

RAMSEY COUNTY

History

A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

Robert Foulis—Minnesota's
First Golf Professional

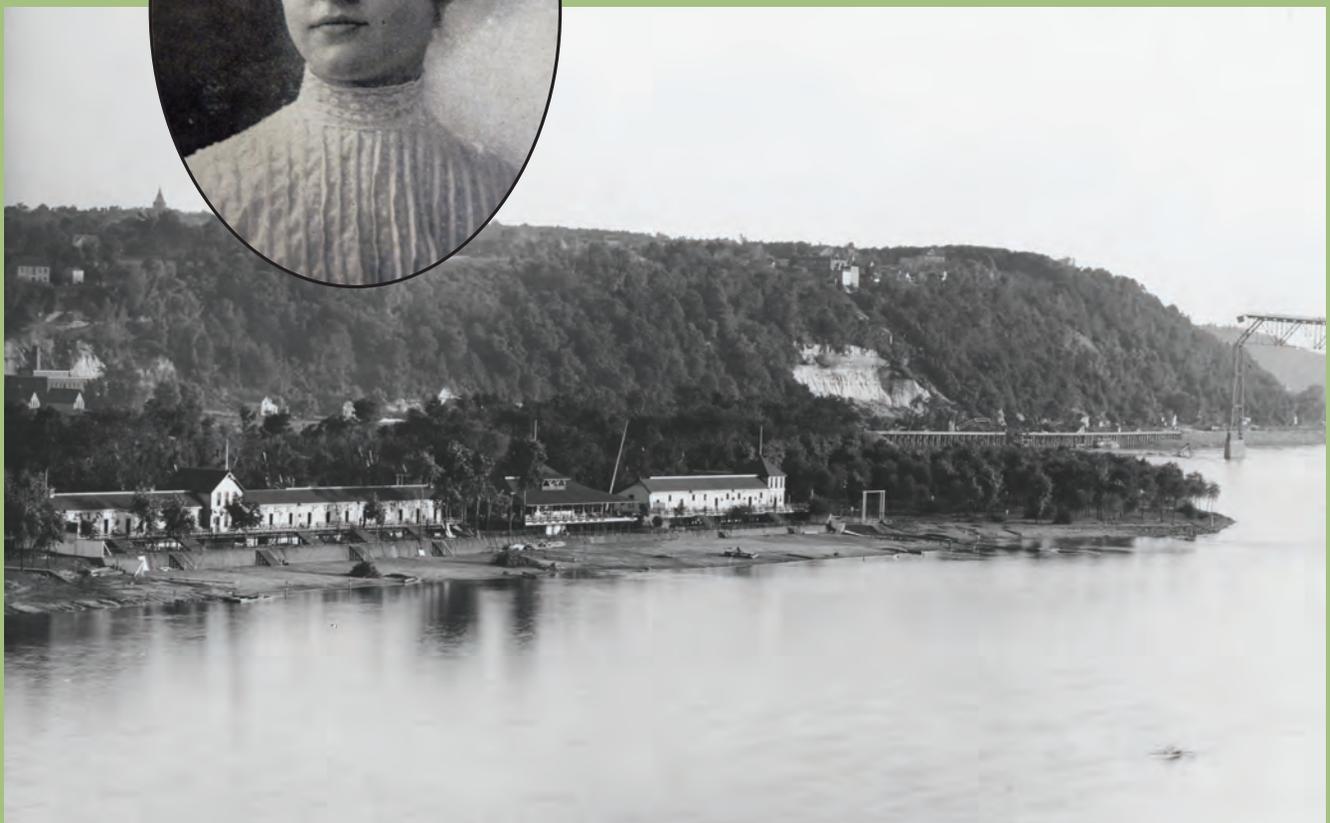
Joseph Gladke
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Summer 2016

Volume 51, Number 2

What Does the Queen Say?:
Helen Marks, Dressmaker,
the 1903 Summer Carnival, and the Unions

David Riehle, page 3



Helen A. Marks, member of the Dressmakers Union Local 1, was elected Queen of the St. Paul Summer Carnival in 1903 by an overwhelming popular vote, including thousands of labor union supporters. Voters paid 10¢ per vote and could vote as many times as they wanted because the money raised went to help pay for the Free Public Baths on Harriet Island, seen here in the background looking southwest from Wabasha Bridge. The portrait of Helen Marks is courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society. Photo of Harriet Island and the Free Public Baths about 1905 by the Detroit Photographic Co., courtesy of the Library of Congress.

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RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 51, Number 2

Summer 2016

THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON JANUARY 25, 2016:

Preserving our past, informing our present, inspiring our future

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Marc J Manderscheid

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A Message from the Editorial Board

About one hundred years ago, Ramsey County was changing with the times. In this issue, you will read about some of those changes. In 1903, for one brief shining year, St. Paul had a SUMMER carnival, which Dave Riehle describes for us. The carnival, whose proceeds went to Dr. Justus Ohage's public bathhouse along the Mississippi, had its own queen, who was a dressmaker and union activist, elected by union members. Other activities held the attention of Ramsey County residents too. Joseph Gladke shares the story of how, a few years earlier, the newly organized Town and Country Club recruited Robert Foulis, a native of St. Andrews, Scotland, to help design its nine-hole course and act as its first golf pro. And the City of St. Paul was growing. Marc Manderscheid details the city of Saint Paul's zoning changes that allowed the transformation of farms and fields in south Highland Park, based on the eagerness of business leaders to develop the area for a major automobile factory. Henry Ford's astute negotiation for his assembly plant changed the character of that neighborhood, which supported the Ford factory for nearly one hundred years. With proposed new development, we will see what happens in the next chapter of Highland Park history!

