

# **Prospect Park/University Area**

## A Brief Historic Overview of the Landscape Features of the Prospect Park Historic District



Prospect Park entrance marker in the Malcolm-University triangle.

*Photo: Marjorie Pearson*

### Background

The Prospect Park neighborhood of Minneapolis was the subject of a survey and study for National Register of Historic Places eligibility in 2001. The landscape of Prospect Park and various features, among them, Tower Hill Park and the landscaped triangles at the intersections of several curvilinear streets including Malcolm and Clarence by University Avenue, are identified as important contributing features of the National Register-eligible Prospect Park Historic District.<sup>82</sup>

Several of these triangles may be impacted because of changes in traffic patterns that result from the construction of the CCLRT line along University Avenue.

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<sup>82</sup> Marjorie Pearson, "Prospect Park, Minneapolis: An Historical Survey," October 2001, prepared by Hess, Roise and Company for the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission and Prospect Park East River Road Neighborhood Improvement Association, 26-27.

## Landscape Features of Prospect Park<sup>83</sup>

The landscape patterns and topography are the most important features that set Prospect Park apart from other communities of Minneapolis and help to define its essential character. The underlying geology was formed by two ice sheets. The Keewatin glacier extended down from Canada through what are now the Red River and Minnesota River valleys and into eastern Minnesota. The gray drift moraine from this ice sheet partially covered the red drift moraine that was carried from the northeast by the Patrician glacier. The result was a series of roughly rolling hills formed of granite and quartzite boulders known as “hardheads.” These hills extend from the Saint Anthony Park area of Saint Paul into the Prospect Park area of Minneapolis, dropping off into sand dune tracts close to the Mississippi River. The summit of this moraine comprises Tower Hill Park, approximately 971 feet above sea level at its peak. Prior to settlement, these hills were covered by deciduous hardwood trees, primarily ash and oak. A significant number of oak trees remain in Tower Hill Park and elsewhere in the neighborhood. Tower Hill Park is the most prominent landscape feature of the community by virtue of its size, 4.7 acres, and its location on University Avenue, the major artery that traverses the area on the north.<sup>84</sup>

### Tower Hill Park (HE-MPC-3177)

One of the first major efforts of the Prospect Park Improvement Association, founded in 1901 to work for the physical betterment of the community, was to persuade the Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners to acquire the irregularly shaped block bounded by University, Clarence, Seymour, Orlin, and Malcolm (Block 6 of Prospect Park First Division Revised) as parkland. While this block had been lotted (the lot divisions are still shown on the Hennepin County plat maps), the extreme elevation, 917 feet, made residential construction highly unlikely, although its geological formation made it potentially desirable as a gravel pit. (Such a use would have been highly detrimental to the residential community.) The park commissioners approved the purchase of the block in May 1906 for \$19,500, with the cost to be assessed against the property in the vicinity (in accordance with the Elwell law). The park was not actually named Tower Hill until 1909. The water tower, which is now the signature piece of the community, was constructed in 1913 after extensive lobbying by the association to improve the local water pressure for what had quickly become an urban neighborhood. It was designed by Frederick William Cappelen, a nationally prominent engineer who served as city engineer when the water tower was constructed.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> The following discussion is adapted from Pearson, 10-11, 26-27.

<sup>84</sup> Christine A. Curran and Charlene K. Roise, “Prospect Park Water Tower and Tower Hill Park,” 1997, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form prepared by Hess, Roise and Company, available at Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society, 7-6; George M. Schwarz, *The Geology of the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Area* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1936), 86-87; Daniel E. Willard, *The Story of the North Star State* (Saint Paul: Webb Publishing Co., 1922), 56-59, 316.

<sup>85</sup> For an extensive discussion of the water tower and the park see Curran and Roise; Prospect Park History Committee, *Under the Witch’s Hat: A Prospect Park East River Road Neighborhood History*, ed. Dean E. Abrahamson (Minneapolis: Prospect Park East River Road Improvement Association, 2003), 9.

## Landscaped Triangles

Other prominent landscape features are derived from the street patterns. The intersections of the curvilinear streets resulted in the creation of spaces that have allowed for the insertion of landscaped triangles, bounded by concrete curbs. The triangle at the intersection of Malcolm and University (HE-MPC-2755) contains a freestanding boulder inscribed with the name “Prospect Park” and plantings. The triangle at the intersection of Clarence and University (HE-MPC-2434) contains plantings, as does the triangle at the intersection of Clarence and Seymour (HE-MPC-2653). These three triangles are adjacent to Tower Hill Park, although they are not located on park property. Photographic evidence suggests that the triangle at Malcolm and University was in place by 1925. That triangle as well as the triangles by Clarence and University and Clarence and Seymour are visible in a 1937 aerial photograph. The Prospect Park boulder along University Avenue is illustrated in a 1936 photograph.<sup>86</sup>



This 1925 photograph is taken from the Prospect Park Water Tower looking north towards University Avenue. A portion of Tower Hill Park is in the lower right foreground. Malcolm Street curves towards University Avenue. The arrangement of trees along Malcolm and University Avenue suggest that the triangle is in place, and judging from the size of the trees, it has been there for a number of years.

*Photo: Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

Other landscaped triangles are located at the intersection of Arthur and Orlin (HE-MPC-2475), the intersection of Orlin and Melbourne (HE-MPC-2464), and the intersection of Barton and Malcolm (HE-MPC-2497). The latter two are mapped parkland, which was acquired by the Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners in 1915. Three other mapped parkland triangles,

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<sup>86</sup> The 1925 photograph is looking towards University Avenue from the water tower; Minnesota Historical Society, location no. MH5.9 MP1i p21, neg. no. 1495-B. The 1936 photograph is Minnesota Historical Society, MH5.9 MP4.1 r17, neg. no. 2395-A. The 1937 aerial photograph was taken on July 1, 1937, and is available at the Borchert Map Library, University of Minnesota Libraries.

Clarence at Bedford, Bedford at Orlin, and Bedford at University have been removed (the first two) or reduced in size to improve traffic flow (the last). A curvilinear landscaped island is situated on Franklin Avenue, west of Bedford (HE-MPC-2452). This island was created when the route of the street, originally named Hamline Avenue, was straightened in conjunction with the construction of the Franklin Avenue Bridge between 1919 and 1923.<sup>87</sup>

It is likely that the landscaped triangles were created in conjunction with the tree-planting program in Prospect Park. The improvement association enthusiastically supported the Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners in the practice of planting trees along streets and boulevards, thus enhancing the attractiveness of the neighborhood. The trees lining University Avenue and the other streets of the neighborhood are very visible in historic views and aerial photographs. Charles M. Loring, the first president of the Board of Park Commissioners, is credited with implementing a tree-planting program which made Minneapolis “one of the most uniformly tree-adorned cities of the country.” The board was authorized to plant trees along the streets or issue permits for tree planting and to assess the costs against the adjacent property owners.<sup>88</sup>

## Conclusion

The landscaped triangles in the Prospect Park Historic District are historic, important, and contributing features to the district.

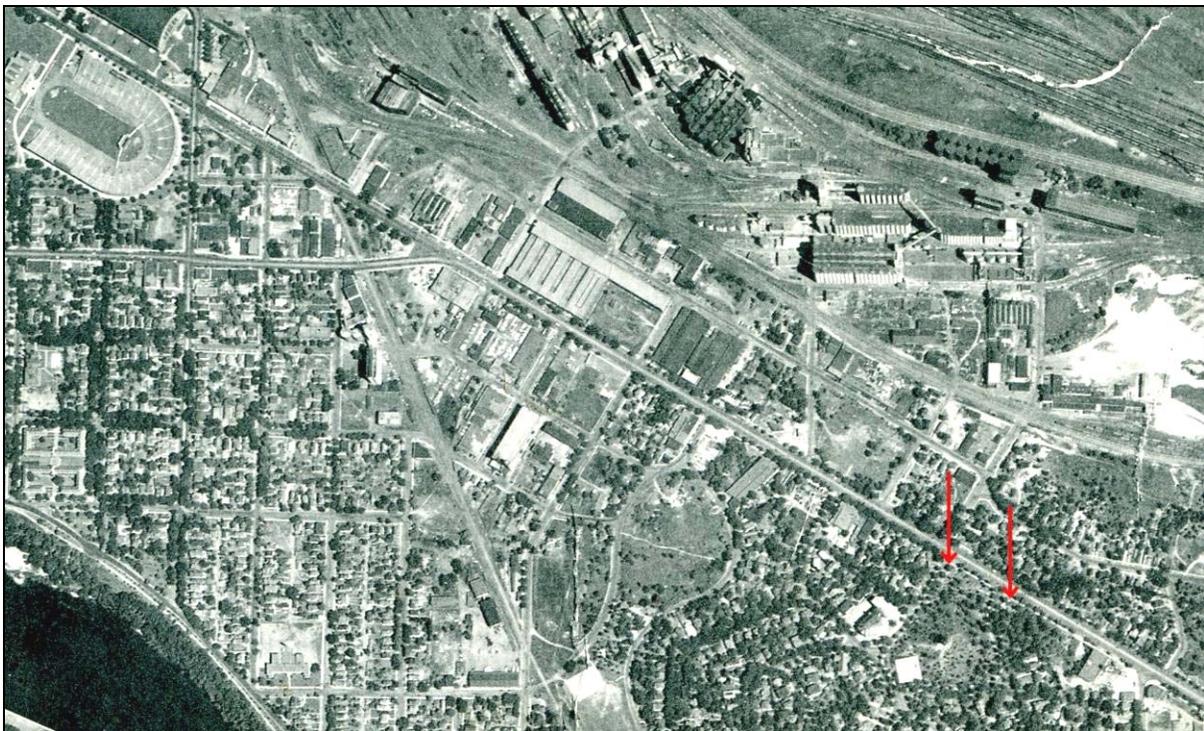
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<sup>87</sup> C. Ben Wright, “Minneapolis Parks and Recreation: A History of the Park and Recreation Board Since World War II,” unpublished typescript prepared for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Appendix II; *Hudson’s Dictionary of Minneapolis: A Guide and Handbook* (Minneapolis: Hudson Company, 1925), 120-124.

<sup>88</sup> Theodore Wirth, *Minneapolis Park System, 1883-1944* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners, 1945), 39, 207; Allen H. Gibas, “The History of Prospect Park,” typescript, research paper, Macalester College, February 1965, available at Minnesota Historical Society, 12, 18.



1937 aerial photograph. The red arrows indicate the triangles at Malcolm and Clarence along University Avenue. *Photo: Borchert Map Library*



1940 aerial photograph. The red arrows indicate the triangles at Malcolm and Clarence along University Avenue. Tennis courts have been installed in Tower Hill Park below the Water Tower. *Photo: Borchert Map Library*



1953 aerial photograph. An early fall snowfall gives greater definition to the street pattern. The red arrows indicate the triangles at Malcolm and Clarence along University Avenue.

*Photo: Borchert Map Library*

## **806, 814, and 818 and 820-828 Washington Avenue Southeast: Assessment of National Register Potential**

### **Background**

The section of Washington Avenue Southeast between Oak Street Southeast and Ontario Street Southeast required evaluation because of a change in the LRT alignment at Huron Street Southeast. The following buildings are at least fifty years old.<sup>89</sup>

#### **806 Washington Avenue Southeast (Lot 2, Block 7, Baker's Addition to Saint Anthony).**

The evidence of Sanborn maps and building permit records for this building is not clear-cut. The original one-story building on the site appears to predate 1906, when it was owned by shoemaker Herman Dalen. That building was enlarged by shoemaker William Kabulnikoff in 1915. That building was either replaced or incorporated into the existing larger two-story building in 1920. Designed by architect Luther Twitchell, it was a two-story brick store and flats that had the addresses of 806 and 808 Washington Avenue. According to city directories, Kabulnikoff had his shoemaker business at 808 until 1930, and his family lived upstairs. The Egekvist Bakery was at 806 Washington Avenue from 1921 until at least 1950. This was one of several locations for the bakery in the city. The building now houses an Army Recruiting Center.

#### **814 Washington Avenue Southeast (Lots 1 and 4, Block 7, Bakers Addition to Saint Anthony).**

In 1900, Joseph C. Wilson took out a permit to build a 24.5-foot by 40-foot, two story brick veneered store and flat building, probably the same building that stands on the site today. Wilson, who operated a hardware store at 812 Washington Avenue Southeast, had been associated with site for several years. In 1894, he built a wood-frame shop on or near the same lot. The 1894 building permit does not give an exact address, stating only that it is on Washington near Ontario Street Southeast. The current building, now occupied by Enrica Fish Medical Bookstore, looks more like a large house that was converted to commercial purposes than a store built with housing above. From 1930 until at least 1935, 814 Washington Avenue Southeast was occupied by Michael Kreuzmayer, sheet metal works. In 1944, the building was listed as vacant, but by 1950 Larson and Son Shoe Repair were the occupants of the storefront, while Emil Mortenson lived above.

#### **818 and 820-828 Washington Avenue Southeast (Lots 1 and 4, Block 7, Bakers Addition to Saint Anthony).**

This property was built in two sections for building contractor John Gillesby. The larger portion of the two-story building with the addresses of 820-828 Washington was built in 1910 with four storefronts and four apartments. It was designed by the Arnold Wissinger Company. The section of the building with the address of 818 Washington was built in 1927 of "brick and tile." The architect was C. J. Bard, who also designed the Granada Apartments (1929) at 1456 Lagoon Avenue South, which displays a strong Spanish-Moorish style that was popular in the 1920s. Gillesby's building at exhibits similar Spanish-Moorish-Mediterranean elements, such as a line

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<sup>89</sup> Building dates, owners, tenants, and architects are derived from an examination of Minneapolis building permits, Minneapolis city directories, and Sanborn insurance maps.

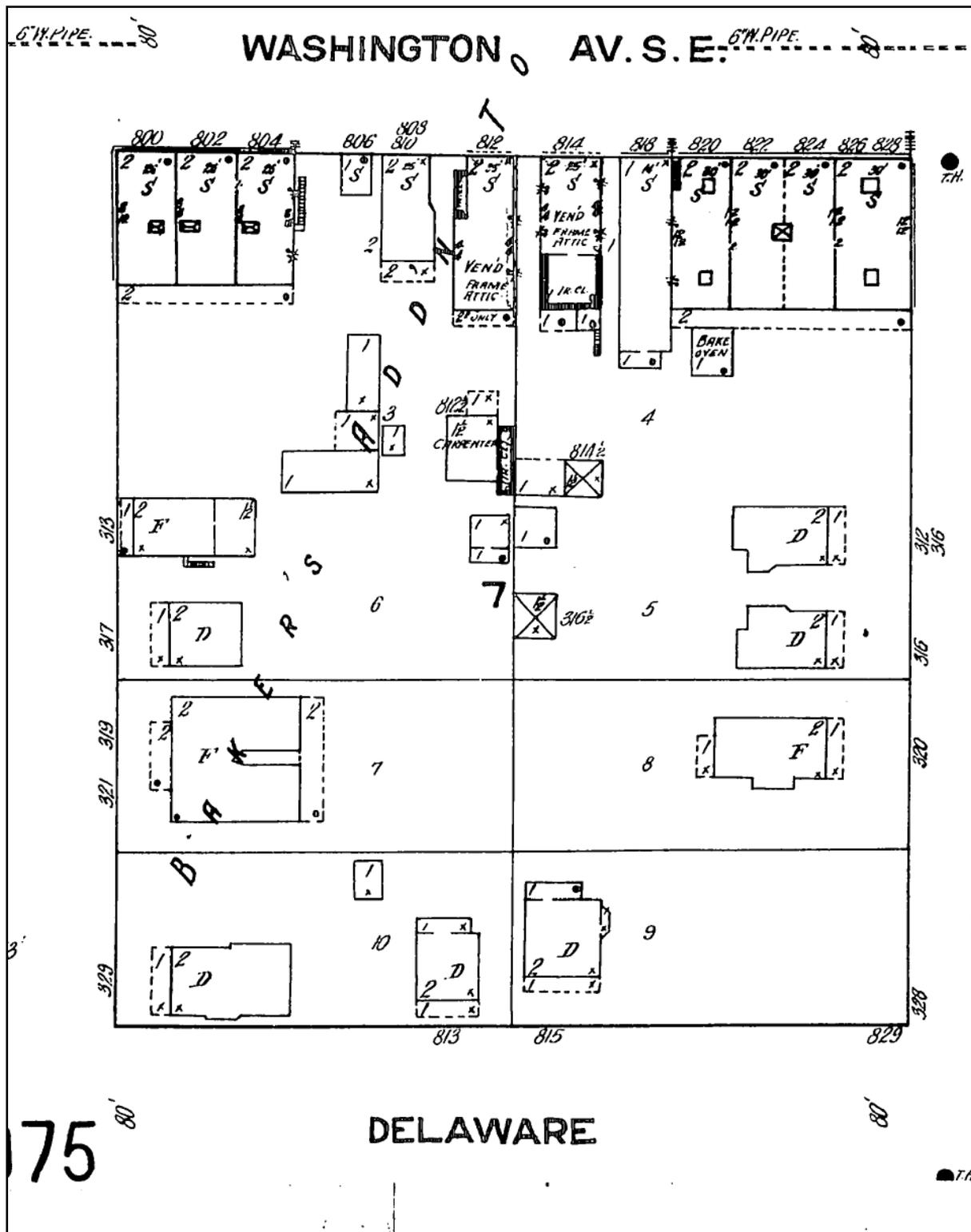
of roof tiles at the top and decorative elements above the second story windows, although the Washington Avenue building is of a much smaller scale than the Granada Apartments.

