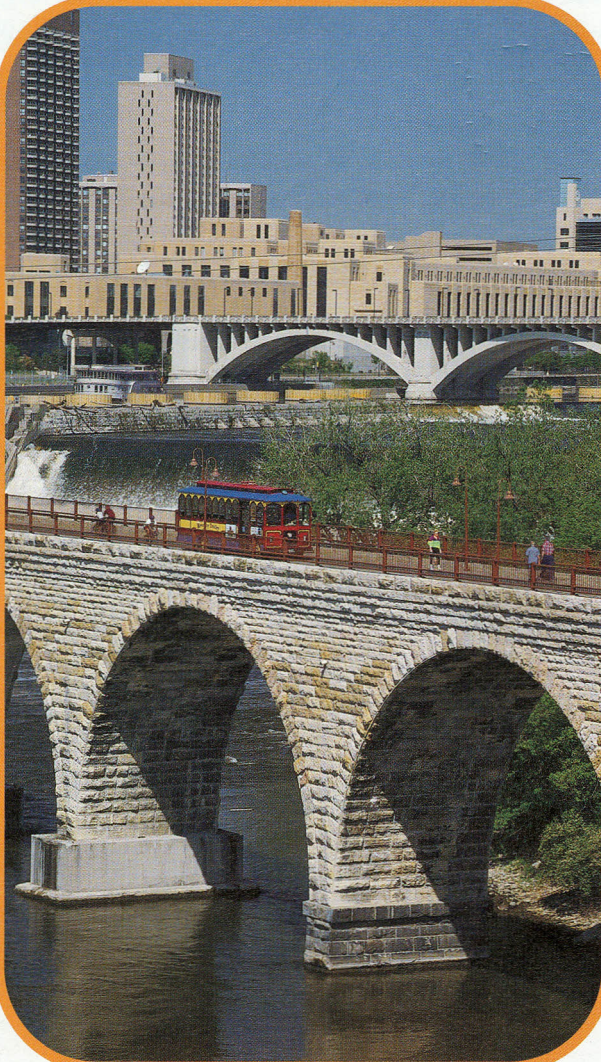


Saint Anthony

FALLS

Heritage Trail



Minneapolis, Minnesota



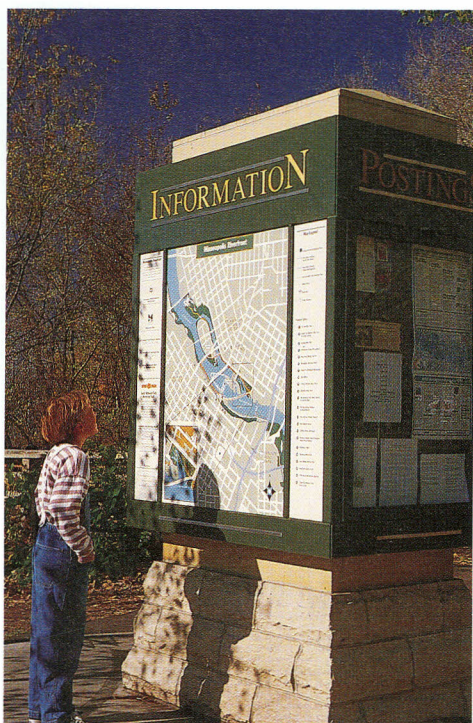
SAINT ANTHONY

FALLS

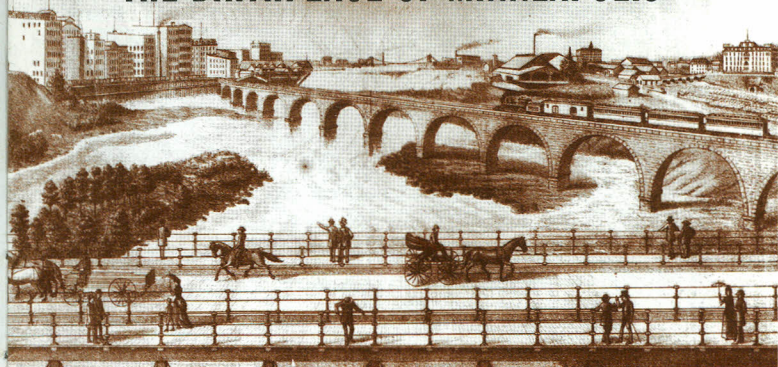
HERITAGE TRAIL

The Saint Anthony Falls Heritage Trail makes a 1.8 mile loop around the Minneapolis central riverfront and is marked by kiosks, signs and waymarkers. It provides a year-round, self-guided tour of the St. Anthony Falls Historic District.