Anne Cowie
Chair, Editorial Board

Homes vs. Factories: The 95-Year Battle over the Future of the South Highland Park Neighborhood

Marc J Manderscheid

A century ago, the part of St. Paul south of Randolph Avenue was primarily used for farming and rural homesteads. Most streets were dirt. Streetcar lines traversed the length of West Seventh Street from downtown to Fort Snelling, and on Randolph to Cleveland Avenue. There was no Highland Park, although plans for new parks suggested a large park should be located atop the Mississippi River bluffs just east of the High Dam.¹

The “Plan of Saint Paul”

In 1920, the St. Paul City Council appointed George H. Herrold as the first Managing Director and Engineer for the City Planning Board.² Mr. Herrold described St. Paul in 1920 as “a natural city of 300,000; that is, it had grown any old way” and was expanding at “just a normal growth.”³

Saint Paul’s initial planning efforts culminated with the mid-1922 release of the “Plan of Saint Paul,” which called for the adoption of a “Building Zone Ordinance” and dividing land uses into separate districts: “[t]he component parts of a city are homes, apartments, commercial buildings, institutions and factories. Each has its standard of excellence, and these standards are maintained more easily when the component parts are grouped in districts best suited to their needs.”⁴ The theory behind zoning in a city was explained as follows:

When one plans a home, he decides the number of rooms wanted and the purpose of each room and furnishes the room accordingly. Why not plan a city and assign a purpose to each street and build on each street according to its purpose? One street would specialize in single family homes, another in apartment buildings, another in retail stores and another in manufacturing.⁵

The City’s first comprehensive citywide zoning code was adopted on July 7, 1922.⁶ The zoning ordinance divided the entire City into six zones or districts: the “A”, the “B”, and the “C” residence districts; a

commercial district; a light industry district; and a heavy industry district.⁷

In the “A” and “B” residence districts, the primary use was to be for “houses for not more than two families.”⁸ Public libraries, churches, colleges and certain social and community center buildings were allowed in the “A” and “B” residence districts, but not “a public dance hall or a public bowling alley.” Fraternity houses, private clubs, boarding and lodging houses, orphan asylums, and homes for the aged could be built in the “B” district, but no apartment houses, stores,



George Herrold (1876–1964) served as St. Paul’s planning director from 1920 to 1951 and was instrumental in persuading city leaders to adopt a zoning code and to consider professional planning principles. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

garages or filling stations.⁹ The “C” residence district was primarily intended to be for “flats, apartments, tenements and family hotels.” Billboards and public garages were prohibited in all three residence districts.

The commercial district was intended for the retail trade and certain small industrial uses.¹⁰ In the light industry district, manufacturing that was not “noxious or offensive by reason of the emission of odor, smoke, gas, noise, or by reason of excessive fire hazard” was allowed.¹¹ No uses permitted in “A”, “B”, or “C” residence districts, or commercial districts “shall be excluded from a light industry district.” In the heavy industry district “no regulations or restrictions are provided by this article”, except that no industry of an obnoxious character could be located “where it would unreasonably interfere” with industries already established, or with any permitted uses or property in a more restricted district.¹²

Initial Zoning in Highland

Almost all of the land in what is now the Highland Park and Macalester Groveland neighborhoods, including all publicly owned land, was zoned in the summer of 1922 as “A” residence district.¹³ Mr. Herrold noted how in this area,

the Mississippi [River] flows southward over the dam and makes a great bend . . . through the gorge. Within this bend lies the city’s highest plateau of rolling land, some 1800 acres in extent. [This land] was an unspoiled country because of lack of approach and because of lack of demand for more residence property. When St. Paul passed its comprehensive zoning ordinance the whole area [of Highland Park] was zoned as ‘A’ residence in anticipation of the natural extension of Saint Paul’s best residential district.¹⁴

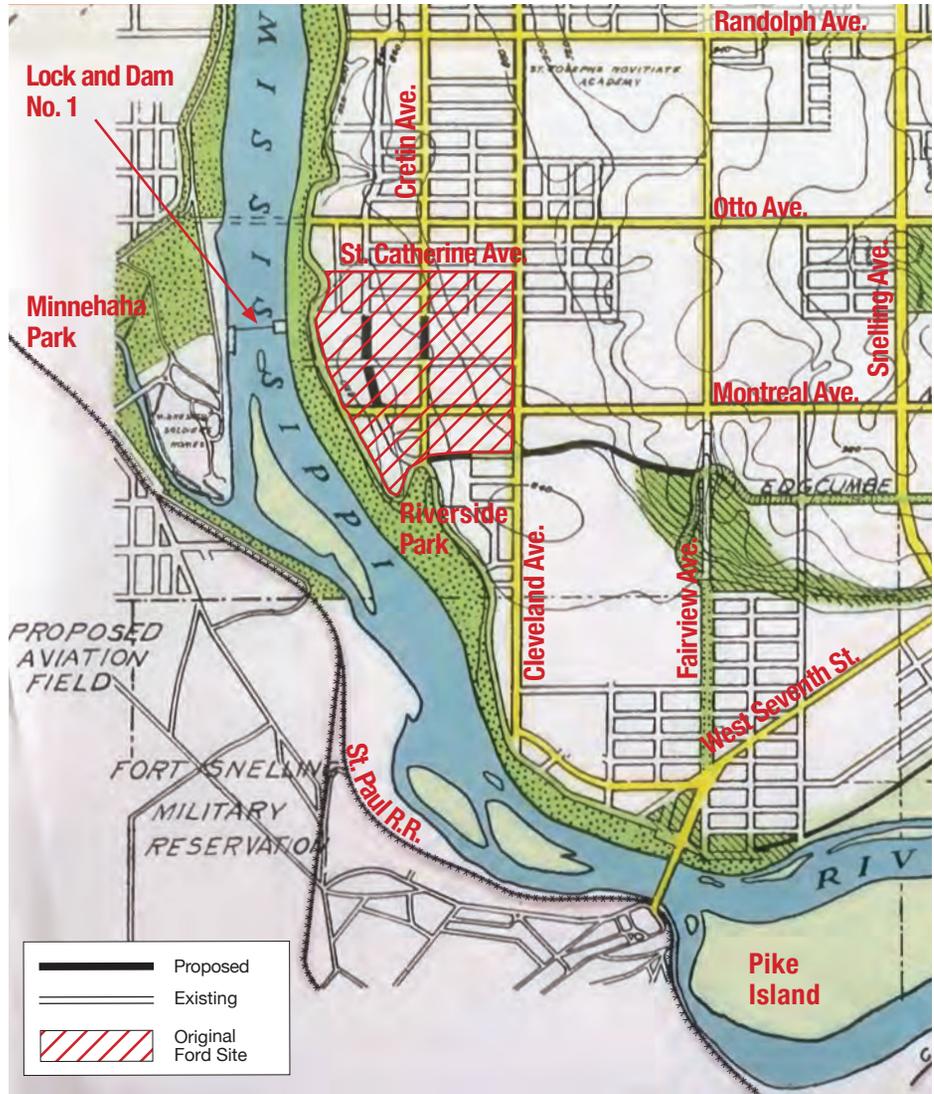
Half-block strips of land on each side of Grand, St. Clair, and Randolph Avenues, as well as both sides of West Seventh Street, were zoned for commercial use.¹⁵ Almost the entire area between West Seventh and the Mississippi River, as well as the areas east of Pleasant Avenue (today's I-35E), were zoned "B" residence district, and intended as homes for working men and women and their families. There was no zoning for any light or heavy industry use anywhere near the Highland Park neighborhood.