By 1930, the storefront at 818 Washington was occupied by grocer Charles Sabeswitz. Five years later, it had become a restaurant operated by Leonard R. Vrooman, which remained under the same ownership until the mid-1940s. By 1950, there was still a restaurant there, but the name had changed to the Gridiron Cafe. Today it is home to Campus Pizza.

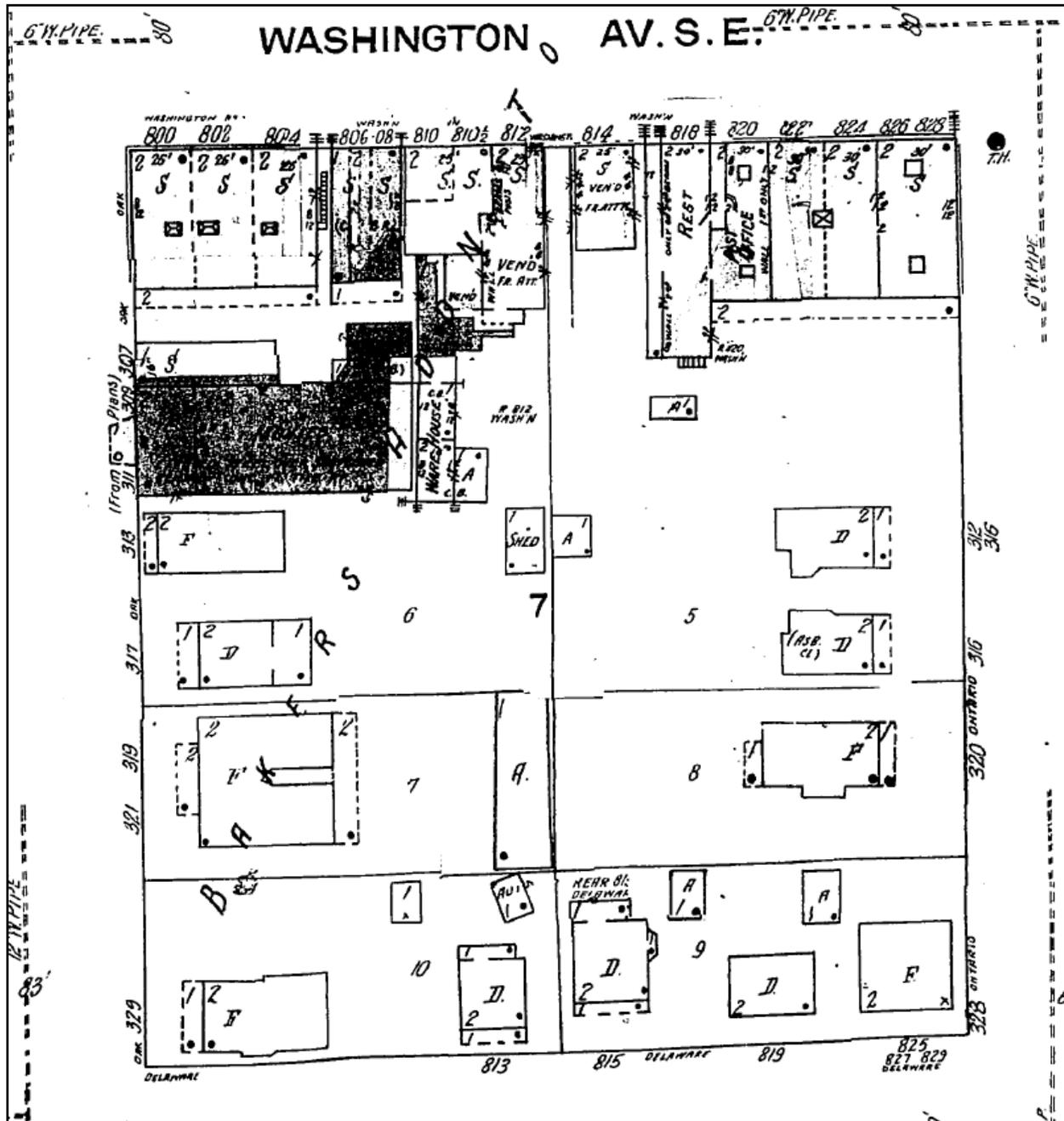
Owner John Gillesby was born about 1851 in Canada to English-born parents. He relocated to the United States in 1872. The 1880 federal census lists him as a single boarder, working in a meat market in Red Wing, Minnesota. By 1900, Gillesby and his family were living in Minneapolis, at 227 Oak Street Southeast, and operated a fuel store at 809 Washington Avenue Southeast. By 1910, Gillesby had become a building contractor and he had a wife and seven children, ranging from 12 to 25 years old. Gillesby died in 1930 and his wife Katherine in 1934. The Gillesby real estate interests apparently passed to a son, Thomas, who lived in an apartment at 820 Washington Avenue SE for many years and worked for the Minneapolis Fire Department. He died in 1982. The storefronts of 820-828 Washington now contain a photo shop and the Harvard Market East.

### **Recommendation**

Based on an assessment of existing conditions and the above research, none of the buildings appear to meet National Register eligibility criteria. We do not recommend further analysis.



1912-1930 Sanborn Insurance Map



1912-1951 Sanborn Insurance Map



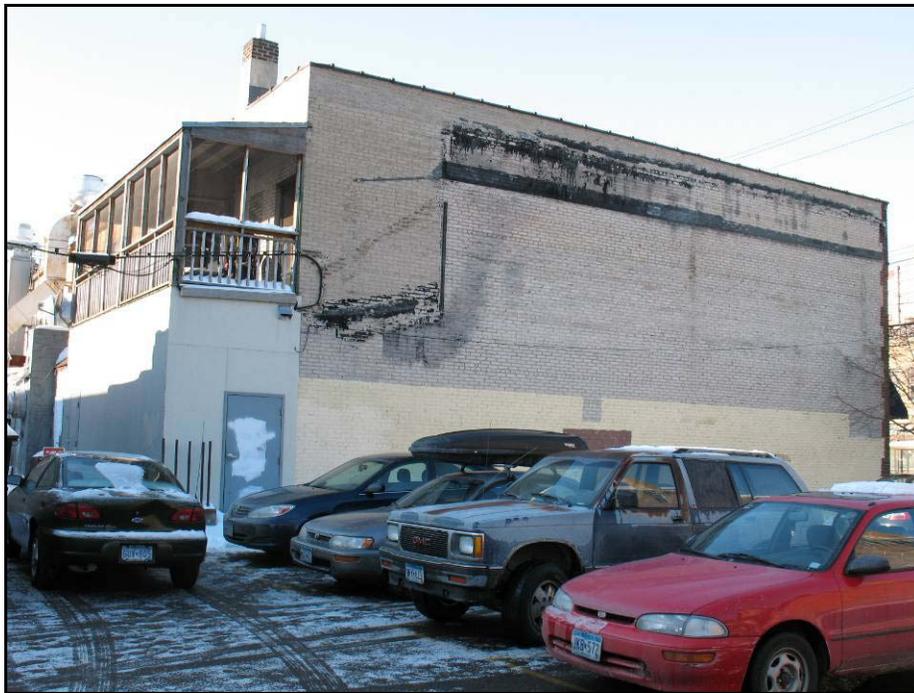
806 Washington Avenue S.E. view towards 800 Washington Avenue S.E.  
*Photos: Penny Petersen*



828 through 820 and 818 and 814 Washington Avenue S.E.



Front of 806 Washington Avenue S.E.



806 Washington Avenue S.E. from side and rear

*Photos: Penny Petersen*



Front of 814 Washington Avenue S.E.  
*Photos: Penny Petersen*



814 Washington Avenue S.E. from the side and rear



Front of 818 Washington Avenue S.E.

*Photos: Penny Petersen*



818 and 820-828 Washington Avenue S.E. from the rear

**University of Minnesota Old Campus Historic District (HE-MPC-3046):  
Boundary Delineation**



The University of Minnesota and the Pillsbury Gate as seen from University Avenue in 1904  
*Photo: Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

## Background

The old campus of the University of Minnesota, also known as the Knoll for the oak-covered hill that was the most prominent feature of the early campus, was the subject of a study in 1977 for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The study focused on the surviving buildings that were built on the oldest section of the campus, south of University Avenue, during the tenures of university presidents, William Watts Folwell (1869-1884) and Cyrus Northrop (1884-1910). The district proposed in the 1977 study was listed in the National Register in 1984. The boundary was drawn in such a way to minimize the inclusion of buildings and other features that postdated 1910. While the boundary included the landscaped lawn that bears the Knoll name and other landscape features, these were not discussed in either the 1977 study report or the National Register nomination.<sup>90</sup>

In 1993, the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office contracted a historic context study of the University of Minnesota campuses to provide background information for preparing a Multiple Resource Documentation Form for National Register purposes. The authors of that report updated the inventory of the buildings and structures on the old campus and carried out an inventory of the buildings and structures on other parts of the campus.<sup>91</sup>

The report discussed broad landscape and planning issues, while segmenting the campus into four zones. Much of the discussion dealt with the new campus, based on the City Beautiful-inspired plan by Cass Gilbert, and eventually carried out by State Architect Clarence H. Johnston, Sr., and landscape architects Morell and Nichols, Inc.

The Roberts report helped form the discussion of the Northrop Mall and its related buildings and features in the 1995 Cultural Resources report. That report recommended that a Greater University Plan Historic District was eligible for National Register listing, but it did not contain a map defining potential boundaries. A University of Minnesota Mall Historic District was listed as eligible in the DEIS in 2006, although the boundaries were not clearly specified.<sup>92</sup>

In 2003, Landscape Research submitted a report to the State Historic Preservation Office that characterized the Northrop Mall as a designed historic landscape. That study made a recommendation for a National Register Historic District centered on Northrop Mall and its

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<sup>90</sup> Charles W. Nelson and Susan Zeik, "An Historical Inventory of the Old Campus at the University of Minnesota," March 1977, prepared for the State Historic Preservation Department, Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul; "University of Minnesota Old Campus Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, February 1984.

<sup>91</sup> Norene A. Roberts, Claire Strom, and Joe Roberts, "Final Report: The University of Minnesota System," September 1993, prepared for the State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul.

<sup>92</sup> "Phase I and II Cultural Resources Investigations of the Central Corridor, Minneapolis, Hennepin County, and St. Paul, Ramsey County, Minnesota," July 1995, 9-133 – 9-140.

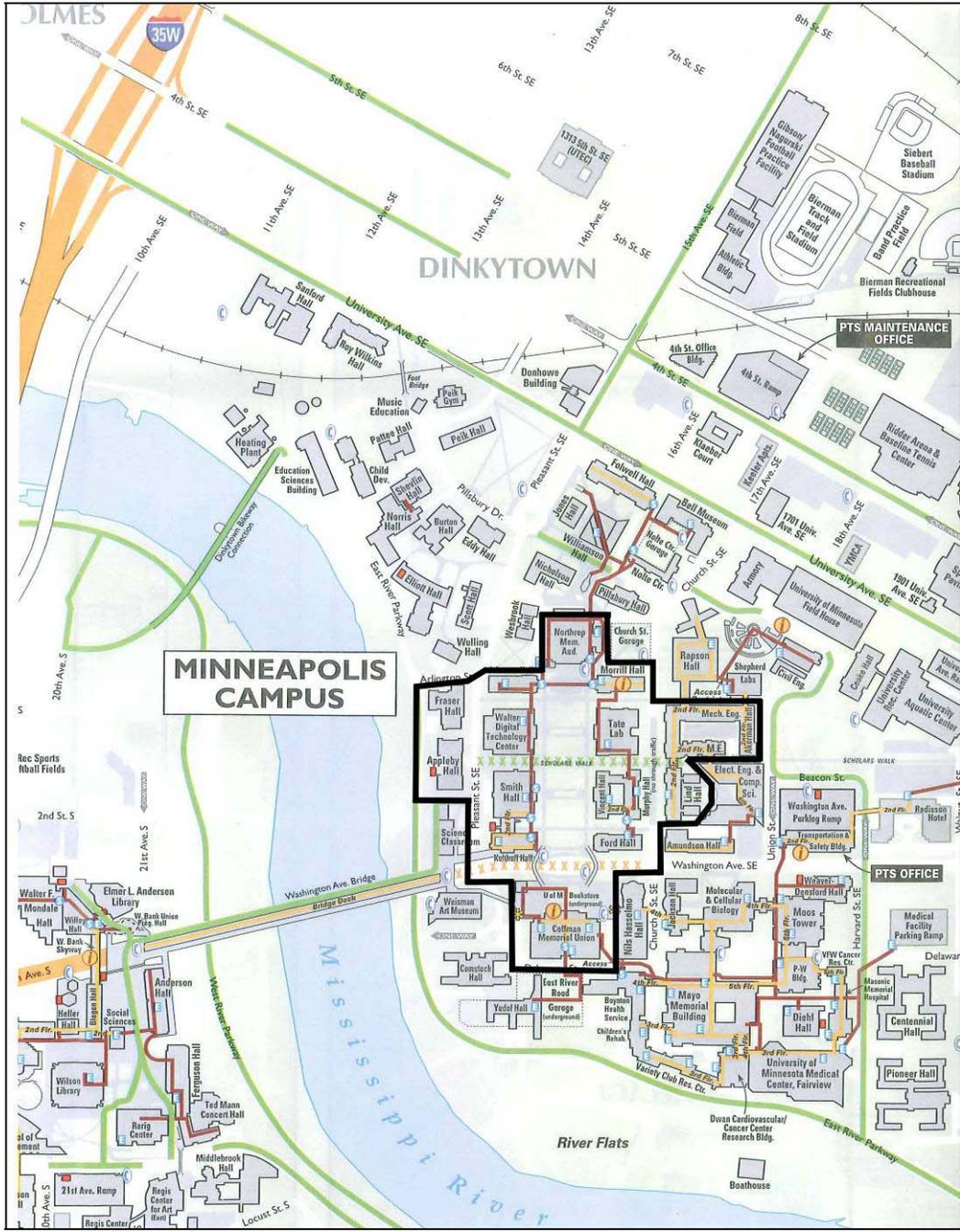
flanking tiers of buildings. As part of the overall historic context, it also looked at the history of planning, landscape, and development throughout the campus.<sup>93</sup>

The analysis in the 2003 report and on-site evaluation led SHPO and the Mn/DOT-Cultural Resources Unit to concur on the boundary recommendation for the University of Minnesota Mall Historic District which is illustrated in this report.

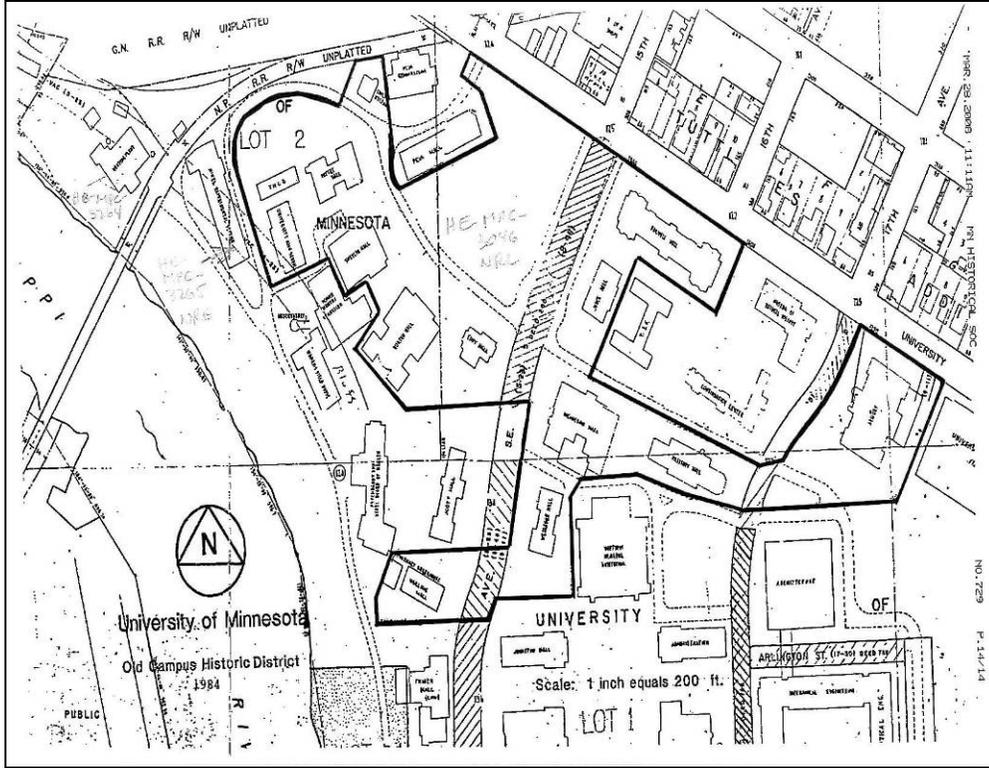
With revisions to the locally preferred alternative of the route of the CCLRT along Washington Avenue, through the university campus, the Area of Potential Effect (APE) has been expanded to encompass the old campus of the University of Minnesota, as far north as University Avenue and to the west along East River Parkway. Consequently SHPO requested a new analysis of the boundaries of the University of Minnesota Old Campus Historic District with particular attention to landscape and planning issues.