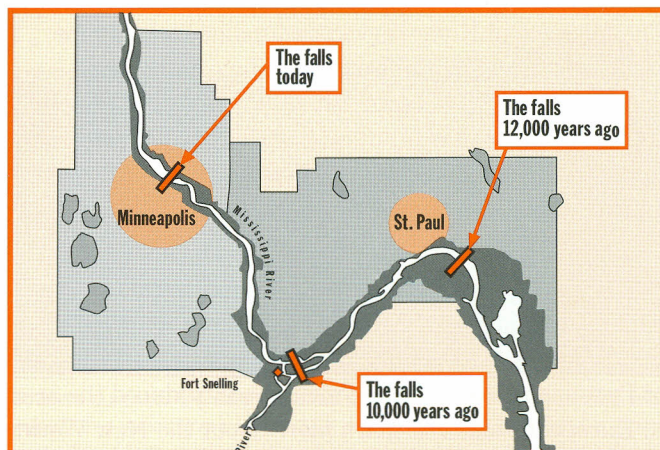
Hike or bike on the Saint Anthony Falls Heritage Trail and enter a place where the present brushes against the past. Signs provide stories and pictures about the area's past and information about recreational opportunities and attractions today. The trail connects nationally significant historic buildings, homes, and archaeological sites and stories, moving through a surprisingly abundant natural environment.



## ST. ANTHONY FALLS THE BIRTHPLACE OF MINNEAPOLIS



The story of Minneapolis begins at the Falls of St. Anthony, the only true waterfall on the 2,350 mile length of the Mississippi River. Already a place of deep spiritual significance for Dakota Indians, the falls lured entrepreneurs from the northeastern United States in pre-Civil War days who saw in them a “Niagara of the West.” It was at the falls, where waterpower, river transportation and railroads came together, that the industrial heart of the upper midwest began to beat in the mid-1800s. Industrialists harnessed the energy produced by a 50-foot drop in the Mississippi with a mechanical system of millraces, waterwheels, gears and rotation shafts. As saw mills and flour mills opened, people flocked to the area to settle, to work, and to build the city of Minneapolis, which became the flour-milling capital of the United States by 1880.



Natural erosion caused the line of the falls to move steadily upriver at about four feet a year from its starting point in St. Paul.



## TWELVE THOUSAND YEARS



Seth Eastman, 1853

For American Indian people, the Falls of St. Anthony was both a landmark and a sacred place.

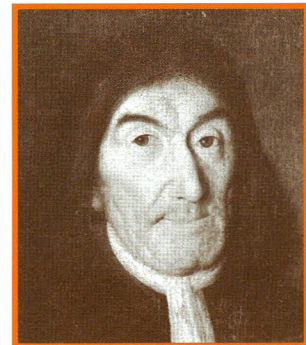
As the last ice age ended 12,000 years ago, glacial melt waters poured down what is now the Minnesota Valley and created the broad canyon of the Mississippi below present day St. Paul. Since that time, the falls have worn their way up-stream to their present location. The falls may once have measured two miles wide and 200 feet high, swollen by melting glaciers. By the late 17th century, the crest was below Hennepin Island. By the 1850s, the cataract was approaching the upper limit of the limestone ledge that sustained it.

The Dakota called the Mississippi River, Hahawakpa, “river of the falls.” A nearby rocky islet known as Spirit Island was significant in Dakota traditions and was once a nesting ground for eagles that fed on fish below the falls. Oral tradition also suggests that Dakota camped on Nicollet Island to fish and tap the sugar maple trees.

The Mississippi River served as a major highway for trade and travel by the Dakota, Ojibwe and other American Indians before them. A portage trail climbed a bluff located in what is now Hennepin Bluffs Park and followed the east bank along what is now Main Street to a point well above the falls.

The falls were first seen by Europeans in 1680 when Louis Hennepin, a Catholic friar in the service of France, was brought there by the Dakota. Father Hennepin named the falls for a Christian saint, Anthony of Padua, and his published memoirs introduced the area to Europeans eager to learn more about the New World. After the nations of Europe assumed the right to make boundaries, the falls lay between lands claimed by

England, France and later Spain. The lands west of the Mississippi were included in the Louisiana territory purchased by the United States from France in 1803. Fur traders changed the local economy and lifestyle of the Dakota and Ojibwe, but Indians still controlled the lands around the great falls.