Henry Ford Changes Everything

On January 9, 1923, Henry Ford and the Ford Motor Company announced plans to build a vehicle manufacturing and assembly plant in St. Paul on approximately 167 acres of land bounded on the north by Saint Catherine's Avenue (quickly renamed "Edsel Avenue," then "Ford Road" and a few years later as "Ford Parkway"); on the east by Cleveland Avenue; on the south by Hampshire Avenue; and on the west by Mississippi River Boulevard (the "Original Ford Site").¹⁶ Ford's dream was to tie together the electrical power to be generated by the unfinished power plant at Lock and Dam No. 1, with a new manufacturing plant to be served by new rail lines and a barge terminal.¹⁷

The Saint Paul Association, a forerunner to today's Chamber of Commerce, had already acquired the proposed factory site, even before the public announcement:

When Henry Ford definitely decided that St. Paul was a superior site for his factory than Duluth or Minneapolis, he would consider no other site than he now has near the High Dam. . . . He would not take options on the land and would consider nothing but deeds. . . . The magnitude of the undertaking may be realized when it is known that Ford would consider no more nor no less than the 167-acre tract. This was in the possession of ninety-seven [sic] owners in all parts of the country. The last deed came from New Orleans. The men who did this work were forced to supply the money for the land, knowing if they failed to get it all they would have the site on their hands with their money gone. They knew they would face ridicule if the plans fell through.¹⁸



This map taken from the 1922 Plan of St. Paul shows the pre-Ford layout of platted streets and blocks. The dashed lines show the anticipated extension of Otto Avenue across the Mississippi River to Minneapolis. The diagonal lines are for a proposed public park along the bluff (which never happened). The existing rail line on the Minneapolis side of the Mississippi River snaked around the base of Fort Snelling.

Full credit for negotiating the deal with Ford was given to Colonel Lewis H. Brittin, the industrial development engineer of the Greater St. Paul committee. "[T]he whole idea originated with him. . . . St. Paul's fight to secure this great industry has been carried on entirely under his direction.¹⁹ Den E. Lane, a St. Paul realtor, coordinated all the land purchases.²⁰

Ford proposed to initially construct a one-million-square-foot, single-level factory to replace its twelve-story Minneapolis assembly plant and to employ 3,000 workmen.²¹ Ford suggested that it would ulti-

mately construct five factory buildings to include both manufacturing and assembly of automobiles and tractors at an expected cost of \$10 million. Ford's engineers predicted that "the plant will be employing 14,000 men within five or six years."²² When Henry Ford visited the site for his new manufacturing plant, on April 26, 1923, he described it as "the finest piece of ground in the country for my purpose."²³

The St. Paul newspapers gushed at Ford's announcement of "the first of the great manufacturing plants which launch its policy of decentralization [and] may be received at full value as heralding the



Henry Ford (1863–1947) was the colorful and autocratic leader of the Ford Motor Company. On his only visit to St. Paul, Ford directed that the plant be “turned around” and laid out so that it faced the Mississippi River, in order to preserve for all time a grove of trees. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.



Colonel Lewis H. Brittin (1877–1952) was the industrial development engineer of the Greater St. Paul Committee whose persuasive genius was largely responsible for Ford’s decision to build its new plant on the bluffs in St. Paul. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.



Den E. Lane (1881–1952; his full name was Dennis Edward Lane) was the “Own your own home man,” putting more than 600 acres for homes on the market in 1925 alone. Many Highland Park subdivisions are named after him. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

advent of a new industrial era of incalculable importance and worth to Saint Paul and Minneapolis, the state and the Northwest generally.”²⁴ The editor of the *Dispatch* noted how St. Paul was already “the financial center of the Northwest; [the] radial center of railway management and operations,” and had the “supreme position as a great distributing depot and jobbing market.”²⁵ The *Dispatch* saw Ford’s announcement as heralding “the promised land of industrial development [to which] St. Paul is now headed” and “the beginning of a manufacturing expansion which alone was necessary to assure the prosperity and growth of the city.”

The Saint Paul City government was elated by Ford’s announcement. Corporation Counsel Carlton McNally stated:

This is not dreaming; it is cold, conservative calculation. The ramifications of this Ford project are unlimited. Its value to the Northwest can hardly be overestimated. We are on the verge of the greatest industrial era we have ever known and the entire Northwest will prosper with us.²⁶

The City did everything it possibly could to help Henry Ford’s industrial dream

come true. On February 23, 1923, the Saint Paul City Council unanimously approved rezoning the Original Ford Site as a “Heavy Industry District.”²⁷ The fervor surrounding Ford’s proposal was so strong that the City adopted the industrial rezoning as “an emergency ordinance rendered necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety.”