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<sup>93</sup> Landscape Research, “Northrop Mall: The City Beautiful Campus Plan of the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota: Designed Historic Landscape Evaluation Final Report,” October 2003, submitted to State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society.



**University of Minnesota Mall Historic District**  
 The black boundary line indicates concurrence by MnDOT and SHPO, October 2007.



**University of Minnesota Old Campus Historic District (HE-MPC-3046)**

*Supplemental Historic Property Investigations and Evaluations for CCLRT Project  
University of Minnesota Old Campus Historic District: Boundary Delineation  
Hess, Roise and Company—Page 166*

## University of Minnesota Old Campus Historic District

The National Register nomination report stated that the district “is significant for its associations with an important early period in the development of a leading university. In addition, the individual buildings included in the district include several notable designs by prominent Minnesota architects.” Under the leadership of the University’s second president, Cyrus Northrop, “the institution expanded and developed into what [President] Folwell had envisioned as a ‘federation of schools.’ . . . The thirteen buildings in the Old Campus District, all constructed during Northrop’s tenure as president, were built to house many of these varied programs.” Further, “the academic nature of the original designs based upon historic prototypes and the well preserved exteriors of the buildings in the Old Campus District make this area a significant Minnesota collection representing late 19th and early 20th century architectural styles.”<sup>94</sup>

The following buildings and features are described in the National Register nomination report. All are identified as contributing to the historic district, with one exception.

**Eddy Hall**, originally Mechanic Arts Building, 192 Pillsbury Drive S. E., architect Leroy S. Buffington, built 1886. The attached one-story metal-clad annex was built in 1966 and is identified as noncontributing.

**Music Education Building**, originally Students’ Christian Association, 147 Pillsbury Drive S.E., architect Warren Hayes, built 1888.<sup>95</sup>

**Pattee Hall**, originally Law Building, 150 Pillsbury Drive S. E., architect J. Walter Stevens, built 1889, enlarged Clarence H. Johnston, 1904.<sup>96</sup>

**Pillsbury Hall**, originally Science Hall, 310 Pillsbury Drive S. E., architect Leroy S. Buffington, built 1889.

**Nicholson Hall**, originally Chemical Laboratory, 216 Pillsbury Drive S.E., architect Leroy S. Buffington, built 1890. The 1927 auditorium addition and east wing were removed in 2004.

**Wulling Hall**, originally Medical Hall, 86 Pleasant Street S.E., architect Allen H. Stem, built 1892.

**Burton Hall**, originally Library Building, 178 Pillsbury Drive, architects Leroy S. Buffington and Charles Sedgwick, built 1894.

**Armory**, 15 Church Street S.E., architect Charles R. Aldrich, built 1896.

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<sup>94</sup> University of Minnesota Old Campus H.D., sect.8:1.

<sup>95</sup> David Gebhard and Tom Martinson, *A Guide to the Architecture of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 50.

<sup>96</sup> Paul Clifford Larson, *Minnesota Architect: The Life and Work of Clarence H. Johnston* (Afton, Minn.: Afton Historical Society Press, 1996), 188.

**Wesbrook Hall**, originally Medical Science Building, 77 Pleasant Street S. E., architect Frederick Corser, built 1896-1898.

**Jones Hall**, originally Physics Building, 27 Pleasant Street S. E., architect Charles P. Aldrich, built 1901.

**Child Development**, original School of Mines Building, 51 East River Parkway, architect Clarence H Johnston, Sr., built 1903, remodeling 1914 after a fire for School of Education;<sup>97</sup> modern addition.

**Alice Shevlin Hall**, 164 Pillsbury Drive S. E., architect Ernest Kennedy, built 1906.

**Folwell Hall**, 9 Pleasant Street S. E., architect Clarence H. Johnston, Sr., built 1905-1907.

**Pillsbury Statue**, Pillsbury Drive opposite Burton Hall, sculptor Daniel Chester French, installed 1900.

**Pillsbury Memorial Gate and Fence**, University Avenue S. E. from 14th Avenue S. E. (East River Parkway) to 17th Avenue S. E. (Church Street), architect Ernest Kennedy, installed 1902.

**Dorr Fountain**, Pillsbury Drive S. E. and Pleasant Street S. E., northeast corner, architect Ernest Kennedy, installed 1902.

**Student Soldier Memorial Monument**, 15 Church Street S. E., sculptor Theodora Alice Ruggles-Kitson, installed 1906.

The 1993 Roberts report characterizes the old campus: “The older part of the Minneapolis campus appears to many to be simply a miscellany of different architectural styles. While they lack architectural unity, however, the buildings embody an educational plan that was not at all miscellaneous. In underlying principle, this older part of the campus reflected William Watts Folwell’s deepest-held ideas of what a modern University should be.

“To Folwell, the true university was a collection of professional schools. His 1870 diagram of the University showed these schools radiating out like spokes of a wheel from the collegiate work. . . . Initially, all functions and activities were housed in Old Main. . . .As new departments and schools were established, the buildings were constructed, somewhat helter skelter, out from Old Main and were tied together by the winding roads of Cleveland’s romantic landscape design.

“The old campus at Minneapolis today can be understood as a visual manifestation of Folwell’s plan. . . .<sup>98</sup>

The 1993 Roberts report had looked at the locational constraints placed on the original University plan by the Mississippi River and two railroad lines and had identified some of the

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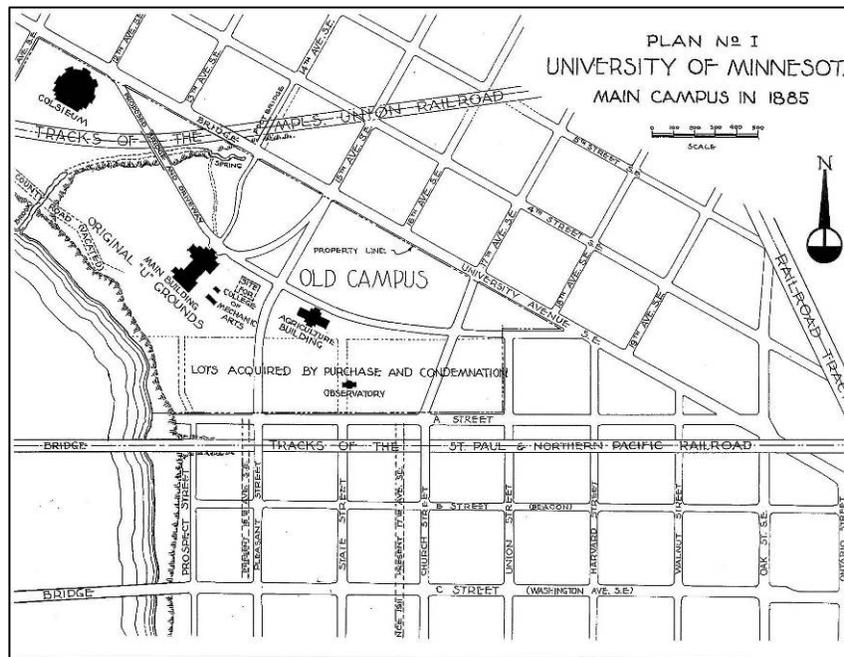
<sup>97</sup> Larson, 188.

<sup>98</sup> Roberts, E-11 – E-12.

early landscaping planning by Horace W. S. Cleveland.<sup>99</sup> The landscape of the old campus is discussed in much greater detail in the 2003 Landscape Research report and the 2004 Roise report.<sup>100</sup>

### Landscape and Planning of the Old Campus

In 1854, the University of Minnesota had acquired a twenty-five acre tract of land on the bluffs of the east bank of the Mississippi River, bounded on the north by today’s University Avenue, between today’s Eleventh Avenue S. E. and Eighteenth Avenue S. E. and on the south by what was eventually a line of railroad tracks (built in 1887) and the Northern Pacific railroad bridge over the river. With the passage of the federal Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862, the University was able to implement and expand its academic programs. President W. W. Folwell invited landscape architect H W. S. Cleveland to consult on campus plans beginning in the 1870s. Under President Cyrus Northrop, Cleveland presented a campus plan in 1892 that sought “to combine the best artistic effects with the essential demands for necessity and convenience, so far as the latter can yet be foreseen.” In addition to a line of elm trees along University Avenue, he recommended extensive plantings of trees and shrubbery throughout the campus to create “pretty vistas of groves and lawn in varying succession from different points. The broad space of open lawn across which the main buildings will be seen from University Avenue will contrast finely with the wooded portion through which the entrance avenue [Pleasant Avenue] is carried.”<sup>101</sup>

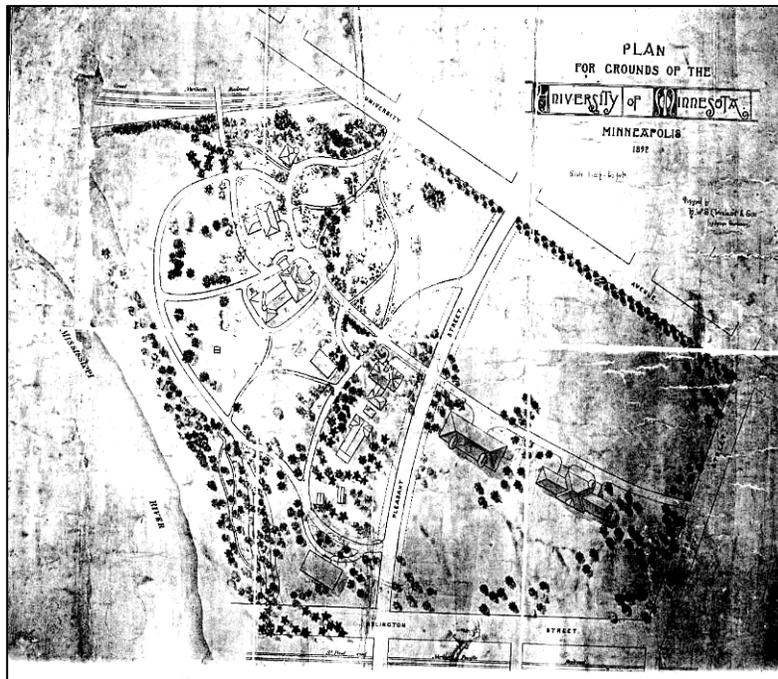


The old campus in 1885.  
*Courtesy of University of Minnesota Archives*

<sup>99</sup> Roberts, E-5 – E-6, E-10 – E-11.

<sup>100</sup> See note 4 above; Charlene K. Roise, “Mitigation Plan for Nicholson Hall with an Assessment of the Landscape of Nicholson and Jones Halls in the Context of the Old Campus (Knoll) Historic District,” October 2004.

<sup>101</sup> Landscape Research, 15-16; Roise, 4-5.



Cleveland's 1892 plan for the campus. Pleasant Avenue is the prominent curving roadway.  
*Courtesy of University of Minnesota Archives*

The 2003 Landscape Research report describes the early form of the University campus as a suburban variation on the “middle landscape” model, a type popular for land grant universities. “Freestanding buildings were organized in relationship to greens and walks often enclosed by circumferential roadways.” Old Main (1857), the Agricultural College (1875), and Mechanic Arts (now Eddy Hall, 1886) faced the oak knoll along University Avenue. Eddy Hall is the only one of these three to survive. Additional buildings were constructed on the block facing the knoll, fronting the street now known as Pillsbury Drive. Pleasant Street was a wide curving drive that entered the campus from University opposite Fifteenth Avenue S. E. This was paralleled by Church Street, opposite Seventeenth Avenue S.E. to the east. A curving circumferential drive, part of today's East River Parkway, wound along the top of the river bluffs at the west side of the campus.<sup>102</sup>

Boston-based landscape architect Warren H. Manning was hired by the University in 1902 to devise plans to accommodate the expanding campus. He favored a program of enclosed yards or quadrangles of the type popular in American campus plans at that time. The installation in 1902 of the Pillsbury Memorial Gate, designed by architect Ernest Kennedy, at the entrance to the drive at Fourteenth Avenue furthered the idea of an enclosed yard. A fence of wrought-iron pickets was extended eastward from the Pillsbury Gate to beyond Church Street by the armory. Stone posts, similar in design to the gate posts, flank Pleasant Street and Church Street, and also flank an entrance to Folwell Hall from University Avenue.<sup>103</sup> In addition to his unrealized plans

<sup>102</sup> Landscape Research, 17, 20-23.

<sup>103</sup> The Pillsbury Gate is illustrated in two early views in the Minnesota Historical Society collections, location no. FM6.811 r 5, neg. no. 103234, location no. FM6.811 p59, neg. no. 3939-B. A photograph of Folwell Hall shortly

for enclosed yards on the campus, Manning also worked on plans for extending and improving the river road between University Avenue and the Northern Pacific railroad bridge.<sup>104</sup>

In 1907, Manning's plans were superseded by an ambitious endeavor to expand the campus to the south, beyond the Northern Pacific railroad tracks, and across Washington Avenue, as far as the river. This led to a major plan for the new campus, designed by Cass Gilbert and eventually realized by Clarence H. Johnston and the landscape architecture firm of Morell and Nichols, Inc. Gilbert's design brought the City Beautiful aesthetic to the University and shaped the growth and style of the campus for decades. As Northrop Mall was developed as part of that plan, the focus shifted away from the Old Campus and the Knoll, even as Northrop Auditorium backed up to it.<sup>105</sup>

Meanwhile, construction of new buildings continued on the old campus in response to new needs and demands. Norris Gymnasium for Women, now Norris Hall, 172 Pillsbury Drive S. E., was built in 1914-1915 and designed by Clarence H. Johnston, Sr. Norris was expanded with a field house addition built in 1935-1936 and designed by Clarence H. Johnston, Jr. The Music Building, now Scott Hall, 72 Pleasant Street S. E. was built in 1921-1923 and designed by Clarence H. Johnston, Sr.<sup>106</sup> Johnston also designed the Mines Experiment Station, built in 1923, on the river side of the East River Parkway, opposite the old School of Mines building.<sup>107</sup>

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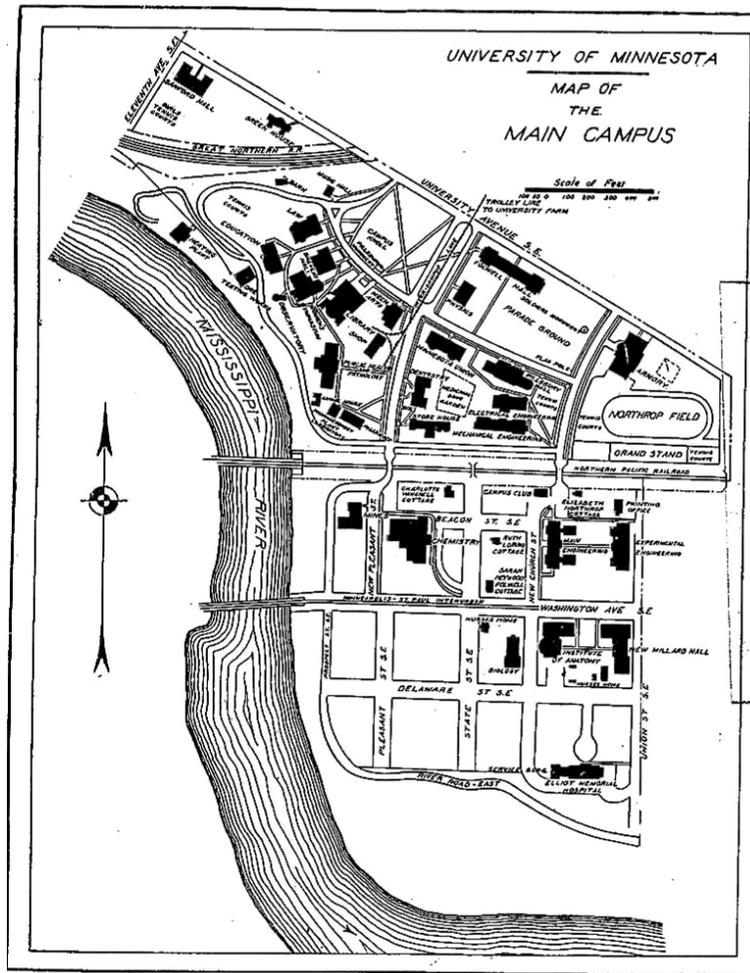
after its completion in 1907 depicts the fence and the posts flanking the University Avenue entrance: location. no. FM6.813 p28, neg. no. 74634.