Father Hennepin

## TREATIES AND FORT SNELLING

In 1805 the U.S. Government sent a young army lieutenant, Zebulon Montgomery Pike, to explore the northern reaches of the Louisiana Territory. Pike's mission was to acquire information about the land as well as Indian permission to erect military forts in this area. Pike procured a parcel of prime land that extended nine miles up the Mississippi from its junction with the Minnesota River. In 1820 Fort Snelling (first called Fort St. Anthony) was built at the confluence of the two rivers to demonstrate the western reach of United States power. Fort Snelling Military Reservation included most of what is now downtown Minneapolis.



Soldiers built the first waterpowered mills at St. Anthony Falls. A small, wood-frame sawmill was erected on the west side in 1821 and a stone gristmill in 1823. Snelling ordered his men to keep white settlers off the military “reservation,” although the army erected several out-buildings near the falls.



In 1838 Dakota Indian land east of the Mississippi, with all its memories and sacred places, was opened to private ownership by white settlers. The land west of the Mississippi was purchased from the Dakota in the 1851 Treaty of Traverse des Sioux and opened for settlement the next year.

## EARLY ST. ANTHONY AND MINNEAPOLIS

Speculators raced to claim land and waterpower rights at the falls as land became available. In 1838 Franklin Steele, the sutler (civilian storekeeper) at Fort Snelling, staked his claim to the east side of the falls in a moonlight caper that out-maneuvered the fort's commander. Handicapped by lack of capital, he was slow to develop the waterpower. It was ten years before Steele and several partners built the first dam across the east channel, started operation of a sawmill, and laid out the town site of St. Anthony.



Franklin Steele

Settlers from New England and New York were drawn to this place in the 1850s by the lumber industry and by the power of the falls. Educated, religious and often self-righteous, these people valued industrial enterprise and favored laws against slavery and liquor. On the Mississippi, they came face-to-face with Canadian voyageurs, western fur traders, Indians and southern slave holders. The conflicts, compromises and understandings that resulted put a special stamp on the character of Minneapolis.



In the 1850s hundreds of oxcarts driven by French Indian people (Metis) creaked along St. Anthony's Main Street on their way to St. Paul. They brought furs and hides from what is now Manitoba over trails from the Red River of the North. These trails later became the routes of railroads and freeways.



By 1855 a number of frame buildings stood along Main Street. In that year brothers Moses and Rufus Upton constructed a business block from locally made brick and opened a store on the ground floor. The upper floors housed several lawyers and, for a while, the offices of the *Minnesota Republican* newspaper. In 1857 the Winslow House, a luxury hotel, opened on the hill overlooking the falls.



By 1860 St. Anthony had become a favorite summer resort for wealthy southerners who traveled on steamboats up the Mississippi to escape the summer heat. Often they and their slaves stayed at the luxury hotel, the Winslow House. One such slave was Eliza Winston. Slavery was illegal in Minnesota, and a local free black woman named Emily Grey persuaded her to leave her owner. A court sustained Winston's right to freedom, but a pro-slavery crowd threatened harm. Anti-slavery people in the town hid her, and she later made her way to Canada. During the Civil War, tourists from down river stopped coming, and the hotel closed.

Crossing the Mississippi River was a risky venture at best. American Indians, fur traders and soldiers crossed just above the falls, where the Hennepin Bridge now connects with Nicollet Island. The first documented ferry was operated by a Dakota woman with a canoe in 1840. In 1850 John H. Stevens received permission from the army to operate a ferry at this same spot. Danger lurked, however. Rowboats and rafts were always at risk of being swept over the falls by strong currents or destroyed by logs that had escaped from booms upriver.

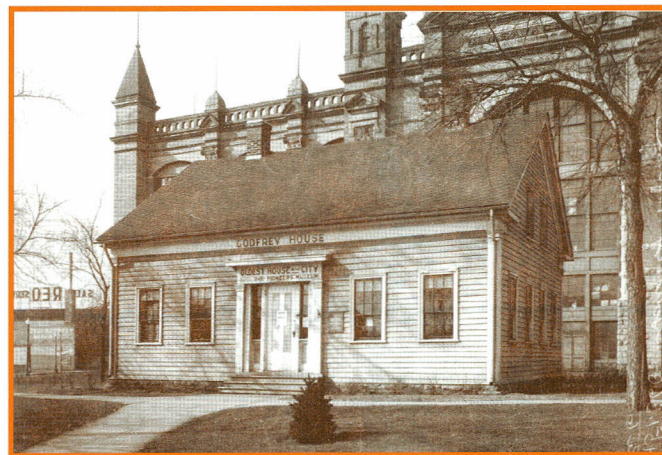


The first bridge ever to span the Mississippi River was completed in 1855, replacing the ferry. Built by private interests, it was a wooden suspension bridge with a roadway only 17 feet wide.