Adjacent properties to the Original Ford Site were also rezoned to accommodate the expected growth to be attracted by Ford’s new industrial development. “Heavy Industry” zoning was extended to the north to the alleyway south of Otto Avenue (since renamed as Highland Parkway) and to the south by the alley north of Magoffin Avenue.²⁸ The Heavy Industry zone was “buffered” by Light Industry zones on both sides of Otto Avenue; on the east side of Cleveland Avenue from Otto Avenue to Montreal Avenue; and on the north side of Magoffin Avenue. On March 15, 1923, the Saint Paul City Council adopted a Resolution vacating all then-existing City streets and alleys within the boundaries of the Original Ford Site.²⁹

Ford needed to acquire additional lands to fulfill its transportation and

power plans. Ford bought two islands in the Mississippi River from Northern States Power Co.³⁰ The northernmost island, just below the High Dam, was removed by Ford to construct the tailrace for the Hydroelectric Plant. The second was a thirteen-acre island lying to the west of Riverside Park (today’s Hidden Falls Regional Park). Ford traded most of this island to the City of Saint Paul in exchange for almost 2,000 feet of riverfront park land lying south of St. Catherine’s Avenue and between Mississippi River Boulevard and the Mississippi River.³¹

The City required that the soil excavated from the northern island be used to fill in the channel located between the southern island and the east bank of the River. This newly enlarged park was envisioned to become “baseball diamonds, tennis courts, picnic grounds,” landscaping and possibly “a new municipal golf links.”³² Only the picnic grounds and landscaping were ultimately constructed; probably because the City soon purchased the land that became Highland Park.³³ On the riverfront property it acquired from the City, Ford constructed a steam plant and built a flood wall along the dam tailrace (where it could load and unload

barges); all this, despite the fact that the land was zoned as “A” residence and remained so for decades.

George Herrold explained how this initial 1923 industrial rezoning for the Ford plant and the area around it had been a complete change of plans from what had been anticipated:

The coming of the Ford Motor Company with its Ten Million Dollar plant in 1924 introduced problems in City Planning which at first seemed insurmountable. . . . This district was [initially] zoned as “A” residence or for single family homes. . . . This area had to be re-zoned for manufacturing, and in addition to the 167 acres also two and one-half blocks to the North and one-half mile East and West were re-zoned to provide for a business center, hotels and boarding houses. The land on the hills to the eastward to be used for housing were left in “A” Residence Districts.³⁴

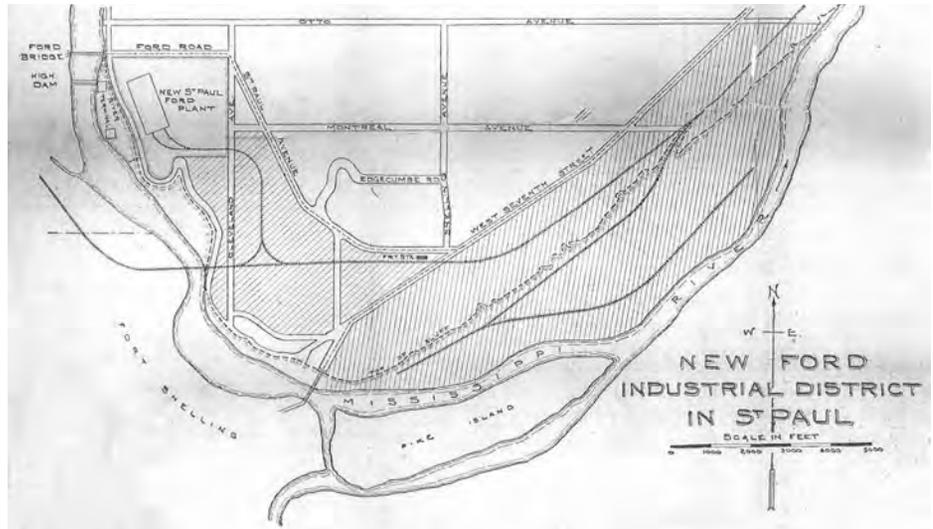
Here was an encroachment of industry in a district of great potential value for residences. Its frontage would be upon a beautiful river drive through park lands along the wooded river bluff. It was a \$16,000,000 plant too large and of too great value to combat. It presented a problem almost unknown in city planning experience. Reduced to its simplest terms it meant the acceptance of the encroachment and still attempt to preserve these lands for their most worthy use.

In addition to rezoning [for the Ford plant], about 50 acres to the north and 37 acres to the east were rezoned for heavy and light industry for accessory plants, hotels and commercial uses made necessary by this new industry.

Further schemes for rezoning were held in abeyance until the [planning] Board could adjust itself to the new situation.³⁵

The New Rail Line

On the same day as Ford made its big pronouncement, January 9, 1923, the Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul Railway (“the Saint Paul Road”) announced that it would construct a new rail line connecting its Saint Paul and Minneapolis operations.³⁶ This new rail line would extend from downtown Saint Paul to the southwest along West Seventh, turn to the west across southern St. Paul, cross the Mississippi River on a new railroad bridge, and then join



This map was prepared by Colonel Brittin and the St. Paul Road; it was published in the St. Paul Pioneer Press on December 21, 1924. The shaded area was for industrial development: the 700 acres above the river bluff for factories and 600 acres along the riverfront for coal receiving. St. Paul Avenue and West Seventh Street were proposed as heavy trucking routes and for street car lines. Colonel Brittin described this location as “One of the largest areas of good industrial property at a reasonable price in America.”

the St. Paul Road’s existing tracks which ran from Fort Snelling to Minneapolis. Three great benefits of the new rail line were predicted. First, “[t]hrough traffic now passing through the Summit Avenue residential district over the short line of the St. Paul road will be diverted to the new low grade line, relieving the residential district,” of 75 percent of the current traffic.³⁷ Second, the new line would open “a great and desirable trackage area in the vicinity of the West Seventh Street which, with the cooperation of the Greater St. Paul Committee, undoubtedly will develop an important industrial district in that locality.” “The new line to be built at a cost of more than \$2,000,000 will tap and open up an entirely new industrial district for St. Paul, a district containing about 700 acres of land at a reasonable price and with facilities very attractive to other industries locating here.”³⁸ Third, the railroad’s new Mississippi River Bridge would allow the St. Paul Road a direct connection to the Pacific Ocean. It was announced that “The Mississippi [River] Boulevard will be bridged and elevated tracks over Seventh street are planned.”