<sup>104</sup> Landscape Research, 23-26.

<sup>105</sup> Roise, 6.

<sup>106</sup> Larson, 188. See also "University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, General Plan for Arrangement of Buildings and Grounds," Morell and Nichols, Inc., 1930, available at University of Minnesota Archives.

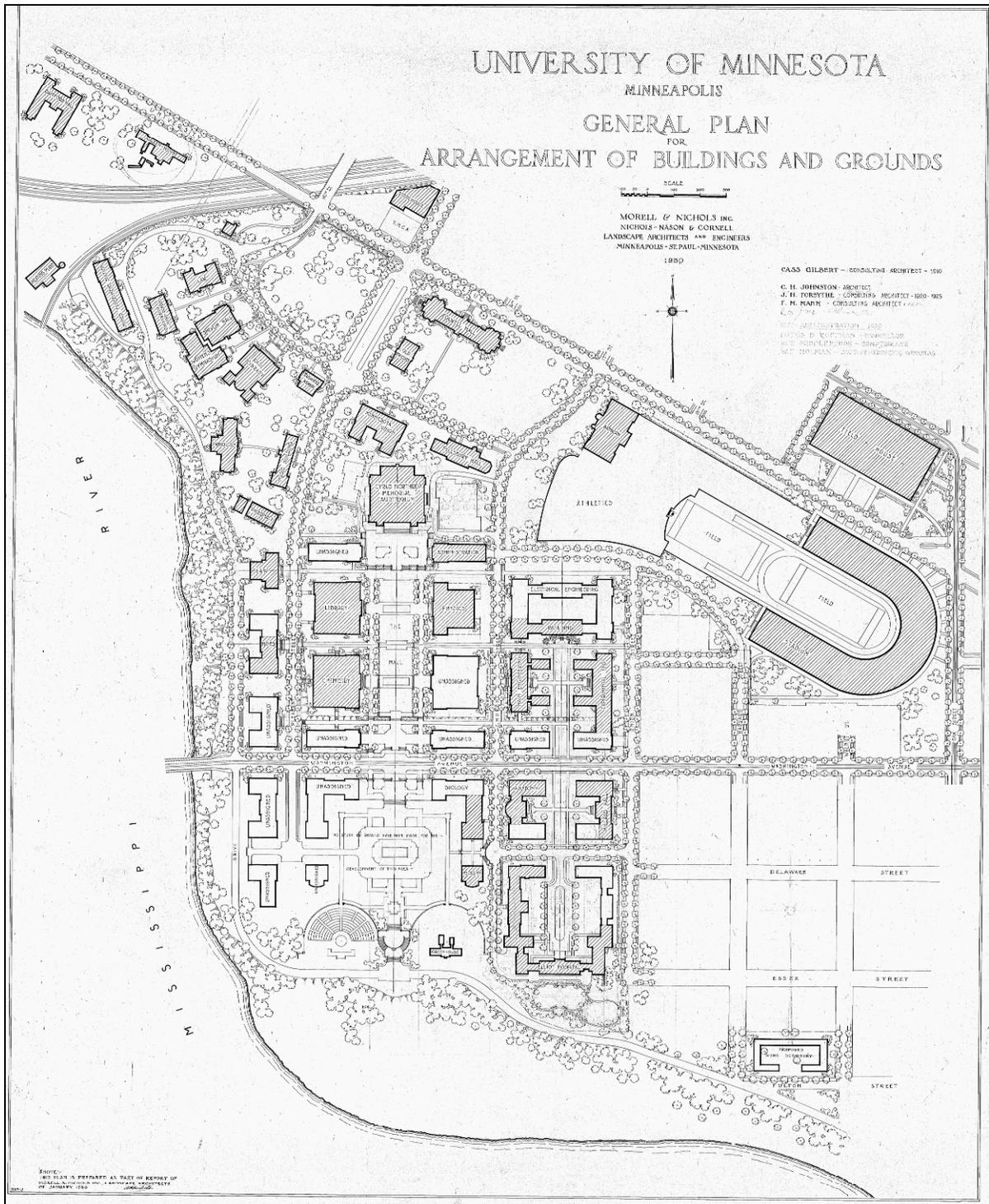
<sup>107</sup> This building has been documented as HABS MN-95 and is individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.



The campus in 1917. The Northern Pacific railroad tracks still divide the campus, and the route of East River Parkway is interrupted.  
*Courtesy of University of Minnesota Archives*

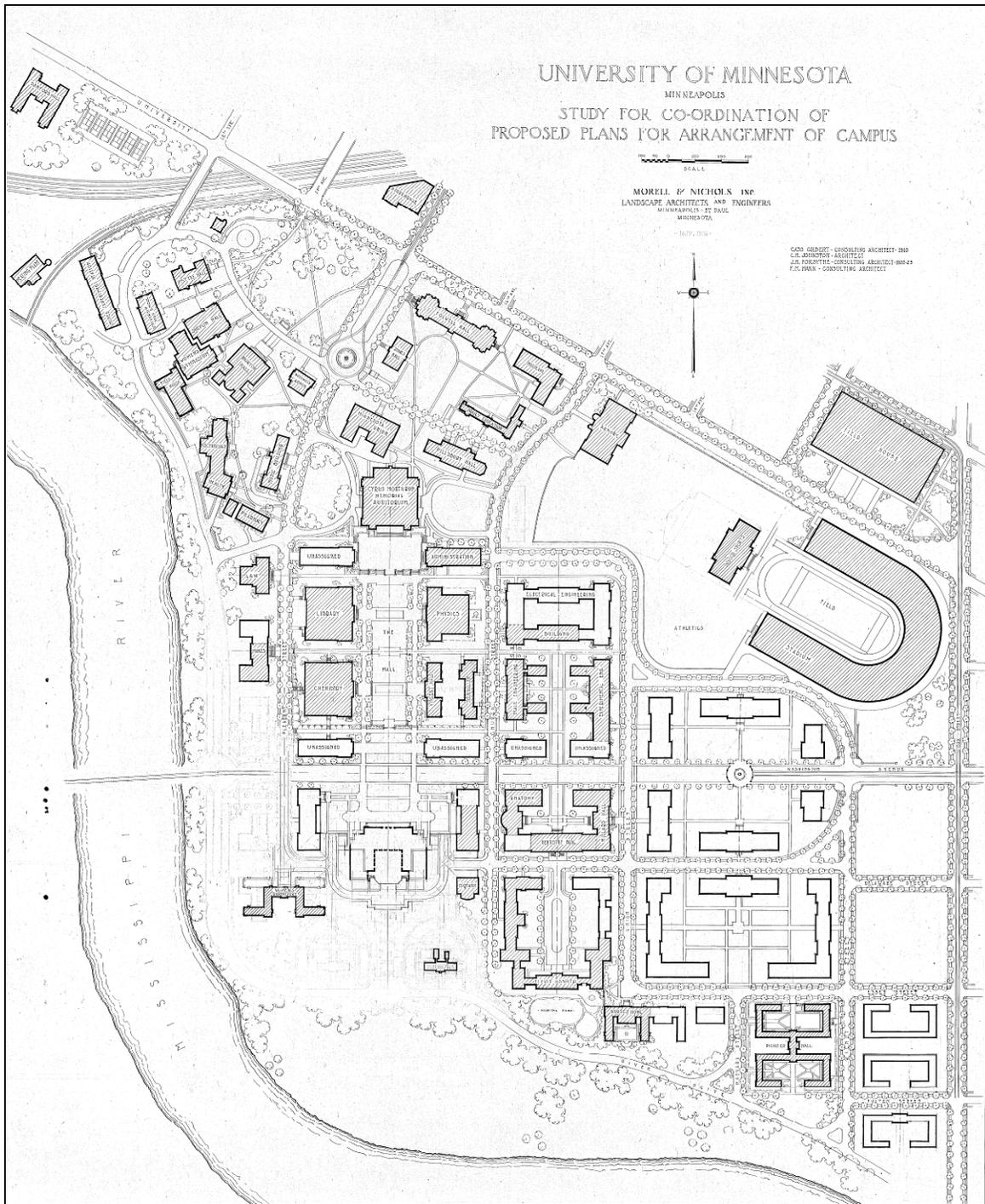
By the late 1920s, the University and Morell and Nichols turned their attention to landscape improvements for the old campus area. The paving of Pleasant Street between University Avenue and Pillsbury Drive and the paving of Pillsbury Drive between Fourteenth Avenue and Seventeenth Avenue was authorized in 1929. The landscape architects also wanted to create a turn-around for streetcars at the intersection of Pleasant and Pillsbury. This eventually happened and a landscaped island was created down the middle of the road. With the removal of the railroad tracks that had allowed the creation of Northrop Mall, East River Parkway was finally able to be extended in a continuous roadway through the campus, although the University and the Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners negotiated over the exact route.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Roise, 7-8.



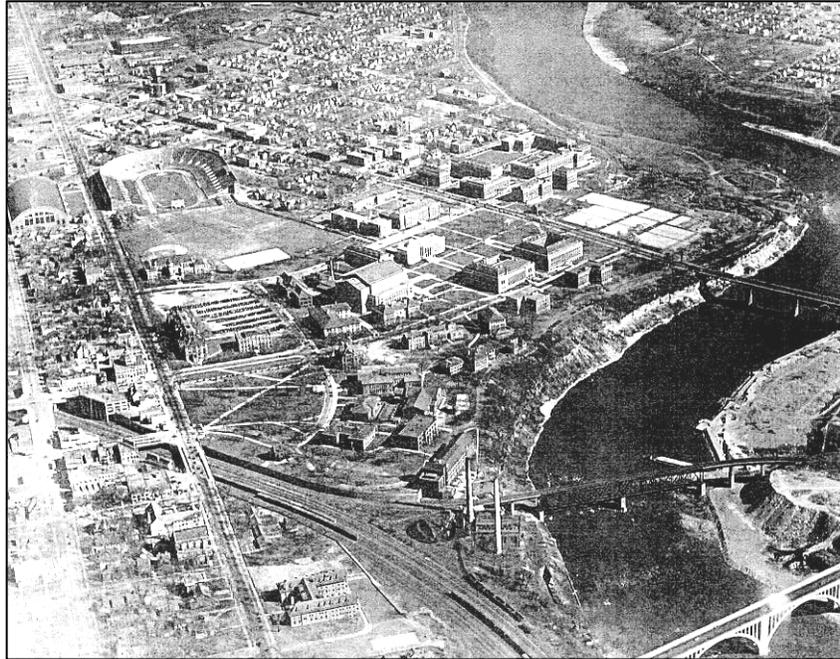
The campus in 1930 as shown in this plan by Morell and Nichols, Inc. Wesbrook Hall, to the west of Northrop Auditorium, is projected for removal. The landscape plantings are probably more idealized than actually in place.

*Courtesy of University of Minnesota Archives*



A 1931 plan for the campus by Morell and Nichols, Inc. Westbrook Hall is removed in this study, and the locations of the museum and adult education are shown. The island with the streetcar turn-around is shown on Pleasant Avenue.  
*Courtesy of University of Minnesota Archives.*

The landscape architects also planned for the location of two new buildings on the site of the old parade grounds facing Church Street opposite the armory. On a 1931 study, they are called “Adult Education” and “Museum” and planned around a landscaped courtyard.<sup>109</sup> They were built later in that decade, and both were designed by Clarence H. Johnston, Jr. Adult Education, built in 1935-1936, is now the Nolte Center for Continuing Education, 315 Pillsbury Drive S. E. The Museum, built in 1939-1940, is the Bell Museum of Natural History, 10 Church Street S. E.



An aerial view of the campus in the early 1930s. This provides a good view of the Knoll, the drives, and other landscape features of that time.

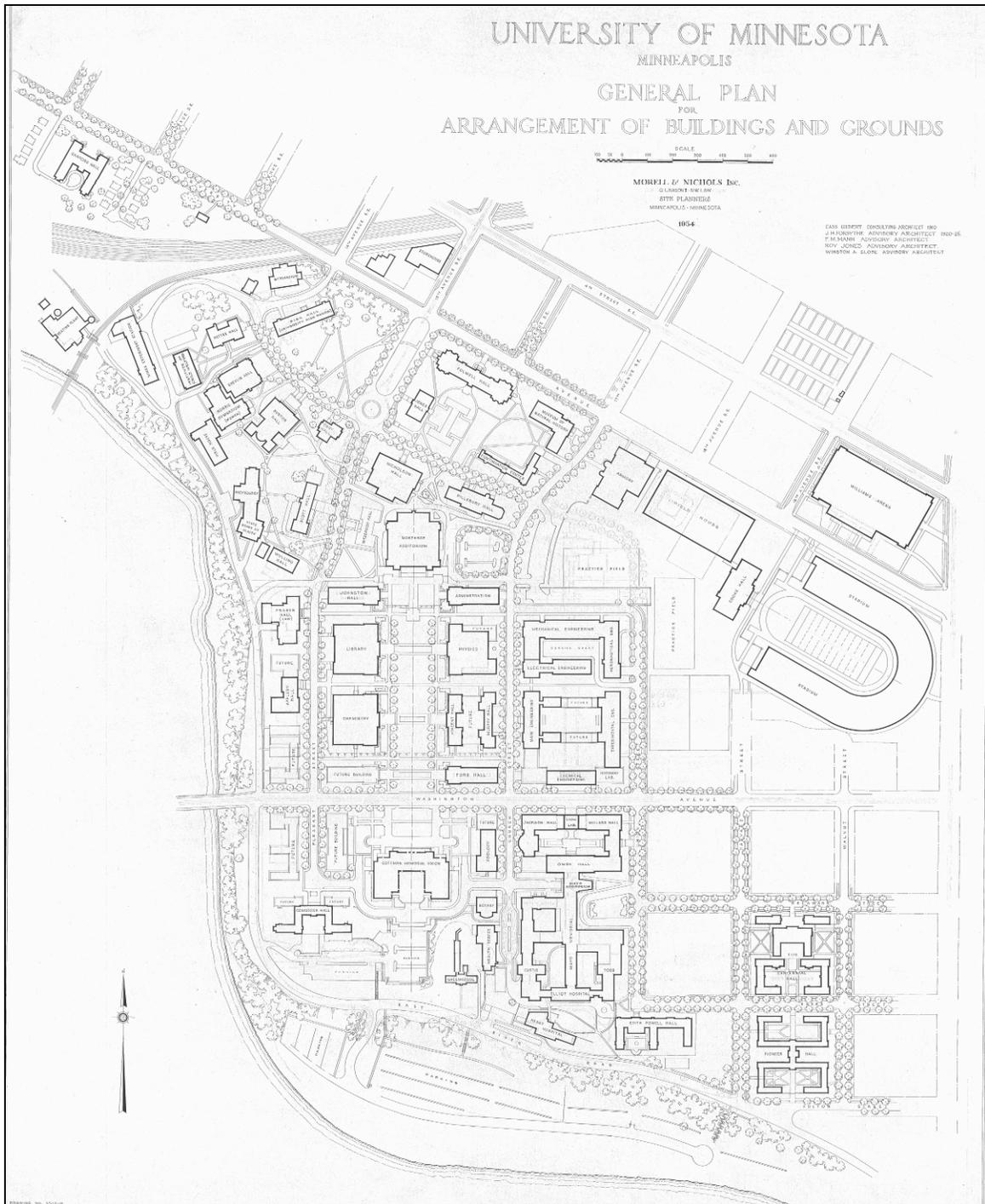
*Courtesy of University of Minnesota Archives*

Morell and Nichols, Inc., continued its planning and landscape architecture work for the University into the 1950s. A plan from 1954 depicts the realization of some of the ideas from the 1931 study as well as several additional buildings.<sup>110</sup> Most notably, Peik Hall, 159 Pillsbury Drive S. E., and Peik Gymnasium, 157 Pillsbury Drive S. E., were built in 1954 and designed by Magney, Tusler and Settler. Westbrook Hall, just west of Northrop Auditorium and slated for removal in earlier plans, remains in place. Two more buildings were added to the old campus in the 1970s. Elliot Hall, 75 East River Parkway, built in 1973-1974 and designed by architects Parker, Klein, replaced the old Psychology and State Board of Health Building. The underground Williamson Hall, 231 Pillsbury Drive S. E., was inserted into the courtyard between Folwell Hall and Jones Hall, replacing a “temporary” building from the 1950s. Built in 1975, it was designed by Myers and Bennett.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>109</sup> “University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Study for Co-ordination of Proposed Plans for Arrangement of Campus,” Morell and Nichols, Inc., 1931, available at University of Minnesota Archives.