The suspension bridge built in 1855 was hailed as a great step in opening the West, but its real importance lay in uniting the small milling communities of St. Anthony and Minneapolis. The village of Minneapolis (meaning "waterfall city") grew rapidly on the west bank. In 1872 it absorbed the older town of St. Anthony across the river.

## SAWMILLING

Long before farmers plowed Minnesota's western prairies, lumberjacks were felling pines in the northern forests. Beginning in the late 1840s, trees from Ojibwe lands upriver were being made into boards in sawmills at the Falls of St. Anthony. By 1850, logs from lumber camps along the upper Mississippi and Rum rivers were sent down the river to one of four sawmills that stood along a dam that crossed the river's east channel.



Ard Godfrey, a millwright from Maine, helped Franklin Steele build the first dam and sawmill in St. Anthony. The Godfrey family built a house in 1849 near the corner of Main Street and Second Avenue S.E., behind the Upton Block. It was later moved to its current location on University Avenue and was restored in 1979 by the Woman's Club of Minneapolis. It is the oldest remaining house in Minneapolis.

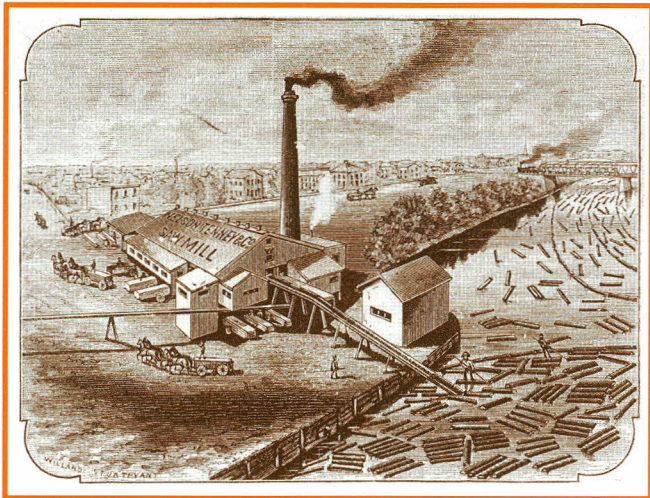
Sawmilling in the 19th century was a dangerous and environmentally destructive business. Like trees, mill workers were considered plentiful and expendable. Safeguards were few and accidents frequent. Testimony to this was the city's thriving business in artificial limbs. Piles of lumber and sawdust also made fire an ever-present threat to mills and nearby buildings.





Sawmills were often built on platforms out over the river, powered by water that drove machinery through systems of shafts, gears, and belts.

By 1890 sawmills powered by steam were spread along the river in north Minneapolis. The industry peaked in 1899 with the frenzied cutting of Minnesota's remaining forests, most of which were obtained through treaties with the Ojibwe. For six years Minneapolis was the largest sawmilling center in the nation, but by 1910, with the timber gone, nearly all the sawmills had closed.



The Nelson-Tenney sawmill was one of many built upriver from the falls in the 1880s. Its tall smokestack signaled the new steam technology that made the move away from the falls possible.

## FLOUR MILLING



The waterpower canal on the west side of the river was expanded in 1885.

The West Side milling district was created in 1858 when a great canal was constructed along First Street South to improve distribution of water to the fast-growing milling industry. By the 1880s, Minneapolis had become the flour milling capital of the nation, a distinction it held for the next 50 years. The engine of that booming economy ran on water — the waterpower of St. Anthony Falls. Water entered the canal above the falls, flowed through underground headraces, then dropped into turbine pits as deep as 50 feet. The turbines, connected to machinery in the mills above, were thereby sent spinning. The water then returned through tailraces to the river below the falls.

Minneapolis millers led the country in applying new technologies to the problem of producing fine flour from the hard spring wheat grown on the northern plains. Using a series of steel rollers instead of a single set of millstones, and removing fragments of bran with middlings purifiers, they achieved flour of premium quality.

In the 1880s and 1890s, two dozen flour mills, connected by a system of canals, sluiceways and tunnels, dominated





The milling district came back stronger than ever from the disastrous explosion of the first Washburn A Mill in 1878, which leveled many mills and killed 18 men.

the west bank at the Falls of St. Anthony. They also dominated much more. These towering mills cast their shadows over thousands of farms across the northern wheat belt. Their strength rested not only in waterpower but in money and organization. By 1889 three companies controlled two-thirds of the flour production at the falls. The names of mill owners and grain traders like Washburn, Pillsbury, Peavey and Cargill became household words across the Northwest. Through the Minneapolis Millers Association, these men managed the market and — some said — controlled the prices paid to farmers. Wheat growers fought back by forming organizations of their own — the Farmers Alliance, the Equity Exchange, the Nonpartisan League and the Farmers Union.

