the-art features when it was built in 1872. Learn about its radiant heat, communication system for the servants, and other "modern" conveniences.

Alexander Ramsey House, St. Paul

April 14, 7 p.m.

Fee: \$7 adults, \$6 seniors and college students, \$4 children ages 6-17.

Reservations required, call 651-296-8760.

#### A Day with Bob Yapp

Presented by the Twin Cities Bungalow Club.

Bob Yapp of the PBS show *On Your House* will give two presentations on maintaining your old house.

April 16, Hillcrest Community Recreation Center  
10 a.m.-noon: *Old Windows*

How to make your old windows just as—or even more—energy efficient and cleanable as replacements, and for less money. You'll walk away with hefty handouts for resources, specifications, methodology and research.

2 p.m.- 4p.m.: *Affordable Paint Jobs*

Forget vinyl. This presentation will show you how to get a painter to give you a 12-to-15-year paint job for less money than vinyl siding. You can save even more if you do it yourself. You'll learn about re-pointing, foundations, roofing, insulation, hiring a contractor, moisture issues and general old house maintenance.

MORE PRESERVATION-RELATED EVENTS LISTED AT:

<http://events.mnhs.org/calendar/>

[www.cala.umn.edu/calendar.html](http://www.cala.umn.edu/calendar.html)

Hillcrest Community Recreation Center

1978 Ford Parkway, St. Paul

Bungalow Club members free; nonmembers \$3 per session or \$5 for both.

For more information, see

[www.bungalowclub.org/event.html](http://www.bungalowclub.org/event.html)

#### Illustrated Lecture:

#### The Architecture of Summit Avenue

One-hour illustrated lecture exploring the architectural styles of St. Paul's historic Summit Avenue.

James J. Hill House, St. Paul

April 27, 7 p.m.

\$8 for adults, \$6 for seniors and students, \$4 for children ages 6-17. Free for children under age 6.

Reservations recommended, call 651-297-2555.

### MAY

#### 18th Annual Minneapolis and Saint Paul Home Tour

This popular tour celebrates city living by offering the public the chance to visit unique homes in the two cities. It's an eclectic mix -- large, small, just-constructed, historic, and remodeled houses are among those on display. Self-guided. Free.

Saturday, May 7 and Sunday, May 8

Home Tour Guide available in late April. For more information, visit [www.msphometour.com](http://www.msphometour.com).

#### 15th Annual Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Awards

The annual awards ceremony, co-sponsored by the Saint Paul HPC and the Saint Paul Chapter of the AIA ([http://www.aia-mn.org/chapters/st\\_paul.cfm](http://www.aia-mn.org/chapters/st_paul.cfm)). Mount Zion Temple, 1300 Summit Avenue.

Tuesday, May 17. Doors open at 6 p.m.; event begins at 7 p.m.

#### Spring 2005 Bungalow Tour

#### Bungalow Kitchens: Small but Sensational

Join the Twin Cities Bungalow Club for a tour of innovative bungalow kitchens, all of which are fully functional, inviting spaces that fit within the "footprint" of the home's original kitchen.

Saturday, May 14

For more information, see

<http://www.bungalowclub.org/event.html>

#### Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary Grand Opening

Join the Lower Phalen Creek Project and other organizations and individuals involved in the creation of Saint Paul's newest park to celebrate its grand opening. There will be fun family activities and, of course, a chance to look around the sanctuary.

Saturday, May 21

For more details, visit [www.mepartnership.org/sites/LOWERPHALENCREEK/](http://www.mepartnership.org/sites/LOWERPHALENCREEK/)

## May is Preservation Month!

This year's theme is *Restore America: Communities at a Crossroads*

The National Trust calls Preservation Month an opportunity to "help bring historic preservation to the forefront of Americans' daily lives by emphasizing the vital importance of protecting our nation's history." There will be preservation-related events across the country all month. For more details, visit:

[www.nationaltrust.org/preservationmonth/index.asp](http://www.nationaltrust.org/preservationmonth/index.asp)

# Renewed Push for a State Historic Tax Credit

Sen. Larry Pogemiller (D-Minneapolis) Rep. Morrie Lanning (R-Moorhead) have introduced legislation (S.F. 1659/H.F. 1731) that will create a 25 percent tax credit for the restoration and rehabilitation of Minnesota's vacant and underutilized historic buildings.