<sup>110</sup> “University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, General Plan for Arrangement of Buildings and Grounds,” Morell and Nichols, Inc., 1954, available at University of Minnesota Archives.

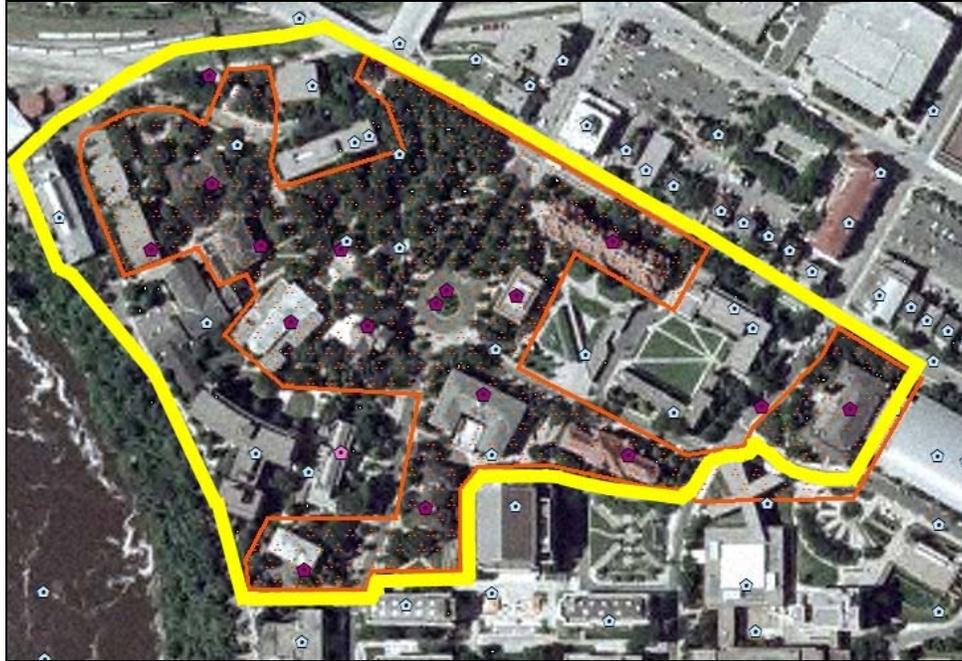
<sup>111</sup> Gebhard and Martinson, 50-51.



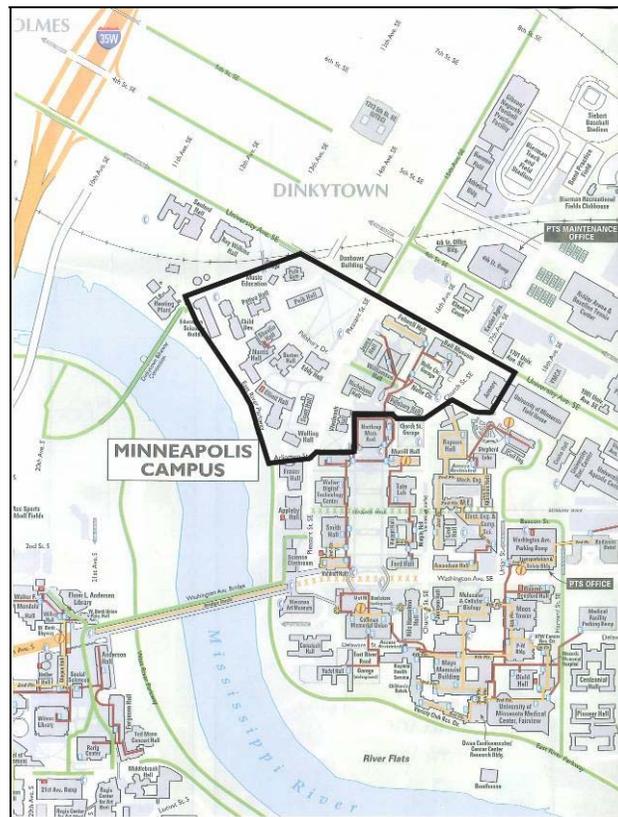
The campus is 1954 as depicted by Morell and Nichols, Inc. Peik Hall and Peik Gymnasium are depicted at the upper left.

*Courtesy of University of Minnesota Archives*

## Expanded University of Minnesota Old Campus Historic District



The yellow line shows the revised boundary in relation to the existing boundary, depicted by the orange line.



Revised boundary in relation to the East Bank campus.

## **Recommendations for an Expanded University of Minnesota Old Campus Historic District**

As stated above, the boundaries of the listed University of Minnesota Old Campus Historic District were drawn to eliminate any buildings that postdated the tenure of President Northrop and largely ignored the landscape, even though it included the original Knoll. There was no discussion of the walks, drives, roads, or plantings, or the spatial relationships among the buildings. Significant portions of the roadways were eliminated as was a portion of the fence that was installed along with the Pillsbury Gate.

Based on an analysis of the development of the old campus, its landscape and planning, and its architecture, we recommend an expansion of the historic district boundaries to encompass an area that is more closely related to the historic extent of the old campus.

### *Revised Boundary*

The revised boundary would begin west of the East River Parkway entrance on University Avenue, extend eastward along the south curb line of University Avenue to the stone post at the east edge of the armory, extend south along the east wall of the armory to the extension of Pillsbury Drive S. E., extend west along the north curb line of the extension of Pillsbury Drive S. E. across Church Street S. E., extend south along the west curb line of Church Street S. E. to the north edge of Lily Plaza, extend west along the edge of Lily Plaza and the north side of Northrop Auditorium, extend south along the west side of Northrop Auditorium, then west along the south edge of the plaza north of Johnston Hall, extend west across Pleasant Street S. E. and continue west along Arlington Street to East River Parkway, then continue north along the west side of East River Parkway to the lower drive on the west side of the Science Education Building (former Mines Experiment Station), continue along the lower drive back to East River Parkway and continue along the edge of the railroad right-of-way to the point of beginning.

This revised boundary would be slightly altered at the east end from the existing boundary to eliminate the link between the armory and the field house and to follow the line of the extension of Pillsbury Drive while eliminating the recent Stephen Holl-designed addition to the Architecture Building (Ralph Rapson Hall).

The revised boundary would be contiguous with that for the University of Minnesota Mall Historic District. Along East River Parkway, this boundary would make the link between the portion of the parkway under the jurisdiction of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and that under the jurisdiction of the University of Minnesota.

### *Period of Significance*

The period of significance for the expanded district would extend from the establishment of the campus in the 1850s through 1940. This period marks the successive efforts of landscape architects and planners H. W. S. Cleveland, Warren Manning, and Morell and Nichols, Inc. to shape the old campus. Architecturally it extends through the tenure of the Clarence H. Johnston firm on the old campus.

The following buildings would be added to the district within this expanded boundary. Chronologically they are:

**Norris Hall**, 172 Pillsbury Drive S. E., architects Clarence H. Johnston, Sr. and Jr., built 1914-1915, 1935-1936.

**Scott Hall**, 72 Pleasant Street S. E., architect Clarence H. Johnston, Sr., built 1921-1922.

**Science Education Building** (Mines Experiment Station), 56 East River Parkway, architect Clarence H. Johnston, Sr., built 1923.

All three buildings are designed in variations of Renaissance Revival styles, with brick facades and decorative stone details.

**Nolte Center for Continuing Education**, 315 Pillsbury Drive S. E., architect Clarence H. Johnston, Jr., built 1935-1936. The building is designed in a Jacobethan style that harmonizes with nearby Folwell Hall.

**Bell Museum of Natural History**, 10 Church Street S. E., architect Clarence H. Johnston, Jr., built 1939-1940. The building is designed in a Classical Moderne style that was deemed appropriate to the scientific institution it houses.

These five buildings should be identified as contributing to the historic district. Architecturally, they fit the theme identified in the original National Register nomination: a significant Minnesota collection representing late nineteenth and early twentieth-century architectural styles. Even the last two buildings are stylistically related to the earlier ones. They were also carefully designed to be set harmoniously into the plan and landscape of the old campus.

**Peik Hall**, 159 Pillsbury Drive S. E., architects Magney, Tusler and Settler, built 1954.  
**Peik Gymnasium**, 157 Pillsbury Drive S. E., architects Magney, Tusler and Settler, built 1954. These two red brick buildings are of modern design. While the gymnasium is tucked along the edge of East River Parkway, Peik Hall was built at the edge of the original Knoll, removing a portion of that landscape feature.

**Elliot Hall**, 75 East River Parkway, architects Parker, Klein, built 1973-1974. A large modern building faced in red-brown brick that is set into the slope at this edge of the campus.

**Williamson Hall**, 231 Pillsbury Drive S. E., architects Myers and Bennett, built 1975. This concrete structure was designed as an underground building, but certain brutalist elements protrude above ground into the area between Folwell Hall, Jones Hall, and the Nolte/Bell courtyard.

These four buildings would postdate the proposed period of significance for the expanded district and should be identified as noncontributing to the district.

The landscape and overall plan of the Old Campus Historic District bear the signatures of a succession of landscape architects and planners. Plantings have changed over time, and the old campus has a much heavier tree canopy than that depicted in early photographs. Certain landscape and planning elements should be called out as contributing features to the historic district. These include: the original Knoll and the pathway system that crosses it; roadways and drives, including East River Parkway, Pleasant Avenue, Church Avenue, and Pillsbury Drive; the courtyards between Folwell, Jones, and Nolte/Bell; plazas, pathways, and other spatial elements around and between the buildings in the district; and changes in grade and elevation that recall the historic location of the University campus on the bluffs above the Mississippi River.

In addition to the sculptures and objects identified in the National Register nomination report, another commemorative object is identified in the 1993 report. This is the stone dedicated by the Class of 1878, located to the northeast of the Pillsbury statue along one of the pathways of the Knoll. This large boulder bears a bronze plaque with the names of the class members. It is a contributing element.

## **Mines Experiment Station Building (HE-MPC-3265): Summary of Significance**

### **Background**

The Mines Experiment Station Building, 56 East River Road, is adjacent to the University of Minnesota Old Campus Historic District on the west side of East River Road and is within the expanded APE. It is recommended for inclusion within an expanded University of Minnesota Old Campus Historic District. The building was documented in “Mines Experiment Station (Mineral Resources Center) HAER Documentation” (MN-95) prior to the conversion to its current use as the Educational Science Building.

### **Significance**

Built in 1922-1923, the Mines Experiment Station Building was designed by Clarence H. Johnston, Sr., in his role as architect to the University of Minnesota Board of Regents.<sup>112</sup> The Renaissance Revival style of the building, which is clad with red-brown brick over a reinforced concrete structure, is compatible with Johnston’s other work on campus. At the same time, Johnston used a variety of architectural forms and details “to transform an industrial shed into a work of strong architectural character.”<sup>113</sup>

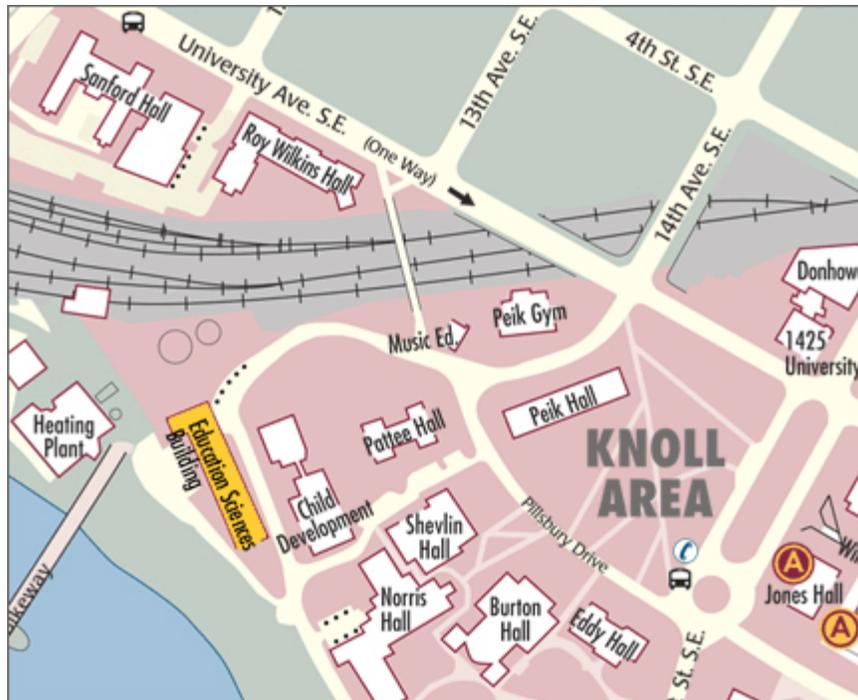
Beyond its architectural character, the Mines Experiment Station is notable for its innovative work with taconite, a low-grade iron ore which was found in abundance in the Cuyuna Range of northern Minnesota, but was difficult to mine and process. The Mines Experiment Station was specifically designed to enable researchers to analyze ore and conduct tests that could be applied to commercial processing techniques. The work carried out in the Mines Experiment Station for some fifty years led to the expanding and profitable taconite industry in the state.

Because of its innovative and long-lasting role in the development of the taconite industry in Minnesota, the Mines Experiment Station is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of Industry and Invention.

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<sup>112</sup> Paul Clifford Larson, *Minnesota Architect: The Life and Work of Clarence H. Johnston* (Afton, Minn.: Afton Historical Society Press, 1996), 150-151, 188.

<sup>113</sup> Larson, 151.



Legend:

- Freshman Admissions Welcome Center
- Transfer & International Admissions Welcome Center
- Information centers
- Major intercampus bus stops with connections to intracampus circulators
- Meter parking
- Public parking
- Public parking (events only)
- Code blue emergency telephones

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## **Pioneer Hall (HE-MPC-3171) and Comstock Hall (HE-MPC-3296), University of Minnesota Campus: National Register Evaluations**

### **Background**

With the expansion of the APE for the CCLRT project, these two dormitories complexes on or adjacent to East River Parkway have the potential to be impacted. Consequently, Mn/DOT-CRU and MnSHPO requested National Register evaluations.

### **Pioneer Hall, 615 Fulton Street S.E., Minneapolis**

Pioneer Hall was built in two sections that occupy a block that was historically bounded by Fulton Street on the south, Harvard Street on the west, Essex Street on the north, and Walnut Street on the east. The latter two streets have been closed to vehicular traffic. The section facing Fulton Street is fronted by a triangular park area that adjoins East River Parkway. The sections of Pioneer Hall are organized as two reverse “Cs” in plan. Each section is laid out around a courtyard, forming a quadrangle. The buildings are Georgian Revival in style and faced in red brick with contrasting stone detail. The slate-covered hipped roofs are punctuated by dormers. The entrances are marked by projecting porticos and a cupola that rises above the roofline. Low brick-faced service wings have been built at the east and west ends of the complex. The windows have been replaced, but otherwise the exteriors appear to be largely intact.

The earlier south section, called the south court, visible from East River Parkway, was designed and built in 1930-1931. The north section, called the north court, accessed from the extension of Essex Street, was built in 1934. Both are the work of Clarence H. Johnston, Sr., in his role as architect to the University of Minnesota Board of Regents.<sup>114</sup> Stylistically, the buildings are similar to Johnston’s academic buildings facing Northrop Mall. They continue the plan and character of the buildings on Northrop Mall to this area of the campus. The quadrangle plan of the complex was popular and widely used for dormitories on American college and university campuses.

The Pioneer Hall buildings were the first dormitories constructed on campus to house male students. In his history of the University of Minnesota, James Gray tells the tale:

No one who looked seriously at problems of education doubted that the university required dormitories. . . .

If the large university was to justify its existence it must manage to provide comfortable quarters for its students and not allow them to be dispersed throughout a largely indifferent urban community.