Initially, it had been thought that Ford would buy the land for the spur line from the St. Paul Road’s new main line to its

plant, “but since it was discovered that much of the property needed is held by persons who are demanding high prices for it the St. Paul Road has taken over this part of the trackage.”³⁹ The *Dispatch* also reported, “Land speculators have hopped in and bought up tracts which are needed for the right-of-way of the spur line of the St. Paul Road . . . and have complicated the acquisition of this property.”⁴⁰

Most of the trouble is being caused by one or two combinations where the land is held in such manner that we can’t get through. The owners, some of whom bought while the Ford project was still in the negotiation stage, want the St. Paul road to buy much more land than it needs, and in several cases won’t even fix a price.⁴¹

The solution was condemnation: “The railroad has the right of condemnation when prices are exorbitant while Ford does not have this right. By condemnation the attempt of the speculators to reap an excessive harvest will be defeated.”⁴²

There soon erupted a railroad civil war, as the other eight railroads in St. Paul strongly urged the City to prevent the St. Paul Road from having sole access to Ford’s new plant.⁴³ For several months, alternative railroad connections,

including one crossing the Mississippi River at Pike Island, were proposed. Ford, however, ended the debate with a telegram:

As we have concluded definite arrangements with officials of the C.M.&St.P. to serve our High dam property we strongly urge quick passage of pending ordinance granting railway rights to establish line to our property. Actual construction now delayed pending action. Imperative we have railroad connections at once.⁴⁴

With the winning rail line and its route now certain, condemnation proceedings were promptly commenced by the St. Paul Road. The land needed for the new rail lines was all acquired by June 1923.⁴⁵ By October 1923, the main rail line had been constructed from the existing Short Line tracks near Ancker Hospital (currently site of St. Paul Public Schools headquarters), southwest along West Seventh Street, turning west and skirting the hills of Highland Park, and extending all the way west to Cleveland Avenue, a half-mile south of the Original Ford Site.⁴⁶ The Saint Paul Road also acquired or condemned the land needed to construct the half-mile spur line connecting to the new Ford plant. The railroad subsequently transferred all of its land north of the main line to Ford.⁴⁷

The plan was that the St. Paul Road would soon extend its mainline west to Minneapolis, across a new bridge spanning the Mississippi River, to “form a shortening link to the Chicago-Pacific coast route of the St. Paul road.”⁴⁸ The railroad acquired all of the land lying west of Cleveland Avenue that it needed for its new bridge (extending south from Ramlow Place to Sheridan Avenue).⁴⁹ On April 2, 1924 President Coolidge signed the Keller-Shipstead bill, authorizing the St. Paul Road to extend its tracks across part of Fort Snelling, so that the railroad could construct its approach to the proposed bridge from Minneapolis.⁵⁰

Ford’s plans also required developing water transportation. Ford proposed developing a fleet of tugboats and barges which would revive barge traffic on the Upper Mississippi.⁵¹ The Ford plan was to bring Southern Illinois coal to Saint Paul, and return the barges to the south loaded with manufactured goods.

Local roadway improvements included building a new “Inter-City” Bridge over the Mississippi River, extending from either Randolph Avenue, Otto Street, or St. Catherine Avenue.⁵² After months of debate, the Saint Paul City Council finally selected Edsel Avenue (Ford Parkway) as the route for the river crossing.⁵³ The existing Randolph Avenue Streetcar Line was to be double-tracked and extended from Randolph Avenue down Cleveland Avenue to Ford Parkway, then from Cleveland Avenue to the Ford Plant, and finally, from the Ford plant across the river to Minneapolis, where it would connect with the Minneapolis Kenwood-East 25th Street Streetcar Line. Construction on the Intercity Bridge (known as the Ford Bridge) finally began in 1925; it opened in 1927.

The City planned to construct several new streets and widen existing streets to accommodate the anticipated surge in industrial development around Ford’s new plant. Saint Paul Avenue “was condemned with a width of 104 ft. and a length of 8,700 ft. to connect the [Ford] plant with Seventh St. . . . Its design calls for a central double track street car line, two 27 ft. paved driveways and two 15 ft. sidewalks.”⁵⁴ Otto Street, Montreal Avenue, Cleveland Avenue, West Seventh, and Snelling Avenue were all widened. Six miles of 60-foot-wide streets were widened to 86 feet wide, and Ford Road was widened to 100 feet in width.

The “Ford Industrial District”

Even before Ford’s official announcement, business leaders in St. Paul had sought increased land for industry: “Included in the [Ford] project [is] the development of the outer West Seventh street, west of Otto Avenue, into an industrial area with approximately 500 acres of favored contiguous territory.”⁵⁵ Corporation Counsel McNally had already begun preparing an ordinance to change the zoning “to provide industrial areas along the new trackage and in the section surrounding the Ford project.⁵⁶ But the rezoning for the Original Ford Site was quickly separated from the rezoning of the area to be served by the new main line.⁵⁷ When the Original Ford Site

was rezoned in February 1923, no part of the West Seventh District was rezoned.

On November 12, 1924, plans for a “definite industrial development of a 700 acre tract adjacent to the new Ford plant” were unveiled by H.E. Byrum, president of the Saint Paul Road and Colonel Brittin of the St. Paul Association.⁵⁸ Colonel Brittin’s vision for the new “Ford Industrial District” encompassed a total area of about 1,300 acres.⁵⁹ The lower 600 acres of the new district would be “most suitable for coal docks, for storage, cleaning and distribution of coal brought to St. Paul from the Southern Illinois fields by river.”⁶⁰ This lower-level district would be directly served by the new railroad line. “Saint Paul lacks competition from Minneapolis in this matter, in that because of the high bluffs on both sides of the river there is no place in the latter city where such river facilities may be offered.”