The tax credit will encourage private investment in historic properties, generate additional jobs and stimulate economic development within existing communities. The credit, available in 24 other states, will be an effective economic incentive for the creation of market-rate and affordable housing. Additionally, the credit will leverage private investments into "Main Street" commercial properties in older neighborhoods and rural areas— where there is critical need for community revitalization.

The Preservation Alliance of Minnesota and its coalition of partners have worked with experts and historic preservationists around the state and country to assist in the development of the proposed legisla-

tion for the Minnesota Historic Structure and Community Re-Investment Tax Credit which will enhance the economic revitalization of communities around the state.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

Please contact your legislators and encourage them to support the Historic Structure and Community Re-Investment Tax Credit bill (you can use some of the points listed below). Be sure to share with your representatives how the proposed tax credit would work in your community – and identify specific projects that could benefit from it!

### Some (of the many) benefits:

- \* The tax credit will encourage private investment in historic properties, generate additional jobs and stimulate economic development within existing communities.
- \* The tax credit would allow an income tax credit of 25 percent of the amount spent to rehabilitate certified residential and commercial historic structures.

- \* The tax credit can be used as an effective tool for community revitalization in urban and rural areas.
- \* The tax credit will provide incentives to create affordable housing and market-rate housing that stabilizes neighborhoods in the most difficult to develop and disinvested areas.
- \* The tax credit will accelerate private investments into "Main Street" businesses and building rehabilitations, bring vacant properties back onto local tax rolls, and bolster heritage tourism efforts.
- \* The reuse of Minnesota's historic buildings can and should be an economic development and community revitalization tool as well as an important link to our past.

## ACTION NEEDED ASAP!!

The bill will be heard in the House and Senate tax committees, so it's especially important to contact your legislators if they are on these committees.

**YOU CAN HELP! Ask your legislators to support the Historic Tax Credit bill!**

Go to [www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/Districtfinder.asp](http://www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/Districtfinder.asp) to find out how to contact your legislators.

**P S E I**

**10**

TEXT AND PHOTO BY ROBERT ROSCOE

## PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE

The term "period of significance" applies to historic districts, denoting the years during which architecturally significant buildings were constructed that define the overall historic character of the district. The beginning year and the end year serve to frame the period of significance. For historic preservation, a historic district's period of significance is important to determine which structures are pivotal to the district, which are supporting, and which are non-contributing. Both the date of construction and the architectural style are basic measures. Although years described as numerical units may seem to be only of statistical relevance, in historic preservation they provide a strong association with conditions and events that provide the stuff of history.



**The periods of Significance for the following Saint Paul Heritage Districts are:**

**DAYTON'S BLUFF**  
1878-1910

**IRVINE PARK**  
1849-1890

**SUMMIT HILL**  
1858-1930

**SUMMIT AVENUE WEST**  
1900-1937

**LOWERTOWN**  
1888-1923

**RAYMOND-UNIVERSITY**  
1890-1920

The Hiawatha light rail line has drawn praise from riders and spurred economic development.

Next stop: a line along University Avenue.

How will the proposed

## CENTRAL CORRIDOR

light rail line affect preservation and revitalization efforts?

BY DOUG MACK

The Hiawatha light rail line in Minneapolis opened to great fanfare last June, expanded to run all the way to the airport in December, and has generally received rave reviews from passengers for being a quick and comfortable ride. Beyond the accolades and the glossy brochures, however, the most accurate gauge of success comes from empirical measures, and here, too, the news is good: light rail transit (LRT) ridership figures have exceeded initial projections.

Rail is back, and though the specifics of its future have yet to be determined, it seems as though this time, the trains are here for good. The Hiawatha line has helped spur development along the corridor, with lofts, coffee shops and restaurants springing up near stations, creating new commercial nodes and bringing added bustle and business to existing ones. The next phase for light rail, the proposed Central Corridor line along University Avenue (connecting downtown Minneapolis and downtown Saint Paul), will likely have even more of an impact on the preservation and revitalization efforts in the surrounding area. University, unlike Hiawatha, is already densely developed, with a broad range of businesses and a wide variety of architectural styles – it is already a well-established commercial corridor.

"Transit oriented development" may be a relatively new term, but it's not a new concept. Many of the commercial nodes along University Avenue – such as that at Raymond Avenue – first developed because of their proximity to stops along the old Twin City Rapid Transit line, a streetcar system that spread across the Twin Cities from Stillwater to the shores of Lake Minnetonka. University Avenue was, in fact, the site of the first streetcar line connecting Minneapolis and Saint Paul (though the cities had previously had separate networks). That line was completed in 1890, the first of four streetcar links between the two cities.