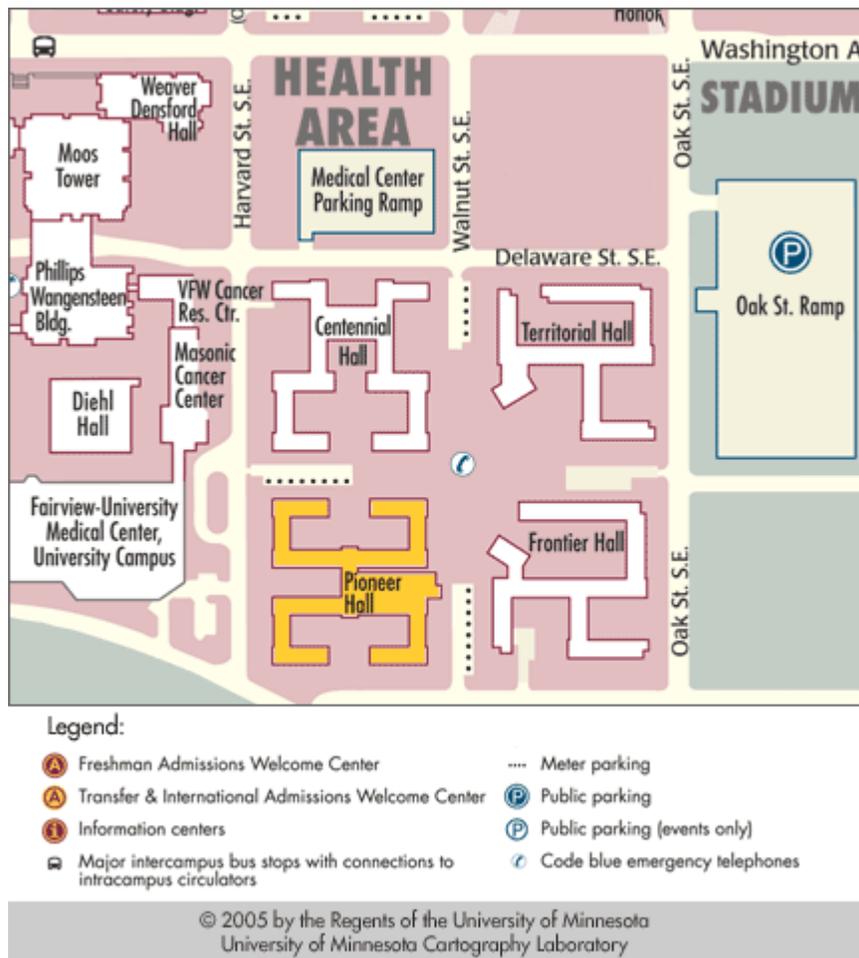
But with a site selected, high on the riverbank, with architects at work on the plans, with arrangements for financing perfected, and with the authority of the

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<sup>114</sup> Paul Clifford Larson, *Minnesota Architect: The Life and Work of Clarence H. Johnston* (Afton, Minn.: Afton Historical Society Press, 1996), 188.

Supreme Court that the university was a mature and responsible agency capable of designing and carrying out its own plans, a further quibble was thrust in its way. A group of real estate owners in the neighborhood had conceived the idea that it had become their inalienable right to provide lodgings for students. They resented competition and went to court. . .

In June 1919, Judge Grier M. Orr filed the decision that “the University acting through its board of regents has the power and authority to issue and sell bonds for the purpose of creating a fund to erect and enjoy said dormitories.”<sup>115</sup>



<sup>115</sup> James Gray, *The University of Minnesota 1851-1951* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1951), 306-307.

## **Eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places**

It is recommended that Pioneer Hall be considered eligible for the National Register under Criterion A in the area of Education for its role as the first dormitory built especially for male students at the University of Minnesota in an era when the University was expanding its mission and its mandate. It is also recommended for eligibility under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, in this case the dormitory quadrangle in the Georgian Revival style; and as it represents the work of a master, Clarence H. Johnston, Sr.

## Comstock Hall, 210 Delaware Street S.E., Minneapolis

Comstock Hall was built south of Washington Avenue and west of Coffman Memorial Union. Overlooking East River Parkway, the building is constructed into the slope as it rises from the parkway. Today the building forms an irregular “H” in plan with wings extending to the east and west. The entrance pavilion that links the wings is approached from Delaware Street. The building, clad in red brick, is Moderne in style with such characteristic details as projecting sun porches, curvilinear forms, and glass-block windows in the stair towers. The front wings, fronting on Delaware Street, are a later addition, although their presence is indicated on a 1939 campus plan.<sup>116</sup> They had not been constructed by the time of the 1956 aerial photograph shown below. Most of the windows have been replaced, and the terracing and landscaping have been redone.

The building was designed by the firm of C. H. Johnston, Architects-Engineers. This firm, which had been formed by Clarence H. Johnston, Jr., after his father’s death, had succeeded the senior Johnston for work on the University campus. Other major buildings on campus designed by the Johnston firm and under construction at the same time were the Coffman Memorial Union, located to the east of Comstock Hall, and the Bell Museum of Natural History, located in the older, Knoll section of the campus north of Washington Avenue, on Church Street off University Avenue.<sup>117</sup>

Built in 1939-1940, Comstock Hall was the second of the University’s two dormitories for women. It was named in honor of Ada Louise Comstock who had been the first dean of women between 1907 and 1912. Comstock, who was a strong advocate for women on the campus, both academically and in their living arrangements, left Minnesota to serve as dean of Smith College and then as president of Radcliffe College.<sup>118</sup>

The date is contemporary with the construction of Coffman Memorial Union. Both mark the expansion of the campus south of Washington Avenue. The Johnston firm worked with Arthur Nichols of the landscape architecture firm of Morell and Nichols, Inc. on the location and siting of the buildings. Nichols was particularly concerned with the southward expansion of Northrop Mall and the relationship of Coffman Union to the buildings and mall area north of Washington Avenue.<sup>119</sup>

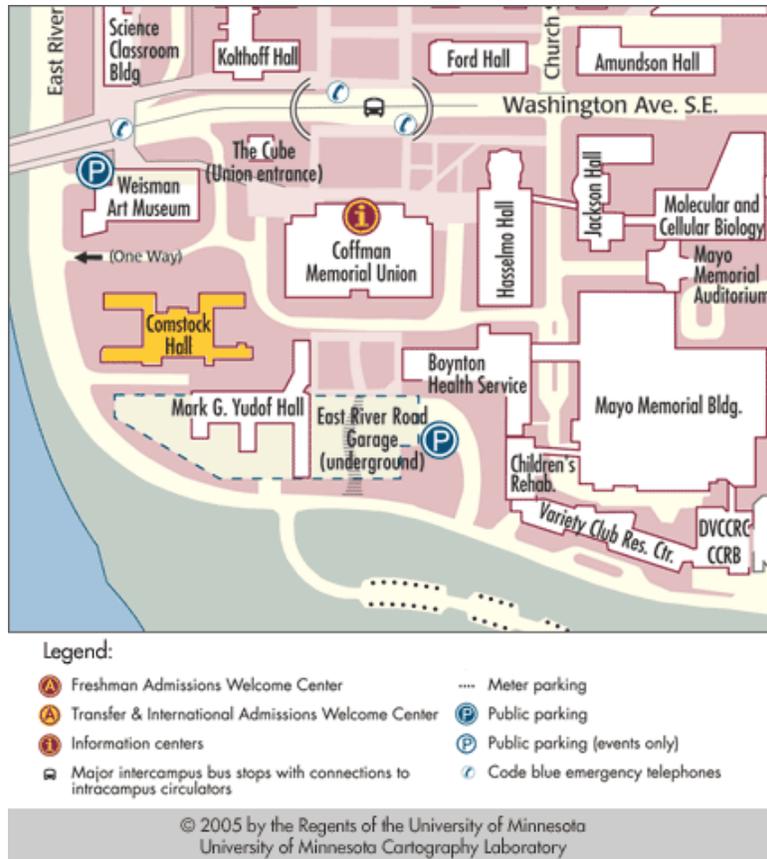
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<sup>116</sup> See Landscape Research, “Northrop Mall, The City Beautiful Campus Plan of the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota: Designed Historic Landscape Evaluation Final Report,” submitted to State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society, 2003, 78.

<sup>117</sup> Larson, 194 n25; David Gebhard and Tom Martinson, *A Guide to the Architecture of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 51-52; Larry Millet, *AIA Guide to the Twin Cities* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 2007), 129, 131.

<sup>118</sup> Gray, 136-137.

<sup>119</sup> See Landscape Research, 51-60.



## Eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places

Comstock Hall is not recommended for National Register eligibility. Although it could be considered under Criterion A in the area of Education, Comstock Hall lacks the precedent-setting role of Maria Sanford Hall (1910, 1920-1921), the first women’s dormitory on the campus, located on University Avenue west of the railroad tracks and the Knoll area. Although it was named after the first dean of women, it lacks the direct associational qualities with Ada Louise Comstock to be eligible under Criterion B. The building lacks sufficient distinction as an example of a type, period, or method of construction to be eligible under Criterion C. Compared with Coffman Memorial Union or the Bell Museum, works of the firm of the younger Johnston on campus, it lacks distinction as the work of a master. (Both Coffman and Bell had been named as among the best new buildings in the Twin Cities of the 1930s in an *Architectural Record* poll.)<sup>120</sup> Moreover, the building has been somewhat compromised by later alterations and additions that diminish its integrity. Although its location is close to the Coffman Memorial Union, Nichols sited it in such a way that it would be set apart from his Northrop Mall expansion plan.<sup>121</sup> Consequently it is not recommended for inclusion within the boundaries of the National Register eligible University of Minnesota Mall Historic District.

<sup>120</sup> Gebhard and Martinson, 51-52.

<sup>121</sup> Landscape Research, 55-56.



Pioneer Hall south, view from East River Parkway

*Photo: Marjorie Pearson*



Pioneer Hall south, view from Fulton Street

*Photo: Marjorie Pearson*



Pioneer Hall south, courtyard overview  
*Photo: Marjorie Pearson*



Pioneer Hall south, entrance from courtyard  
*Photo: Marjorie Pearson*



Pioneer Hall south, cornerstone  
*Photo: Marjorie Pearson*



Pioneer Hall south, courtyard to west  
*Photo: Marjorie Pearson*



Pioneer Hall south, view from Harvard Street

*Photo: Marjorie Pearson*



Pioneer Hall north, view from Essex Street extension

*Photo: Marjorie Pearson*



Pioneer Hall north, courtyard to west  
*Photo: Marjorie Pearson*



Pioneer Hall north, entrance from courtyard  
*Photo: Marjorie Pearson*

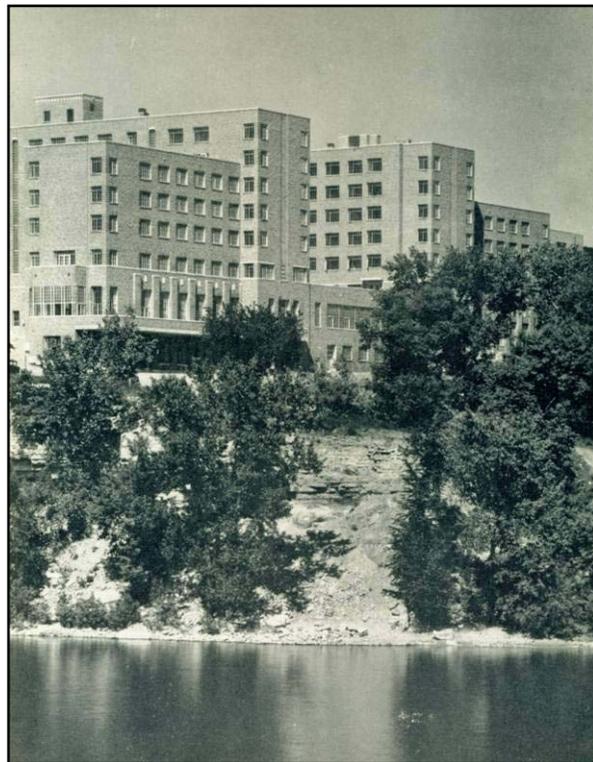


Pioneer Hall north, cornerstone  
*Photo: Marjorie Pearson*



Aerial view of University of Minnesota Campus, August 14, 1956,  
red arrow points to Comstock Hall

*Photo: Norton and Peel, Minnesota Historical Society Collections*



A view of Comstock Hall the river

Taken from *The University of Minnesota, 1851-1951*



Comstock Hall, view to southeast  
*Photo: Marjorie Pearson*



Comstock Hall from East River Parkway  
*Photo: Marjorie Pearson*



Comstock Hall from East River Parkway, view to north  
*Photo: Marjorie Pearson*



Comstock Hall from East River Parkway, view to northeast  
*Photo: Marjorie Pearson*



Comstock Hall, west wing from Delaware Street  
*Photo: Marjorie Pearson*



Comstock Hall, entrance pavilion between the two wings on  
Delaware Street

*Photo: Marjorie Pearson*



Comstock Hall cornerstone by entrance

*Photo: Marjorie Pearson*

**WASHINGTON AVENUE BRIDGE (HE-MPC-4918)  
SPANNING THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA:  
NATIONAL REGISTER EVALUATION**



## Background

The Washington Avenue Bridge (Bridge No. 9360) was constructed between 1962 and 1965 by the Minnesota Department of Transportation to replace an earlier bridge built in the same vicinity. The new bridge linked the traditional East Bank campus of the University of Minnesota to the modern West Bank campus, also constructed beginning in the 1960s. The unique design separated pedestrian and vehicular traffic on two levels to facilitate travel between the two campuses. It also incorporated university buildings into its approaches.

The historical, architectural, and engineering significance of the Washington Avenue Bridge is being evaluated as part of the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Final Environmental Statement for the planned construction of the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit project. It had not been evaluated in any of the earlier studies. The proposed light-rail route will cross the bridge on the lower level, potentially subjecting the structure to environmental and physical impacts.

## Description

The double-deck Washington Avenue Bridge spans the Mississippi River between the East Bank and West Bank campuses of the University of Minnesota. It measures 1,130'-0" in length and is designed to separate uses between each level. The lower, vehicular, level of the bridge accommodates two lanes of traffic in each direction (four lanes altogether) and is supported by a steel-span superstructure. The three main spans are continuous haunched girders measuring 246'-0", 315'-0", and 246'-0" in length. Single, beam-girder spans connect the central section of the bridge to each shore. The west girder measures 105'-0" in length and the east girder is 66'-0" long. All of the girders rest on bearings, which are connected to the two reinforced-concrete piers and the reinforced-concrete abutments. The upper, pedestrian, level is supported on steel frames, which run under the concrete-slab deck and down the sides of the bridge to the superstructure. Both levels measure 74'-0" in width, and the upper deck has an enclosure which is 30'-0" wide and 8'-0" tall, which runs the entire length of the bridge. The globe street lamps lining each side of the upper deck are part of the original design and have always lighted the pedestrian level. This bridge was one of the first in the nation to use A441 high-strength, low-alloy steel in its superstructure, which allowed for welding rather than riveting the structure.<sup>122</sup>

## Minneapolis's Ponte Vecchio

The first Washington Avenue Bridge was built in 1884-1885 to facilitate the Interurban trolley line between Minneapolis and Saint Paul. The line was begun in 1881 with a horse car line on University Avenue from downtown Saint Paul to Dale Street. The line was completed to downtown Minneapolis via University Avenue and Washington Avenue in December 1890. Trusses were added to the bridge in 1890 and 1906 to improve its stability. The Interurban line was one of the busiest in the Twin Cities and the name proved so popular it was adopted by the

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<sup>122</sup> Mn/DOT, Structure Inventory Sheet for Bridge 9360, May 14, 2003, available from Mn/DOT, Bridges and Structures Department, Oakdale, Minnesota; T. H. 12, State of Minnesota, Department of Highways, Bridge No. 9360, General Plan and Elevation, April 13, 1962, available from Mn/DOT, Bridges and Structures Department, Oakdale, Minnesota; "Two Decks Unite Divided Campus," *Engineering Record* 175 (July 8, 1965): 72, 74.

Twin City Rapid Transit Company to describe all intercity lines. In the 1930s and 1940s, the bridge's stability further deteriorated, partly because the weight of motorized vehicles was much greater than that of horse-drawn vehicles. Streetcar speeds were restricted to 20 miles per hour over the bridge, and trucks and other vehicles weighing more than three tons were eventually banned altogether. As early as 1945 the City of Minneapolis explored rebuilding the bridge. The university opposed replacing the bridge at the same location, because the heavy traffic generated on Washington Avenue by the bridge crossing divided the existing campus on the east bank. University officials suggested that a new bridge be built downstream from campus.<sup>123</sup>

In the 1950s, enrollment at the University of Minnesota reached its highest numbers up to that time and the school needed to expand its East Bank campus, but options were limited. "It was not easy to find space adjacent to the campus, which was hemmed in by railroad yards on the north and the Mississippi River to the west and south. To the east lay a residential area, Prospect Park, home to many faculty members—and Hubert Humphrey." The neighborhood's strong political clout meant "expansion in that direction was not likely to be popular or feasible." The west bank of the river, with a high percentage of renters, appeared to be an easier target for expansion plans.<sup>124</sup>

In 1954, Ralph Rapson, then head of the School of Architecture, proposed a year-long project for the school's architectural students that would analyze the university's expansion problems and offer solutions. Four schemes were presented to the administration in 1955. One scheme proposed renovating and constructing new buildings on existing university land, while another advocated expansion of the Saint Paul campus. The third suggested developing a campus in the suburbs. The fourth plan recommended that the university expand across the Mississippi River with a "Ponte Vecchio-like bridge" connecting the existing east campus and a new west campus. Vehicular traffic would be on the lower level and pedestrians above. University officials proposed, and city officials agreed, that the lower level would carry vehicular traffic from the east riverbank to Oak Street in a tunnel to make the campus free of through traffic. In 1957, the west bank campus concept was adopted by the Board of Regents and political negotiating with the state legislature over money and land was begun. The legislature granted the university \$1.5 million to acquire 17.5 acres of land for the new West Bank campus.<sup>125</sup>

While the university worked on the plans for the West Bank campus, the design for the two-level bridge was promoted to the public. The pedestrian level of the bridge would be equipped with

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<sup>123</sup> John W. Diers and Aaron Isaacs, *Twin Cities by Trolley: The Streetcar Era in Minneapolis and St. Paul* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 197-201; "University Asks New Bridge Site," *Minnesota Daily*, January 23, 1945; Stanford Lehmborg and Ann M. Pflaum, *The University of Minnesota 1945-2000* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 77-79.