The manufacturing component of the new “Ford Industrial District” was planned to extend all the way from the Ford plant eastward to the junction of Otto Avenue and West Seventh Street, encompassing approximately 700 acres of level ground.⁶¹ “The St. Paul Road has so located its new Ford plant line that spur tracks may be built covering this entire district, thus affording railroad trackage to the entire district.” Street car lines were being planned for Snelling Avenue and the new St. Paul Avenue, which was to be the heavy trucking route to the Ford plant. The railroad was planning to build a district freight depot along the main line near where it crossed West Seventh Street.⁶² When the St. Paul Road graded its right-of-way, it planned for a switching yard with up to nine sets of tracks extending from West Seventh to Cleveland Avenue.⁶³

In early January 1925, the Industrial subdivision of the St. Paul Association announced that it would “center its activity [in] the coming weeks on bringing about the zoning of the West Seventh street district as industrial property.”⁶⁴ There was an extraordinary optimism that a new industrial era was dawning in St. Paul. Colonel Brittin predicted that “[t]he Saint Paul Ford plant will employ 10,000 men, eighteen months after opening March 1,” and that it will “be necessary to provide housing units for

at least 7,500 of these men in addition to caring for the city's normal population increase."⁶⁵ The "[w]est end is seen as [a] Second Midway" district, which "will vie industrially with that portion of University Avenue [west of] Snelling."⁶⁶

Some additional areas near the Ford plant were subsequently rezoned from light to heavy industry, including the east side of Cleveland, from Montreal to Magoffin.⁶⁷ Light industrial zoning was extended to fill in the triangle between Saint Paul Avenue, Montreal, and Cleveland. Commercial zoning was added to both sides of Ford Road from Snelling to Cleveland, and on the east side of Saint Paul Avenue, north of Montreal.⁶⁸ Apartment and hotel zoning, the "C" residence district, was added to the area bounded by Prior, Ford Road, Cleveland, and Bayard.⁶⁹ There was tremendous pressure placed upon City officials to go further and to rezone even more land for industry.

A thousand speculators dropped down upon the city and many options were taken on various properties included in this area. Every speculator was convinced that the piece of land on which he had an option should be zoned for industrial purposes, but a sane attitude prevailed among city officials, and all requests to change the zoning were refused until the City Planning Board could study the district and report their findings.⁷⁰

The City held firm, however, and continued to refuse to rezone to industrial the 1,300 acres that the St. Paul Association had been pushing for coal docks and for the new industrial park.

The Death of the Industrial Dream

In 1925, three auto-related businesses new to St. Paul opened on Ford Parkway. McGee White Corporation, which specialized in bodies and Ford truck equipment, relocated from Minneapolis to take advantage of the scores of Ford dealers who visited the factory each day.⁷¹ McGee White built a three-story structure with a white tile façade and display rooms on the lower floor at 2221 Ford Parkway (today's Haskell's Building). A block further west, at 2277 Ford Parkway, the Schurmeier Whitney Company, manufacturers of automobile



The McGee-White Corporation built its white-tiled headquarters on the north side of Ford Road after the street was finally paved in the summer of 1925. The building still stands as the Haskell's Building but was substantially remodeled and is now home to a liquor store and offices. Photo courtesy of Brian McMahon.

and truck bodies, erected a one-story structure (where Petco is today).⁷² At the northeast corner of Mississippi River Boulevard and Ford Parkway, Motor Power Equipment Company constructed a large, one-story structure, designed by noted architect Clarence H. Johnston. The firm was "organized by Colonel Brittin to handle and distribute all accessories and machines used in conjunction with the Fordson tractor and trucks."⁷³ Rather than being financed "by one or a few men, it has been created as a civic enterprise and is backed and supported by the Greater St. Paul Committee with the idea that it is a good thing for the city and the Northwest."⁷⁴ Disappointingly, these businesses were the only auto-related operations attracted to St. Paul by the Ford plant.

Why is it that the expected surge in industrial development never happened? The St. Paul Road had been operating at a deficit for years and filed for bankruptcy in 1925.⁷⁵ After it emerged from bankruptcy, it never pursued any further expansion of its St. Paul trackage.

In the summer of 1926, Colonel Brittin came to learn that the existing airmail carrier flying between St. Paul and Chicago was going to lose its contract. On

September 1, 1926, he and other investors in the Twin Cities and Detroit incorporated Northwest Airways in Michigan and won the new airmail contract with two rented, open cockpit planes.⁷⁶ Consequently, the St. Paul Association lost its dealmaker and turned its attention from industry to other projects.

During the 1930s, Ford lost market share in the auto industry and even closed the St. Paul Plant for a couple of years. As Ford's ambitions waned, it began to sell off parts of the Original Ford Site. The first sale was of the Highland Village Apartments site (west of Cleveland Avenue and south of Ford Parkway) which was sold by Ford in 1938, with the apartments opening in 1939.⁷⁷ This residential apartment development was allowed to be constructed in an area zoned for heavy industry without any zoning changes, because the City of Saint Paul then allowed for cumulative zoning, sometimes referred to as "pyramidal zoning;" that is, more restricted land uses could be built in less restrictive zoning districts, but not vice versa.⁷⁸ The Highland Village Shopping Center, located at the southeast corner of Cleveland Avenue and Ford Parkway, and the Highland Theater, further north on Cleveland, also opened in 1939.

By 1941, the industry zoning north of the Ford plant was adjusted southward to terminate at the alley north of Ford Parkway.⁷⁹ The entire area north of the alley has since been developed for predominantly single-family housing.

The 1950s saw the dreams for the Ford Industrial District expansion die completely. In October 1950, the Milwaukee Road sold all of its property west of Cleveland Avenue, which had been planned as the site for its proposed bridge crossing the Mississippi River, for single-family development.⁸⁰

In October 1950, neighbors who were alarmed by a plan to build a dry cleaning business in the midst of single-family homes east of Cleveland Avenue, petitioned the City of Saint Paul, “ask[ing] that the land in the tract now zoned for light and heavy industrial and commercial purposes be upgraded to residential uses only, such as single family, duplex and apartments.”⁸¹ “The move is a sequel to an original zoning plan made for Highland Park many years ago when the area was undeveloped and the Ford plant was being built. It is generally reported that city planners then anticipated a big industrial development would surround the Ford plant and therefore zoned the land for such purposes.”