"In many ways, [the Central Corridor] is a 'back to the future' project," says Steve Morris of the Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority. "This will help bring new life to some of the commercial areas that developed with the streetcar system."

Brian McMahon of University United shares this sentiment, and views transit oriented development as potentially beneficial to preservation efforts. McMahon says that as the University corridor becomes more vital, restoring some of its architectural gems will become more of a priority. University United has long been at the forefront of preservation efforts along the corridor, including a success-

ful effort to halt plans to demolish the Ford Building, which the organization is now working with the city to preserve. McMahon also points to the University and Raymond Historic District (which received that designation just this year) and the area near Iris Park as areas that have benefited from increased concern about preservation as well as renewed economic vitality – these locations, McMahon says, can serve as a model for historically sensitive, pedestrian-friendly planning.

As with any major development effort, there is some backlash – not everyone is so gung-ho about the Central Corridor. Tom Stransky, for one, calls the whole idea "stupid." Stransky, the owner of Midway Used and Rare Books, at the corner of Snelling and University, says that he fears the light rail project will force him – and other small business owners – to close. His most immediate concern is that the massive construction project will severely limit access to his store. More than that, though, Stransky worries that the light rail line will decrease the amount of parking available near his store, and make the already-busy intersection even more difficult for drivers to navigate.

"It won't get rid of congestion – it'll make it worse," Stransky claims. "The big-box retailers will benefit, but the small businesses will suffer." •

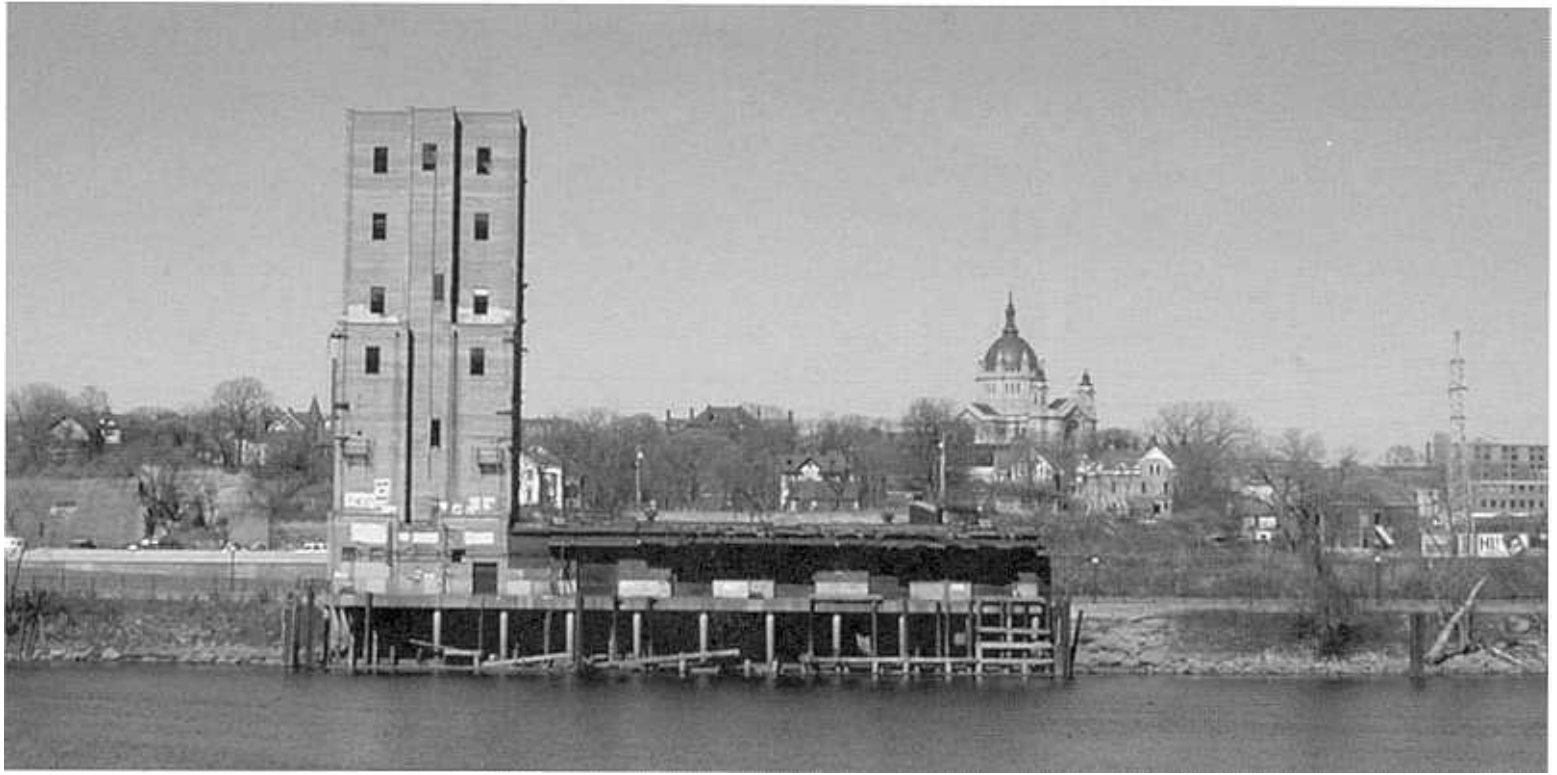
Proponents of the Central Corridor argue that, with the right safeguards in place, these potential problems can be avoided. Construction along the Hiawatha Line did, indeed temporarily limit access to many businesses, and it is inevitable that this will happen along University Avenue, too. But those planning the Central Corridor are aware of these concerns, and are making plans to minimize the inconvenience to businesses.