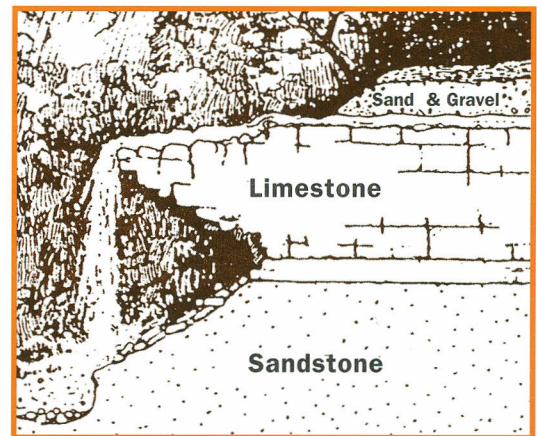
In 1930, as freight rates and tariffs made it more economical to mill wheat in Buffalo, N.Y., Minneapolis companies moved their operations there. Many of the old mills were soon torn down. In 1965 an era ended when General Mills closed its mills at the falls. The once great flour mills stood empty, although some have been adapted to new uses. Fire ravaged the Washburn A mill in 1991 and the Humboldt Mill in 1997, leaving the structures in ruin. While most mills along the river no longer produce flour, sounds of industry can still be heard coming from the Pillsbury mills on Main Street.

## ENGINEERING THE FALLS



Excavating for dams and tailraces ate away at the stone, and William Eastman's disastrous tunnel project nearly destroyed the falls in 1869. The whirlpool off Nicollet Island took seven years to plug.

The pace of erosion increased after lumbering and milling began. Logs floating downriver crashed against the limestone and broke it off in great chunks. To prevent further damage, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers built a concrete dike under the river and placed a wooden apron over the ledge. The Corps later replaced that apron with the current concrete spillway. It protected the falls, but their natural beauty was forever transformed.



This is a diagram of the rock formations beneath the falls. Water wore away the soft sandstone beneath the limestone, and the limestone ledge periodically broke off. This continuous process of erosion caused the falls to move upriver over many years.

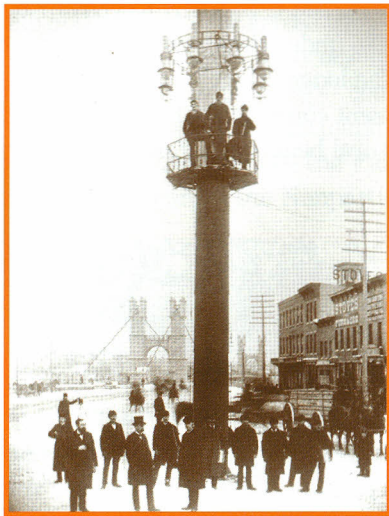




In 1878, William de la Barre, a young Vienna-born engineer, called on owner Cadwallader C. Washburn after the Washburn A Mill explosion with a flour dust collecting device that he said would prevent such accidents. Washburn hired him to oversee the rebuilding of the A Mill.

He stayed on as engineer for the milling companies that controlled the use of the falls. By studying seasonal effects on the river and falls, he improved the water distribution system and increased the over-all output of waterpower nearly six times.

To maintain an even flow of water, mill owners urged the government to build dams and reservoirs at the headwaters of the Mississippi. Over the bitter protest of the Ojibwe, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers built six dams to control waterpower and navigation on the Mississippi. Begun in 1880, the dams raised the level of the lakes, destroying Indian homes, burial grounds and wild rice beds.



In 1883, a 250-foot-tall light mast was constructed in the heart of Bridge Square to promote electric street lighting as an alternative to gas lights. In 1894, the Minneapolis General Electric Company constructed a generating plant on the site of the old east side platform lumber mills to power the new electric street lights.