George Herrold, city planning engineer, pointed out that when Ford Motor Co. some 27 years ago proposed building an assembly plant in the area, St. Paul businessmen anticipated the development there of a large industrial area and asked that zoning be changed to permit it. That was done, Mr. Herrold said, but when the long lines of factories failed to develop, the land was utilized for homes and apartments—most of them built on lots zoned for commercial or industrial use.⁸²

In December 1950, the St. Paul City Council ordered that large areas of land east of Cleveland Avenue be rezoned from commercial and industrial to residential and apartment use.⁸³ The battle for the industrial future of South Highland Park, east of Cleveland Avenue, came to an end in 1950; homes had defeated the dream of the “Ford Industrial District.”



This 1937 aerial photo was taken from over the Mississippi River and is looking to the north-east. In the foreground is the Ford plant, looking virtually the same as it did when it opened in May 1925. Henry Ford’s “grove of trees” is between the factory and Ford Parkway. The Motor Power Equipment Company is just east of the approach to the Ford Bridge. The three-story structure on Ford Parkway is the McGee-White Building. Very little spin-off development from the Ford factory is evident. A few apartment buildings and single family houses are to the north. Photo by A. F. Raymond. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

“Down Zoning” in Highland Park

In 1975, the City of Saint Paul adopted a completely new zoning code.⁸⁴ The zoning for the Original Ford site was changed from Heavy Industry to I-1, Light Industry, which category authorized “Automobiles, Assembly and Storage Only” as a permissible use. This represented a “down zoning” from heavy industry to more restricted use, as the manufacturing and processing uses authorized in the new I-2 and I-3 zoning districts would no longer be allowed at the Original Ford Site.⁸⁵

Also in 1975, additional sections of the industrial zoning along the edges of the Original Ford Site were eliminated.⁸⁶ For instance, the northeast corner of Mississippi River Boulevard and Ford Parkway, the former site of Motor Power Equipment Co., was changed from Heavy Industry to OS-1, Office Service. Much of the Highland Village shopping district was rezoned from Heavy Industry to B-2, Neighborhood Business. The Highland Village Apartments were finally rezoned in 1975, going from Heavy Industry to RM-2 Medium Density Residential.

The site for the senior high-rise on the

west side of Cleveland Avenue, which had been given by Ford to the City of Saint Paul in 1967, was rezoned from Heavy Industry to RM-3 High-Rise Residential.⁸⁷ The Ford property further south, where a part of the Highland Little League baseball fields are located, was rezoned from Heavy Industry to RM-2, Multi-Family Residential.

In 1975, Ford sold the 3.76 acres at the northeast corner of its remaining property to Applebaum’s Food Markets, which allowed for the development of the shopping center in which the Lunds and Byerly’s Grocery Store is now located.⁸⁸ The next year, Ford sold approximately thirteen acres of its property to the railroad.⁸⁹ Thus, by 1980 Ford had sold off approximately one-quarter of the Original Ford Site, reducing its land size east of Mississippi River Boulevard to approximately 122 acres.

On February 24, 2010, the City of Saint Paul adopted a new Comprehensive Plan.⁹⁰ All of the Original Ford Site and the area around the intersection of Ford Parkway and Cleveland Avenue are identified as “Mixed Use Corridors,” which are defined as “primary thoroughfares through the city that are served by public

transit (or could be in the future). [They are] areas where two or more of the following uses are or could be located; residential, commercial, retail, office, small scale industry, institutional, and open space.⁹¹ The Original Ford Site is among several large “Opportunity Sites for Potential Housing Development.”⁹²

In 2006, Ford announced that it would close its St. Paul Assembly Plant. The final day of operation was December 16, 2011.⁹³ All of the Ford assembly build-

ings have recently been demolished. The City sponsored Ford Site Development Task Force has met dozens of times. It appears that when the Ford Site is rezoned for redevelopment in 2017, the last industrial zoning in Highland Park will be eliminated.

Over the years, thousands of people worked at the Ford plant in St. Paul. As the conclusion to the Ford chapter in St. Paul history now comes to a close, we can reflect upon George Herrold’s early ob-

servations, that South Highland Park is “a district of great potential for residences.”

Marc J Manderscheid is an attorney with Briggs and Morgan, P.A. Over the last several decades he has played a significant role in many St. Paul industrial, downtown, and residential redevelopment projects. He was a member of the Saint Paul School Board from 1994–1997. His Macalester-Groveland home was built in 1924–25, concurrently with the opening of the new Ford factory.