<sup>124</sup> Lehmborg and Pflaum, 77.

<sup>125</sup> The tunnel was not constructed because of costs. The following section of this report, "Timeline for the Depression of Washington Avenue" details various efforts to unify the campus across Washington Avenue. "Walkalators' Urged on Bridge," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, June 28, 1955; "Moving Walk Proposed for City Bridge," *Minneapolis Star*, June 28, 1955; "Double-deck bridge OK'd by 'U' & City," *Minneapolis Star*, December 9, 1954; "Double-Deck River Span at U Urged," *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, July 6, 1955; Frank Murray, "City, State Hassle Over Bridge," *Minneapolis Star*, December 12, 1955; "'U' Regents Approve New Bridge Plans," *Minneapolis Star*, November 2, 1957; Jane King Hession, Rip Rapson, and Bruce N. Wright, *Ralph Rapson: Sixty Years of Modern Design* (Afton, Minn.: Afton Historical Society Press, 1999), 121. This source uses the "Ponte Vecchio-like bridge" phrase.

moving walkways, called “walkalators,” and the lower level would be approached by tunnels at both ends. One newspaper reporter suggested the project had “Buck Rogers aspects,” but the university architect, Winston A. Close, believed the bridge would become the symbol for a combined campus, like Northrop Auditorium was a symbol for the main East Bank campus. In 1959, the university unveiled tentative plans for four new campus buildings on the west side of the river.<sup>126</sup>

By 1961, the university’s expansion across the river received notice in the *New York Times*, which observed, “The University of Minnesota has divided itself, amoeba-like, by leaping the Mississippi River in search of expansion space.” The article noted that excavations for three new buildings on the west side were underway and construction of a double-deck bridge to link the two campuses would start later that year. From the start, the bridge was seen as an integral part of the expanded campus. “The west campus area incorporates new techniques of planning which permit extremely compact building arrangements,” said Winston Close. Once the bridge was completed, the *Times* published another article which again noted that the bridge connected the two campuses.<sup>127</sup>

Buildings on the east campus and on the west bank were designed to accommodate the new bridge. One writer noted, “The upper level of the bridge will be connected with the east bank buildings by a raised plaza running from the bridge to the mysterious balcony on the new Science Classroom Building. The upper walkway will also be extended to connect to the mall in front of Coffman Union.” The same style of lighting standards seen on the mall would be carried over the pedestrian walkway. Meanwhile on the west side, “connections will be made to existing buildings by a temporary timber ramp. This ramp will give access to the classrooms, but will also allow space for the construction of the latest addition to the west bank.” Another west bank building, Anderson Hall, was being planned just as the bridge reached completion. The building “will contain eight large classrooms similar to those in the new Science Classroom Building on the east bank. It is to be built parallel to the existing west bank classroom building [Blegen Hall] but will sit overlooking the river in approximately the same spot the workmen on the bridge now park. The entire ground level will be a glassed-in study area in addition to food services. The study space will have one of the most breathtaking views possible of the east bank campus and the Mississippi River.”<sup>128</sup>

Preliminary plans for the bridge and its approaches were drawn up by 1960. The state highway department and the engineering firm, Sverdrup and Parcel and Associates of St. Louis, cooperated on the project. While the new bridge began at the same location on the east bank as the old, it angled south of the old bridge on the west bank.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> “‘Walkalators’ Urged on Bridge”; Herm Sittard, “River Span May Rank With Great,” *Minneapolis Star*, November 7, 1957; Herm Sittard, “On Blighted Area, ‘U’ Will Build an Educational City,” *Minneapolis Star*, October 7, 1959.

<sup>127</sup> “Minnesota Campus is Divided by River,” *New York Times*, January 18, 1961; “School Expands Across a River,” *New York Times*, October 17, 1965.

<sup>128</sup> Daniel Kehrberg, “The Bridge. . .,” *Minnesota Technologist* (February 1965): 25.

<sup>129</sup> Kehrberg, 24-25.

## Sverdrup and Parcel

The Saint Louis engineering firm of Sverdrup and Parcel was founded in 1928 by Leif J. Sverdrup and John Ira Parcel. Sverdrup, a native of Norway, came to Minneapolis in 1914 for a short visit with his cousin, George Sverdrup, president of Augsburg College. World War I broke out and Sverdrup could not return to Norway. He enrolled at Augsburg and earned a B.A. in 1918. He continued his education acquiring a B.S. in civil engineering from the University of Minnesota in 1921. Parcel was an engineering professor at the university and had also worked for the American Bridge Company. After graduating from the university, Sverdrup worked briefly for the Minnesota Highway Department but moved to the Missouri Highway Department, where he became the chief bridge engineer in 1925.<sup>130</sup>

In 1927, plans had stalled for a bridge over the Missouri River at Hermann, Missouri. The state was unable to raise the funds for the bridge so a toll bridge was planned for the site. Sverdrup approached the Hermann Bridge Company and proposed to design the bridge and supervise construction as a private contractor. At the same time, he wrote to Parcel and asked him to become a partner in the venture. Parcel was reluctant to leave the university and took a one-year, unpaid leave of absence. The new firm opened its doors on April 1, 1928, just before the Hermann project was approved. Sverdrup soon persuaded several of his former highway department colleagues to join the firm. The firm struggled to build a reputation and secure work in its early years. By the middle of the 1930s, projects were more forthcoming with funding through New Deal programs. The firm also developed a connection with the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) during this period.<sup>131</sup>

At the outbreak of World War II, the firm was considered one of the best bridge firms in the country. It benefited from its relationship with the Corps and received the commission for Canol, a top-secret 1,550-mile-long oil pipeline that carried 3,000 barrels of crude oil a day across the arctic reaches of Alaska. The firm also designed a wind tunnel for the U.S. Army Air Corps (precursor to the U.S. Air Force) and island airstrips in the Pacific theater. Sverdrup accepted a commission in the Corps during the war. He reached the rank of major general, commanded all engineering forces in the southwest Pacific, and served as an advisor to General Douglas MacArthur.<sup>132</sup>

The war-time experience provided Sverdrup and Parcel a chance to diversify its engineering expertise. After the war, the firm was well positioned to enter a number of new fields including air technology research. It was chosen to prepare a national facilities master plan, conduct research, and provide architectural and engineering services at the new Arnold Engineering Development Center in Tennessee, the air force's flight simulation test facilities. The firm also continued its routine work of building bridges, dams, and electrical substations, and constructing roads. It developed a reputation for its work on breweries and sports arenas, completing the

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<sup>130</sup> Robert Hewett, "Former Minnesotans Direct Building of Dam in Thailand," *Minneapolis Tribune (Picture Magazine)*, April 14, 1963; "Finding Aid for the John Ira Parcel Papers," available online through the University Archives, Department of Special Collections, University Libraries, Washington University in St. Louis, <http://library.wustl.edu/units/spec/archives/guides/pdf/parcel.pdf> (accessed January 9, 2008).

<sup>131</sup> "Finding Aid for the Parcel Papers"; Bob, Swierczek, "Sverdrup Corporation," from Answers.com web site, <http://www.answers.com/Sverdrup+Corporation?cat=biz-fin> (accessed January 9, 2008).

<sup>132</sup> Swierczek; "Minnesota Major Building Airfields on 'Tokyo Road'," *Minneapolis Tribune*, February 11, 1945.

Busch Stadium in Saint Louis in 1966. By the mid-1960s, Sverdrup and Parcel had projects in thirty-two states, the District of Columbia, Panama Canal Zone, and fifteen foreign countries. These included the Bridge of the Americas across the Panama Canal (1962); the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel (1964) that was named one of the “Seven Engineering Wonders of the Modern World”; the Executive Office Building in Saint Louis (1963); and the Yanhee Dam in Thailand (1964).<sup>133</sup>

Sverdrup “took steps to identify promising young people to lead the firm in the future and also came to recognize that the firm had developed a broader role with the passage of time—it was no longer a St. Louis firm with national branches but a national firm headquartered in St. Louis.” Although Parcel died in 1965 and Sverdrup in 1975, the firm continued its international work through the 1980s and 1990s under the name Sverdrup Corporation. It recently merged with Jacobs Engineering Group.<sup>134</sup>

### **Building a Bridge at Washington Avenue**

Sverdrup and Parcel’s preliminary plans were for an all-riveted bridge. Excavation and construction of the abutments and piers was begun in 1961. Work followed on the approach on the west bank. The approach on the east bank, in the midst of the university campus, was delayed until the new bridge was close to completion. After construction had begun, Sverdrup and Parcel changed the plans. The new bridge would be welded instead of riveted, using approximately 1.2 million pounds of a new high-strength, low-alloy steel, A441, as well as two types of more conventional steel.

A441 steel was developed in the 1950s along with A440 steel. Research and development had been spurred by the railroads in the early twentieth century and pushed further by bridge designers. Both steels had yield-strength ranges of 50,000 psi and were priced lower than A242, another 50,000 psi yield-strength steel that had been in use since the 1920s. The combination of increased strength and the relatively low price in the new steels “have opened up new vistas bounded less by available materials than by designers’ imaginations. Through skillful selection of high-strength steels, structural engineers can make structures leaner and more graceful, less costly and more durable.”<sup>135</sup> High-strength steel was increasingly used for buildings in the early 1960s. U.S. Steel estimated that up to and including 1961, fifteen buildings were constructed with high-strength steels. In 1963, thirty-one buildings had been fabricated with the steels. There was also a shift from riveting to welding. A well-known example of the use of A441 steel was the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University. Designed by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill with structural engineer, Paul Weidlinger, the five-story building had a structural system of Vierendeel trusses that would not have been possible without A441. The high-strength steel was welded into slender, tapered truss members that had thinner plate

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<sup>133</sup> Swierczek; “Bridge of the Americas to Open in Panama,” *New York Times*, September 23, 1962; Ben A. Franklin, “Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel Will Open Today,” *New York Times*, April 15, 1964; “St. Louis Adds Major Office Tower,” *New York Times*, November 10, 1963; Kathleen McLaughlin, “Completion of Yanhee Dam is Awaited in Thailand,” *New York Times*, July 10, 1962; Kathleen McLaughlin, “Vast Power Project Opens New Era for Thailand,” *New York Times*, June 30, 1964.

<sup>134</sup> Swierczek.

<sup>135</sup> “New Steels Open New Roads to Progress,” *Engineering News-Record* 168 (February 15, 1962): 40.

thicknesses than conventional steels. The welded trusses also accomplished the designers' aesthetic goals.<sup>136</sup>

Construction of the Washington Avenue bridge was held up when problems began to occur with the welding of the A441 steel girders at the U.S. Steel plant in Orange, Texas. The Minnesota Highway Department had used high-strength steel and machine welding for the Dartmouth Avenue (Interstate 94) bridge over the Mississippi River. A plant in Gary, Indiana, fabricated the girders for that bridge, but transporting them to Minnesota proved costly and time consuming. The commission for the Washington Avenue Bridge girders was originally given to a Bloomington, Indiana, plant. After the transportation delays with the Dartmouth Avenue girders, the job was farmed out to Orange because of its location on the Sabine River, which empties into the Gulf of Mexico near the Mississippi's mouth. The girders could be directly loaded onto barges and floated north to Minnesota. The Orange plant had extensive experience as a ship building center during World War II. However, the plant had no experience in machine welding A441 steel. The high humidity in east Texas was also blamed for welding troubles. The solution was to weld the girders by hand. The slow fabrication delayed the bridge construction by a year.<sup>137</sup>

When it opened in 1965, the bridge connected the modern West Bank campus with the traditional East Bank campus. In early 1966, the thirty-foot-wide pedestrian enclosure on the upper deck was completed. The \$500,000 enclosure, funded by donations from university alumni, was envisioned as a gallery space that would house "bookstalls, information and ticket booths, and various types of exhibits" and would be heated by steam lines carried from the east bank to the west bank. Unfortunately, the gallery concept was never implemented because the bridge was at its maximum dead-load capacity and could not support the weight of additional structures, according to planning officials at the time. The glass-pane walls, which were part of the enclosure's modern style, fell victim to vandalism shortly after completion of the enclosure. Broken glass and graffiti continued to plague the upper deck into the 1990s. The bottom rows of glass panes were replaced with plywood panels in the 1970s, and since the early 1990s have been painted annually by university professors and students as part of the bridge's maintenance. In 2000, the bridge superstructure was painted maroon, white, and gold as a reflection of its importance to the University of Minnesota.<sup>138</sup>

Aside from the repainting and the replacement of the bottom row of glass panes with plywood panels, the bridge retains a high degree of integrity in its form, structure, and materials.

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid.; J. A. Gilligan, "Higher-Strength Structural Steels," *Civil Engineering* 34 (November 1964): 35; "Welded Vierendeel A441 Trusses Frame Library," *Engineering News-Record* 168 (February 15, 1962): 54-55.

<sup>137</sup> Martin Merrick, "Washington Bridge Will Be Year Late," *Minneapolis Star*, September 19, 1964.

<sup>138</sup> "Old Bridge Not Missed by Faculty, Students," *Minnesota Daily*, February 14, 1973; Jon Gordon, "Bridge Was Intended to Serve as Focal Point," *Minnesota Daily*, September 18, 1989; Thomas Douty, "Washington Avenue Bridge Receives Annual Makeover," *Minnesota Daily*, September 10, 1999; Hennepin County, Elevation drawing outlining the paint scheme for Bridge No. 9360, November 4, 1999, available at the Minnesota Department of Transportation, Bridges and Structures Department, Oakdale, Minnesota.

## Bridge Links and Highway Development west of the Washington Avenue Bridge

For many years, the Washington Avenue Bridge was part of State Trunk Highway 12. Because the alignment of the new bridge was south of the old bridge and its continuation westward on Washington Avenue in the Seven Corners area, new bridge approaches were required on the west side of the river. Plans in the Minnesota Department of Highways (now MnDOT) indicate that when the bridge was completed, the roadway west of the bridge extended to a point 75 feet east of Cedar Avenue. A ramp on either side of the road provided access to and from Cedar Avenue. Plans to construct a bridge on Cedar Avenue (Bridge No. 27030) that links the two Washington Avenue ramps were issued in 1967. The route of the roadway (T.H. 12) from the bridge was intended to extend westward under Cedar Avenue approximately along the line of Third Street South.<sup>139</sup>

Meanwhile the route of newly opened east-west Interstate 94 was located south of the bridge approach and T. H. 12 and was intended to link to the north-south route of Interstate 35W, still under construction through downtown Minneapolis. The old route of Washington Avenue from Seven Corners, west of Cedar Avenue, required a new bridge over the depressed interstate roadway. This bridge, No. 27881, was built in 1967, shortly before the new Cedar Avenue roadway bridge.<sup>140</sup>

The complex arrangement of highway routes and connections for Interstate 94, Interstate 35W, State Highway 55, and State Highway 12, were all part of what the Highway Department called the Hiawatha Interchange. Plans for the connecting roads and bridges were issued between 1968 and 1970. The northern section of the interchange provides the connections to the Washington Avenue Bridge and the University of Minnesota. Clearly the intent of the design was to provide access from downtown Minneapolis that was easier than the complicated route through Seven Corners, as well as allow for connections from Interstate 94 and Interstate 35W.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> State of Minnesota, Department of Highways, Trunk Highway No. 12-104, S.P. 2715-66, sheets 1 and 2, 1965, shows the west bridge approaches and the ramps along the new route of Washington Avenue (T. H. 12). The Cedar Avenue roadway bridge is shown in State of Minnesota, Department of Highways, Trunk Highway No. 12-104, S.P. 2715-74, 1967, sheets 1 and 2. An aerial photograph taken in 1968 shows the new Washington Avenue roadway ending short of Cedar Avenue, the flanking ramps leading up to Cedar Avenue, and the new Cedar Avenue roadway bridge.

<sup>140</sup> This bridge is shown on S.P. 2715-74 and the 1968 aerial photograph.

<sup>141</sup> Plans for the road connections and bridges of the Hiawatha Interchange are shown in State of Minnesota, Department of Highways, Trunk Highway No. 12-104, S.P. 2715-86, 1968, sheets 1 and 2 (microfilm roll 438); State of Minnesota, Department of Highways, Trunk Highway No. 35W-394, S.P. 2783-17, 1968, sheets 1 and 2 (microfilm roll 438); State of Minnesota, Department of Highways, Trunk Highway No. 35W-394 and 12-104, S.P. 2783-16 and 2715-75, 1970, sheets 1 and 2 (microfilm roll 438). Two aerial photographs from 1980 show the completed connections.