De la Barre found ways to utilize surplus waterpower at the falls to generate hydroelectricity. A small plant on the west bank made history in 1882 as the country's

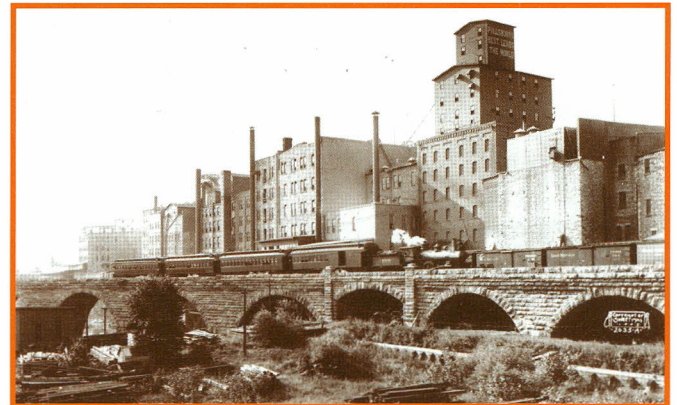
first central hydroelectric power station. Although it furnished light to a few retail businesses for a short time, it soon closed.

In 1897 a lower dam and a hydroelectric plant were constructed to capture the drop of the rapids below the main falls. This and other plants provided power to the fast-growing streetcar system. In the 1950s, electric streetcars gave way to buses, and demand for hydroelectricity to run the city's transit systems came to an end. The sole remaining use of the waterpower of the falls is at the 1908 Hennepin Island Hydroelectric Plant, operated by Northern States Power Company.

With completion of the Upper Lock at St. Anthony Falls in 1963, commercial navigation became possible above Minneapolis. During construction of the lock, the US Army Corps of Engineers altered the entire west side of the falls, eliminating Upton Island and most of Spirit Island and cutting off access to waterpower. What remains of Spirit Island lies beneath the breakwater leading into the lock.

## RAILROADS

Minneapolis was both rival and partner to St. Paul. Only 12 miles away and also located on the Mississippi River, St. Paul was settled first, at the head of navigation on the Mississippi. Minneapolis grew up soon thereafter around the waterpower of the falls. Together the cities became a hub for land routes that fanned out north and west, to Lake Superior, Canada and the western plains.



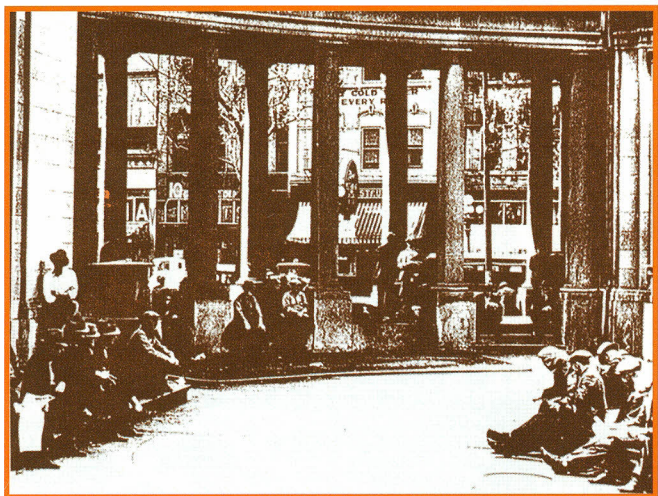
The Stone Arch Bridge provided train passengers with a dramatic view of the West Side mills.



Even though logs and lumber were floated on the river, wheat and flour moved by rail. In the years after the Civil War, steel rails were built along existing land routes. The network of railroads brought tons of grain to the mills beside the falls, and carried flour, lumber and industrial products to the markets of the world. Mill owners built the “Soo,” or “Miller’s Line,” which carried flour from Minneapolis to the east via Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., challenging the discriminatory rates charged by Chicago-owned railroads.

Nearly a dozen railroad companies moved freight and passengers through Minneapolis at the height of the rail era. Trains crossed the Mississippi on the Stone Arch Bridge, arriving and leaving Minneapolis through its first Union Depot. James J. Hill, developer and railroad entrepreneur, built both bridge and depot at the invitation of the Minneapolis millers. The Milwaukee Road Depot served other railroad lines.

Immigrants, workers and goods crowded onto the trains that coursed into the Union Depot at Bridge Square in the heart of the city. Minneapolis began to see itself, like St. Louis, as a “Gateway to the West.” The name was soon applied to the whole district. By the 20th century, jobs for farm laborers and lumberjacks had become scarce. The area became rundown and dirty, crowded with people without work.



The Gateway became known as a haven for the poor during the depression of the 1930s. Riding trains to the city, transients gathered in the bars and flophouses that grew up near depots and railway yards. The 1915 Gateway Pavilion provided public restrooms.

## MID-CENTURY

By the 1930s, flourmilling on the riverfront was in decline. The technologies to harness waterpower and grind grain that were perfected in Minneapolis in the 19th century gave way to new technologies in the 20th century. Power could now be produced by steam and electricity, allowing industries to relocate away from the falls, near new markets and population centers. Some of the old waterpowered mills were converted but others closed.