"We are prepared to do whatever we can to minimize the impact of construction, if it ever gets to that point," Ramsey County Commissioner Sue Haigh told the *Pioneer Press* last year.

The key to avoiding potential problems and to ensuring that the Central Corridor benefits everyone is community involvement in the planning process. Steve Morris acknowledges that the planners need to do a better job of listening to the concerns of area residents and business owners, but says that community involvement in the process is a priority.

If all the affected and interested parties succeed in working together, the Central Corridor could well be a major asset to the University area, helping existing businesses prosper, and, one hopes, helping to encourage well-designed, pedestrian-friendly development that makes use of the corridor's historic assets.





# Rebirth on the River

TEXT AND PHOTO BY ROBERT ROSCOE

## AN UPDATE ON THE HEADHOUSE AND SACKHOUSE

A pair of historically important though architecturally non-descript structures hovering over the Mississippi River shoreline near Irvine Park are moving closer to salvation. The Saint Paul Riverfront Corporation has been coordinating a re-use effort for the past several years, marketing the property to prospective developers and bundling financial assistance. A restaurant group, ADRZ, proposes to renovate the horizontal building (the Sack House) and the tall narrow vertical building (the Head House) will be converted into an interpretive center, using much of the existing machinery on the various floor levels to tell the story of its former function of producing flour.

In 1917, Equity Cooperative Exchange built a large grain-elevator complex in this area, then known as Upper Landing. The cooperative was part of a Midwest populist agricultural movement organized by small farmers

and grain-processing operators to break up the grain-trading monopoly up river in Minneapolis that controlled grain trade in the region.

In the early 1930s, the Equity Cooperative Exchange built the Head

**THE COMPLEX HAS BEEN PLACED ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES FOR ITS ROLE IN ST. PAUL PORT HISTORY AND AS THE FIRST SUCCESSFUL GRAIN-TERMINAL ELEVATOR OWNED AND OPERATED BY AN AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE IN THE UNITED STATES.**

House and Sack House. The loading of grain into rail cars and barges took place in the Head House; the Sack House contained the operation of bagging milled flour. The Head House and Sack House, now owned by Harvest States Foods, have been long abandoned and now serve

as a roosting place for pigeons. The complex has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places, however, for its role in St. Paul port history and as the first successful grain-terminal elevator owned and operated by an agricultural cooperative in the United States.

Gregory Page, Special Projects Coordinator for the Riverfront Corporation, says the re-use project has overcome several hurdles, such as identifying re-uses, solving parking issues, coordinating aspects of proposed land use and public agency regulations and the daunting task of locating funding sources. Several federal sources of potential funding are being approached for financing assistance, but Page says in addition to private capital and public funding, the project will need other sources, such as philanthropic interests, to meet the estimated \$7 million development cost. Page is optimistic, and looks forward to groundbreaking late this year or in Spring of 2006.



## Brewery CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"When people ask me where I live, I usually say 'by the Schmidt Brewery,'" says Andrew Hine, an area resident who has researched brewery history and is active in preservation efforts. "If it were gone, I'm not sure what I would use as an identifying landmark."