Endnotes

1. Plan of Saint Paul, Saint Paul City Planning Board, 1922 (hereinafter “Plan”) at 40. A copy of this plan is available in the Gale Family Library, Minnesota History Center, St. Paul, Minn.
2. Plan at 8.
3. George H. Herrold, “The Planning of Undeveloped Areas,” 1928 Conference Proceedings (of what later became the American Planning Association), *Planning Problems* at 164.
4. Plan at 42.
5. Plan at 44.
6. City of Saint Paul Ordinance No. 5840, adopted July 7, 1922, effective on August 22, 1922.
7. *Ibid.*, Sec. 1.
8. *Ibid.*, Sec. 2.
9. *Ibid.*, Sec. 3.
10. Plan at 43.
11. Ordinance 5840, Sec. 6.
12. *Ibid.*, Sec. 7.
13. 1922 Saint Paul City Zoning Map, to accompany the Building Zone Ordinance approved July 7, 1922.
14. *Planning Problems* at 164.
15. 1922 Saint Paul City Zoning Map.
16. *St. Paul Dispatch*, January 9, 1923, pp. 1–3.
17. Brian McMahon, “Minneapolis and Saint Paul Stumble: Henry Ford Wins the Power Struggle for the High Dam,” *Ramsey County History*, 12:2 (Summer 2007): 4–14. Mr. McMahon generously shared drafts of his new book *The Ford Century in Minnesota*, to be published later this year by the University of Minnesota Press.
18. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 10, 1923, p. 1.
19. *Ibid.* at 3.
20. *St. Paul Daily News*, January 9, 1923, p. 1. Five months later, Edsel B. Ford, president of the Ford Motor Company, voluntarily reimbursed the St. Paul Association for their \$75,170.58 expenditure. *St. Paul Dispatch*, June 21, 1923.
21. *St. Paul Dispatch*, January 9, 1923, p. 1.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
23. *St. Paul Dispatch*, April 26, 1923.
24. *St. Paul Dispatch*, January 9, 1923.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *St. Paul Dispatch*, January 9, 1923 p. 3.
27. Proceedings of the Saint Paul City Council, February 23, 1923, at 134–135.
28. 1923 Saint Paul City Zoning Map. The rezoning of the Original Ford Site to “Heavy Industry” is noted by red pencil markings; the “Light Industry” by blue ink.
29. Saint Paul City Council File No. 44575, recorded with the Ramsey County Recorder as Doc. No. 060930 (The Petitioners were George G. Benz and Merchants Trust and Savings Bank, the “purchas-
- ers” through which the site had been acquired before it was transferred to Ford).
30. *St. Paul Dispatch*, July 6, 1923.
31. Proceedings of the Saint Paul City Council, July 20, 1923 at 763.
32. *St. Paul Dispatch*, July 5, 1923.
33. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, August 10, 1924 (204 acre park plus 40 acres owned by city waterworks).
34. George Herrold, “Progress in Saint Paul,” *City Planning*, 1:3 (October 1925): 177.
35. *Planning Problems*, at 164–165.
36. *St. Paul Dispatch*, January 9, 1923, p. 1.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 1 and 3.
38. *St. Paul Daily News*, January 9, 1923.
39. *St. Paul Dispatch*, January 12, 1923.
40. *Ibid.*
41. *St. Paul Dispatch*, April 11, 1923. Den E. Lane was in “charge of buying the land for the railroad.”
42. *Ibid.*, quoting Carlton McNally, City Corporation Counsel.
43. “Right of Way Battle Centers on Ford Plant,” *St. Paul Dispatch*, March 15, 1923; “Two Northerns and Omaha Seek Route to Plant,” *St. Paul Dispatch*, March 16, 1923.
44. *St. Paul Dispatch*, March 16, 1923.
45. *St. Paul Daily News*, June 23, 1923.
46. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 19, 1923.
47. St. Paul Real Estate Board Parcel Maps, 1928 (on file with the Ramsey County Property Records office).
48. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 19, 1923.
49. St. Paul Real Estate Board Parcel Maps, 1928.
50. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 3, 1924. The cost of building the bridge and added trackage was estimated to be \$1.2 million.
51. *St. Paul Dispatch*, January 9, 1923.
52. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 11, 1923.
53. *St. Paul Dispatch*, December 22, 1923.
54. “Progress in Saint Paul,” 177–8.
55. *St. Paul Dispatch*, January 9, 1923.
56. *Ibid.*
57. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 16, 1923.
58. *St. Paul Dispatch*, November 12, 1924.
59. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 21, 1924.
60. *Ibid.* (the Preliminary City Plan from July 1922 had designated this area as “Proposed Forest Preserve;” it is now Crosby Farm Park).
61. *Ibid.*
62. *Ibid.*
63. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 10, 1923.
64. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 3, 1925.
65. *Ibid.*
66. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 1, 1925.
67. 1926 Saint Paul City Zoning Map.
68. *Ibid.*
69. *Ibid.*
70. *Planning Problems*, 164.
71. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, July 12, 1925.
72. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 17, 1925.
73. *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, August 6, 1924.
74. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 17, 1925.
75. “Railroads in Minnesota,” National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet, Section E, p. 72. The Milwaukee Road again filed for bankruptcy in 1935.
76. Minnesota Public Radio, “Northwest Airlines—A Look Back at Its Long History,” October 30, 2008. For more on Colonel Brittin, the establishment of Northwest Airlines, and the corporation’s early years, see Kenneth D. Ruble, *Flight to the Top: How a Home Town Airline Made History . . . and Keeps Making It* (New York: Viking Press, 1986), 7–72; Jack El-Hai, *Non-Stop: A Turbulent History of Northwest Airlines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 1–84.
77. Deed from Ford to Walter Butler Construction Company, Cert. of Title No. 80850, dated November 28, 1938. Ford “expressly” reserved the right to mine silica sand from under the land sold for the new apartments, which was used by Ford to make windshield glass.
78. See, e.g., *Amcon Corp. v. City of Eagan*, 348 N.W.2d 66, 72-73 n.5 (Minn. 1984).
79. 1941 Saint Paul City Zoning Map.
80. Deed dated October 4, 1950 from The Milwaukee Road to Don Norton, recorded as Doc. No. 124445. In an ironic twist, the land was immediately platted as the Lane-Norton Addition; Mr. Norton’s partner, Den E. Lane, had been the person responsible for the railroad’s initial acquisition of this land in 1923.
81. *St. Paul Dispatch*, October 17, 1950.
82. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, November 19, 1950.
83. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 23, 1950. The downzoning was upheld by the Ramsey County District Court. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, November 1, 1951.
84. City of Saint Paul 1977 Zoning Code.
85. *Ibid.*
86. *Ibid.*
87. *Ibid.*
88. Limited Warranty Deed dated April 3, 1975, recorded April 10, 1975 as Doc. No. 1905119.
89. Deed dated June 29, 1976, from Ford to the Milwaukee Road, filed as Doc. No. 626039.
90. City of Saint Paul 2010 Comprehensive Plan.
91. *Ibid.* at Land Use 1.
92. *Ibid.* at Housing 12.
93. *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, December 16, 2011.

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This colorized, airplane view depicts an architect's vision of future industrial development that Henry Ford and Colonel Lewis Brittin were selling to St. Paul on January 9, 1923. The bottom of the drawing shows the proposed intercity route of the St. Paul Road, crossing the Mississippi River on a new bridge, which was never built. North of the railroad bridge is the entrance to the proposed river terminal for water transportation, which will connect to the Ford factories through a horizontal tunnel. The drawing depicts five future Ford buildings; the smelter in the center is to be flanked by manufacturing and assembly buildings. The factories are to be framed on the south by an extension of Montreal Avenue and on the north by St. Catherine Street, which will be extended westward to Minneapolis over a new concrete bridge (the "Inter-City Bridge"). Note how the plant is to be located in an idyllic, landscaped part of St. Paul, that harmonized "the machine in the garden," while the area across the river in Minneapolis is already developed. Drawing by A. H. Stem. Postcard courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society. For more on South Highland Park, see Marc Manderscheid's article on page 20.