Railroads were still active, but trains became less and less frequent. In 1948, 72 passenger trains crossed the Stone Arch Bridge each day, but by 1978, the daily total dropped to only four. By the 1950s, the Gateway was considered one of the worst skid rows in the country. Forced to take action, the city tore down 14 city blocks in an urban renewal effort.

## RIVERFRONT REVIVAL

Over the past 25 years, there has been serious effort to revive the Minneapolis riverfront, with respect for its history even as new uses evolve. In 1971, the St. Anthony Falls Historic District was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. In 1972, the Mississippi Minneapolis plan became a cornerstone for development. Since that time, hundreds of millions of public and private dollars have been invested in the area. Abandoned railroad tracks have been removed. Polluted industrial land has been cleaned up and made available for new development. More than 2,100 housing units have been added through new construction and historic building rehabilitation, ranging from high-rise towers and new townhouses to renovated historic homes such as those on Nicollet Island. Neighborhoods have built new connections to the river.

Some large historic buildings have been saved, although others have been demolished. Mills, warehouses and commercial buildings still stand throughout the city, adapted to new uses. On Main Street, some of the oldest buildings in the city were restored and adapted in the 1970s to become a shopping complex known as St. Anthony Main. Although the retail venture failed,



those buildings are now occupied by offices and restaurants. On the west side of the river, several mills and a grain elevator have found new life as office buildings and as a hotel. In the warehouse district, hundred-year-old commercial buildings are serving many purposes such as distribution centers, theaters, art galleries, restaurants and entertainment centers, housing, retail stores and offices.

At the west end of the Hennepin Avenue bridge in the Gateway area, a new Federal Reserve Bank now stands, a reminder of the economic strength of the region. On the bank plaza, interpretive markers tell of urban growth and change and the many stories of the bridgehead site.

Both banks of the Mississippi are now part of the Minneapolis park system. The West River Parkway is nearly complete, and the "Mississippi Mile" is an active tourist destination. The Stone Arch Bridge is used daily by pedestrians, joggers, bikers and trolley riders, and the Saint Anthony Falls Heritage Trail, marked by interpretive signs, enables visitors to learn about history. The area benefits from access to the Minneapolis central business district and to the University of Minnesota.

A commitment and desire to connect the past with the present is ever-apparent, even as Minneapolis looks toward the future. People today know that Minneapolis was born on the banks of the Mississippi at the Falls of St. Anthony and that the river made the city great. Today, public and private development are creating a riverfront where people live, work and play, and where they can enjoy dramatic views of the river and downtown. The central Minneapolis riverfront is a vital part of the city, where people come to understand the rich and complex past of the place where they live.

All illustrations and archival photographs are property of the Minnesota Historical Society except where otherwise noted.

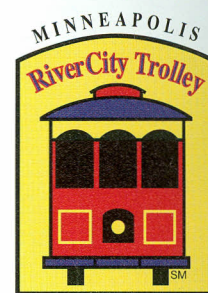
## St. Anthony Falls Visitor Center

Brochures and information about area attractions and special events are available at the St. Anthony Falls Visitor Center, open Wednesday through Sunday, Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission offers guided tours of the historic district during the summer months; for tour schedule, fees and reservations call the Visitor Center at 612-627-5433.



## Minneapolis RiverCity Trolley

Drivers give a narrated 65-minute tour of the city that circles through downtown Minneapolis and around the riverfront, with stops at the Minneapolis Convention Center, the Walker Art Center and the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. The trolley goes through the warehouse district and along Nicollet Mall, crosses the Stone Arch Bridge and stops on Main Street. It runs every twenty minutes from May through late October, Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Weekends 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Fare charged. *Call 612/204-0000*



## Stone Arch Bridge

Built in 1883 by James J. Hill's Minneapolis Union Railway Company, this bridge is recognized as a National Civil Engineering Landmark. Now a pedestrian and bicycle trail, the bridge offers panoramic views of St. Anthony Falls. It is part of the Saint Anthony Falls Heritage Trail and is also on the route of RiverCity Trolley.



## Ard Godfrey House

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The oldest house in Minneapolis (1849) is open for tours led by volunteer guides from the Woman's Club of Minneapolis from Memorial Day through September,



Fridays through Sundays, noon to 3:30 p.m. Tours available by appointment.