Similarly, Nick Coleman, a columnist for the *Star Tribune*, recently wrote fondly of his boyhood in the shadow of Schmidt. The giant red neon lights spelling out S-c-h-m-i-d-t were a beacon for him as he delivered newspapers in the darkness of early morning. "I could repeat their sequence in my head — keeping time, right on the letter," Coleman wrote, "even when I couldn't see them for a few minutes."

The reasons the Schmidt Brewery site evokes such passions among many Saint Paul residents are varied, of course, ranging from fond memories of the beer to nostalgia for the good old days when the neighborhood was lively and the brewery its vibrant center to an appreciation of the hulking architecture and elegant brickwork.

Hine is particularly taken with the central tower of the main building — the most castle-like part of the structure — and its postcard vistas. It is this feature that figures most centrally in his personal vision for re-use.

"I am adamantly opposed to allowing one or two rich families to privately occupy the best one or two locations [within the site]," says Hine. "This place is a neighborhood treasure, so the privatization of the top of the tower for the sake of a million dollars makes no sense to me when it's a billion-dollar view."

The central components of his vision, aside from public access to the tower, are specialty shops, a museum or other feature that

highlights the site's history, maybe some housing, and definitely some beer. A micro-brewery or two, a bar, a pub — something that allows visitors to partake of the product for which the Schmidt Brewery was best known.

Saint Paul City Councilmember Dave Thune, whose ward includes the brewery, shares much of Hine's enthusiasm about the site and its long-term potential. Thune singles out the Rathskeller, but lauds the whole site as having "a unique flair."

Whatever the future use, Hine, Thune and others agree, the site must be a community asset — not just a private development serving residents, but a working, bustling hub of activity that welcomes people from the neighborhood and beyond, and reminds them of Schmidt's glory days.

It should not, must not, cannot be what is now, a vacant shell, or, even worse, what it was until a few months ago: a smelly industrial plant.

This most recent chapter in the brewery's history is one that local residents would like to forget.

Beer production here ended in 2002, but the brewery had struggled financially for years. In 2000, as Gopher State Ethanol took over part of the facility to operate what was billed as the nation's first urban ethanol-processing plant. This distinction, however, proved to be less impressive than originally advertised, in that there was a good reason such facilities had not been sited in an major city — the ethanol production produced an unpleasant odor that wafted across the neighborhood, annoying residents, raising public health concerns, and prompting the city to sue Gopher State on two occasions for being a public nuisance. Area residents said that they couldn't open their windows in the summer because of the odor that hung in the air. They

were glad to have the jobs, they said, and happy to see the lights on at the old brewery. But whatever the benefits of the ethanol plant, the smell easily overwhelmed them all.

The bitter battle over the sour smell seemed as though it could continue through countless cycles, but economics intervened. In the end, Gopher State was brought down by financial rather than emissions problems, ceasing operations in May 2004 and declaring in December that it would liquidate its assets, officially clearing the air for neighborhood residents and offering an opportunity for new life at the site. The City Council recently passed a resolution that effectively banned ethanol or similar processing facilities in the city, a move made for the main purpose of keeping potential buyers of the site from re-starting industrial use.

The Schmidt Brewery's future, then, lies in its distant past. We're long past heyday of the brewery, when it was a true neighborhood institution, surrounded by businesses established to serve the workers and their families, including, just across West 7th, a beer garden, a bowling alley, and a hotel for single men who worked at the brewery. But it's an interesting history, and one that is tied directly to that of the city itself, and it's easy to see how these ghosts of days gone by can be reimagined, and redeveloped into a new development that draws people from all over and is again the pride of the West End.

The redevelopment efforts may not be underway, or even certain, but given the past, and given the potential, it's not hard to imagine, in a few years time, Saint Paulites again lifting their mugs to toast the grand old Schmidt Brewery.

*Thanks to Diane Gerth, Andrew Hine and Councilmember Dave Thune for providing information for this article.*



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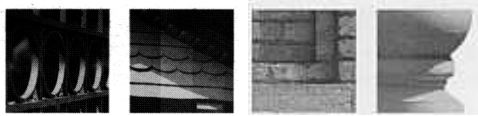
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## **MAY IS PRESERVATION MONTH!**

see page 2 for details

### **A PARTY FOR PRESERVATION**

SCENES FROM HISTORIC SAINT PAUL'S "PARTY IN THE PARK."



Photos courtesy of Kathryn Paulson