*Call 612/870-8001.*

## Our Lady of Lourdes Church

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Built in 1857, this is the oldest church in Minneapolis in continuous use. *Call 612/379-2259.*

## Anson and Betsey Northrup

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Riverboat cruises leave daily from the dock on Boom Island, at noon and 2 p.m. between Memorial Day and Labor Day. On weekends in



May and September boats leave at 2 p.m. only. Admission fee. *Call 651/227-1100.*

## Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam

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Located at Portland Avenue and the river, this is the uppermost of 29 locks connecting Minneapolis with the Gulf of Mexico. The visitor center provides an observation deck for watching watercraft pass through the lock. Open daily, April through November, 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Free admission. *Call 612/333-5336.*

## Minneapolis Central Riverfront Regional Park

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This park covers both sides of the river and includes Nicollet Island. It contains miles of trails for walking, biking and in-line skating, as well as picnic grounds and areas to view wildlife and the river. On Nicollet Island, private homes, some dating as far back as the 1860s have been restored, while on the south end of the island there is a public pavilion, amphitheater and picnic area. Boat launch is available at the Boom Island landing only.

## Mississippi Mile™

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Adjacent to the park are sidewalk shops and cafes and other places to explore. Free concerts, fire-works, and other events are frequently scheduled.

*Call the Mississippi Mile Hotline for current schedule: 612/673-5123.*

## Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

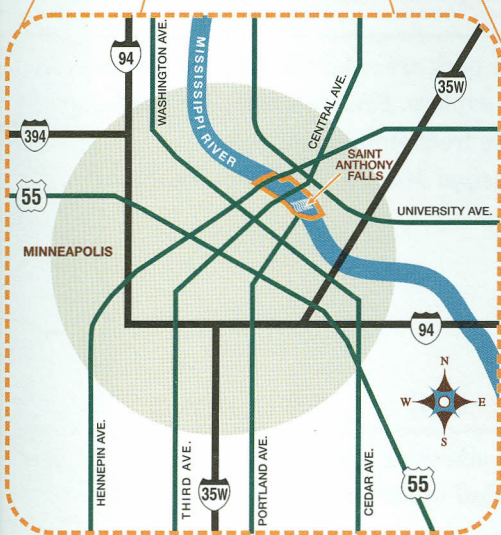
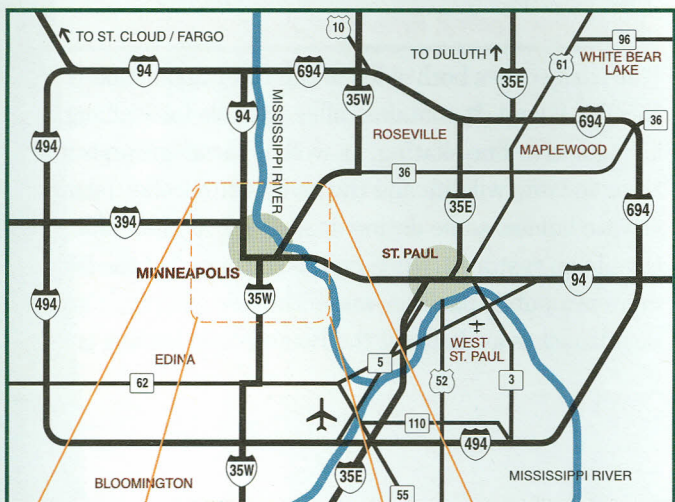
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Information on activities is available from the National Park Service. *Call 612/290-4160.*

## St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board

Minnesota Historical Society  
Mayor, City of Minneapolis  
Minneapolis City Council  
Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board  
Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission  
Hennepin County Board of Commissioners  
Hennepin History Museum  
State Historic Preservation Office  
State of Minnesota





## Getting There


From *INTERSTATE 35W* (either north or southbound) the trail can be reached by taking the *4TH STREET EXIT*. Follow *4TH STREET* to *3RD AVENUE S.E.*; turn left four blocks to reach *MAIN STREET*.

From St. Paul, take *INTERSTATE 94* to the *HURON EXIT*. After one mile, *HURON* turns and becomes *4TH STREET S.E.* Follow *4TH STREET* as directed above.

From downtown Minneapolis, the trail can be reached at the end of *PORTLAND AVENUE* and at the *HENNEPIN AVENUE BRIDGE*.



## Map Legend

 Saint Anthony Falls Heritage Trail

 Park Trail

 Central Riverfront Regional Park

 West River Parkway  
(Great River Road)

 Restrooms

 Public Parking

**A** U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Visitor Center

**B** Minnesota Historical Society  
Walking Tours

**C** Boom Island Boat Launch

**D** Ard Godfrey House

**E** Our Lady of Lourdes Church

**F** Trolley Stops

**G** Kiosk Locations