## Recommendation

The Washington Avenue Bridge is recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Properties listed in the register must meet at least one of four criteria. Properties eligible for Criterion A “are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.” A property eligible for Criterion B is “associated with the lives of persons significant to our past.” To be eligible for the Register under Criterion C, a property “must embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction,” represent the work of a master, possess high artistic values, or “represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.” Properties eligible under Criterion D have archeological value. In addition to the four criteria, properties may also relate to seven criteria considerations. The Washington Avenue Bridge is also evaluated under Criteria Consideration G—a property of exceptional importance that has achieved significance within the last fifty years.<sup>142</sup>

The Washington Avenue Bridge is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development. When the University of Minnesota was faced with the need to expand its campus, it chose an expansion across the Mississippi River because the City of Minneapolis and the Minnesota Highway Department could build a bridge that separated vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The community went to great trouble and expense to build a double-deck bridge with separate levels for pedestrians and vehicles to ensure the safety and easy movement of university students between the two campuses. The university also took its campus planning a step further by integrating buildings on both sides of the river with the new bridge’s structure. The university has continued this planning, including the Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum, built 1992-1993, and the Elmer L. Andersen Library, built 1997-1999.

The Washington Avenue Bridge is also eligible for listing under Criterion A in the area of Transportation. The original bridge was constructed to hold a streetcar line, and over several decades Washington Avenue developed into a major transportation artery within Minneapolis on both sides of the river. The route would not have been as important an east-west artery if a bridge did not carry it over the Mississippi River. The current Washington Avenue Bridge continues to serve as an important transportation link for the city between the two sides of the Mississippi River. Soon after the bridge opened, it was linked into underpasses and interchanges to provide easy access to downtown Minneapolis and two routes of the interstate highway system.

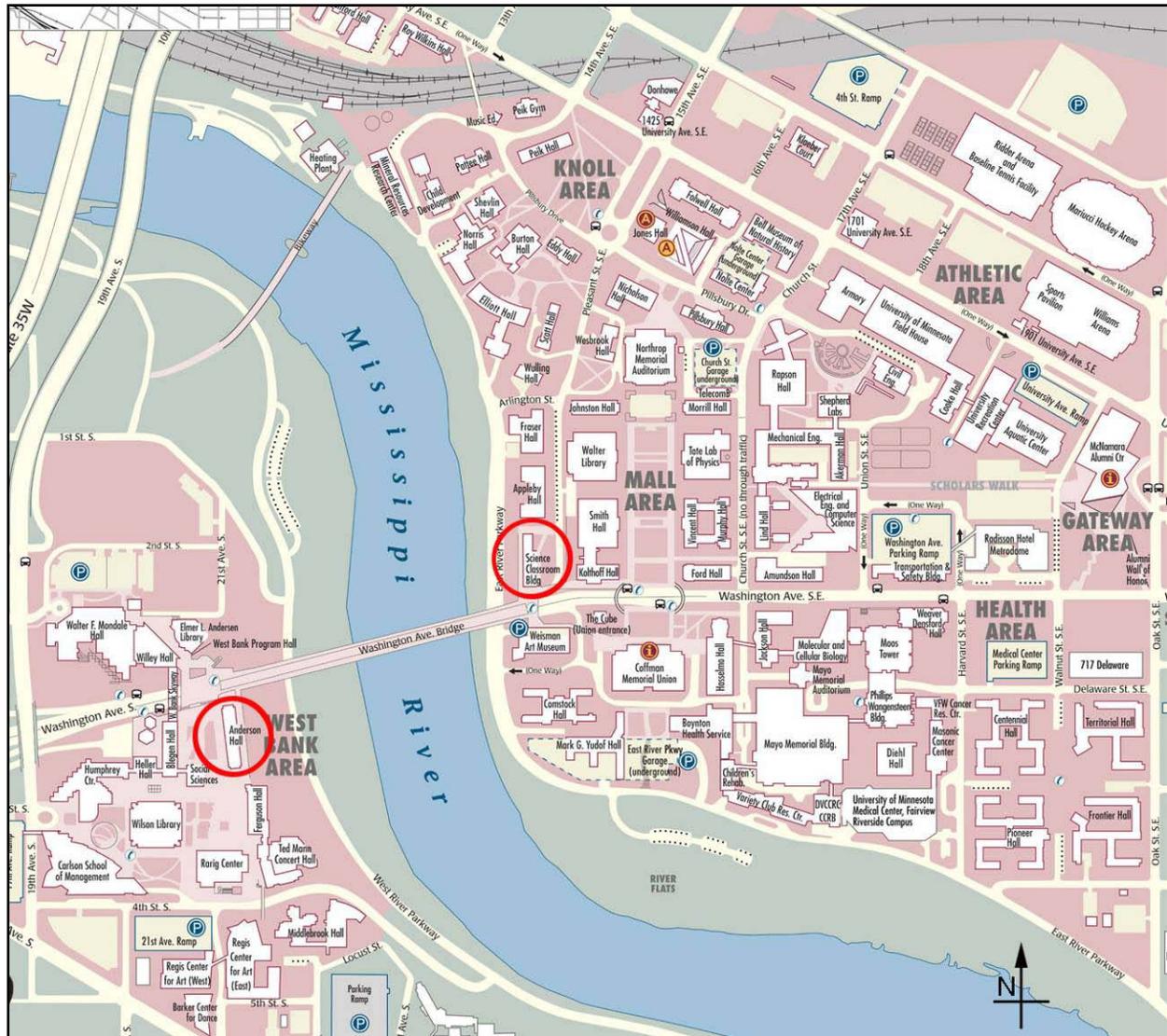
The Washington Avenue Bridge is eligible for National Register listing under Criterion C in the area of Engineering. The bridge is the only known double-deck bridge in Minnesota with a pedestrian upper deck and vehicular lower deck. Although the concept for the bridge was inspired by historic bridges, like the Ponte Vecchio in Florence, Italy, the design is executed in a very modern way, using recently developed materials and construction techniques.

At this time (2008), the bridge is less than fifty years old, so must be evaluated for the National Register under Criteria Consideration G. The bridge’s period of significance starts in 1960 when construction of the bridge began and ends in 1965 when the bridge was completed. After 2015,

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<sup>142</sup> *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 12, 14, 17, 21, 41.

the bridge will have met the fifty-year mark and the criterion consideration will no longer be applicable.

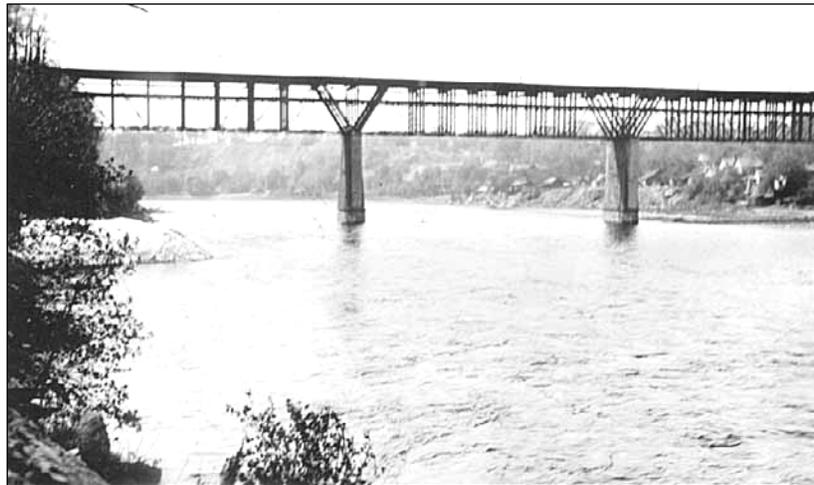


Map showing the location of the bridge.  
The two circled buildings were the first to be integrated into the bridge approaches.  
Subsequent buildings have also been connected to the bridge.

*University of Minnesota campus map*



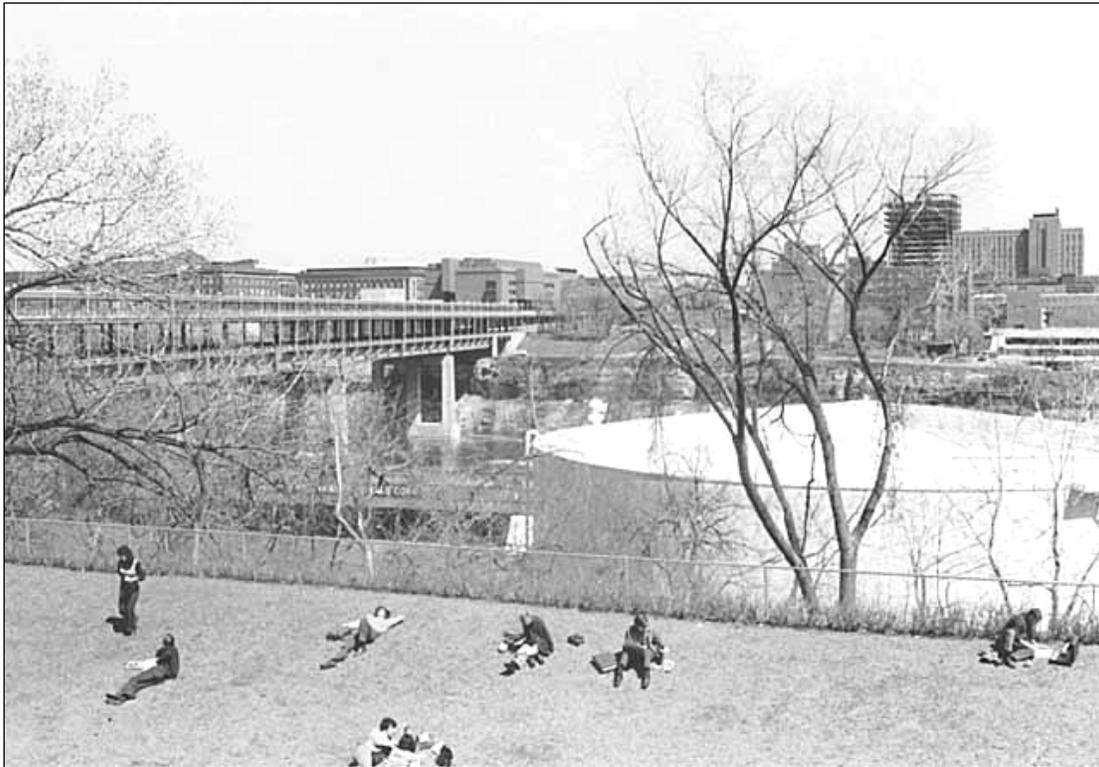
Original Washington Avenue Bridge in 1905 looking upstream  
*Photo: Minnesota Historical Society Collections*



Original Washington Avenue Bridge in 1912 looking downstream.  
*Photo: Minnesota Historical Society Collections*



Original Washington Avenue Bridge in ca. 1945 looking east.  
*Photo: Twin Cities by Trolley*



Rebuilt Washington Avenue Bridge from the West Bank campus in 1972.  
*Photo: Eugene Debs Becker, Minnesota Historical Society Collections*



Washington Avenue Bridge from West River Parkway, view upstream, in 2008.  
*Photo: Elizabeth Gales*



Approach to Washington Avenue Bridge, view to west, in 2008.  
*Photo: Elizabeth Gales*



Upper level of Washington Avenue Bridge, view to east, in 2008.  
*Photo: Elizabeth Gales*



The Science Classroom Building on the East Bank, view to west, in 2008.  
*Photo: Elizabeth Gales*



Anderson Hall on the West Bank, view to west, in 2008.  
*Photo: Elizabeth Gales*



This 1968 aerial photograph shows the new road bridges on Cedar Avenue and Washington Avenue over the depressed roadway for I-35W, as well as the west approach to the Washington Avenue Bridge and the adjacent ramps leading to Cedar Avenue.

*Photo: MnDOT*



Plans for the Hiawatha Interchange, 1970, showing the connecting roads and bridges. The connection to the Washington Avenue Bridge is on the upper right.  
 Source: MnDOT, Microfilm Roll 438

## Timeline for the Depression of Washington Avenue

### Background

Washington Avenue extends through the University of Minnesota Mall Historic District. MnSHPO requested further information on changes to Washington Avenue in relation to the Washington Avenue Bridge.

### Important Dates

1884-

1885 Washington Avenue Bridge constructed for the Interurban Trolley Line (TCRT).<sup>143</sup>

1931 The University commissioned landscape architects Morrell and Nichols to plan for the increasing streetcar and automobile traffic. Their study, “Report on Campus Development,” had five key points, one of which called for the enclosure of Washington Avenue in a tunnel stretching from Harvard Street to East River Road. “Another consequence of this scheme made the space on the deck over Washington Avenue virtually flat.”<sup>144</sup>

1930s “The Morrell and Nichols report represented both a modernization of the program for the campus and a downsizing of grandiose architectural and landscape architectural gestures. In the December 1931 submittal, these ideas also focused on the enhanced pedestrian safety associated with the depression of Washington Avenue. Throughout the 1930s various schemes were suggested for Federal Works Progress Administration participation in depressing the Washington Avenue section of the mall; the most difficult obstacle to this plan was the War Department’s requirement that there be a fifty-five foot clearance on the east side of the river. As the June 10, 1935 letter from W. F. Holman, the supervising engineer of the University, to W. T. Middlebrook pointed out, this requirement would raise, not lower the elevation of Washington Avenue.”<sup>145</sup>

1939 Much of the Morrell and Nichols plan for the upper mall had been completed, “except for the failure to depress Washington Avenue . . . Approximately twenty feet of grade change from the mall to Washington Avenue, shown only partially depressed, was accommodated at the southwest corner of the upper mall by a double flight of stairs.”<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> John W. Diers and Aaron Isaacs, *Twin Cities by Trolley: The Streetcar Era in Minneapolis and St. Paul* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 197-201.

<sup>144</sup> Landscape Research, “Northrop Mall: The City Beautiful Campus Plan of the University of Minnesota,” *Designed Historic Landscape Evaluation*, submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society, October 2003, 53-54.

<sup>145</sup> Landscape Research, 54.

<sup>146</sup> Landscape Research, 54-55

- “Arthur Nichols studied the design of a cut-and-cover tunnel that would deck the space of Washington Avenue and create a continuous mall extending to the Union. He included twenty-four-foot lanes in each direction, plus forty-two feet for the street railway right of way.”<sup>147</sup>
- 1940 Two temporary wood-and-steel pedestrian bridges were built, apparently without the consultation of Morrell and Nichols, across Washington Avenue.<sup>148</sup>
- 1941 When “construction of a new Washington Avenue bridge seemed imminent; Morrell and Nichols weighed in with an opinion about the desirability of a double-deck bridge to be built in connection with the depression of Washington Avenue and the tunnel.”<sup>149</sup>
- 1942 “In 1942, the University proposed a \$3 million capital expenditure to construct the 900-foot tunnel to depress Washington Avenue; the rationale offered was that the ‘original Campus Plan of 1910 prepared by the late Cass Gilbert anticipated the construction of a tunnel through the campus so that all traffic would be underground. The Campus plan can never be finally finished until the tunnel through campus is completed.’ These claims about the Gilbert idea for the grade of Washington Avenue were, of course, inaccurate.”<sup>150</sup>
- 1945 The university presented a resolution to the Minneapolis City Council Post-war Progress Committee to urge the rebuilding of the Washington Avenue Bridge. “A desire for a campus completely integrated and unified, without any through traffic of any kind, was the principal reason presented by the University group for their stand through the resolution made by the Regents.” The university wanted the bridge moved downstream. They concluded that “the reconstruction of the Washington Avenue bridge at its present location would make necessary, in University interests, the subsequent construction of a closed tunnel through the University campus which would be costly in construction and operation.”<sup>151</sup>
- 1946 “Herman Olson of the Minneapolis Planning Commission proposed to depress Washington Avenue through the campus but deck only the portion of the mall; this drew an angry response from Arthur Nichols.”<sup>152</sup>
- 1954 The city and the university came to an agreement on a two-level bridge to replace the Washington Avenue Bridge. “The lower deck would be an expressway for intercity, through-campus traffic of trucks and buses. That traffic would be carried through the campus from the river bank to Oak Street in a tunnel.”<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Landscape Research, 56

<sup>148</sup> Landscape Research, 57.

<sup>149</sup> Landscape Research, 59

<sup>150</sup> Landscape Research, 59.

<sup>151</sup> “University Asks New Bridge Site,” *Minnesota Daily*, January 23, 1945.

<sup>152</sup> Landscape Research, 60.

<sup>153</sup> “Double-deck Bridge OKd by ‘U’ & City,” *Minneapolis Star*, December 9, 1954.

- 1955 The City of Minneapolis proposed a new two-level bridge to the state legislature. “The upper level of this bridge would supply local traffic between the university—a community of 25,000 persons in itself—and the Minneapolis loop. The lower level, constructed as a tunnel, would cut completely under the university campus area to service through traffic between Minneapolis and St. Paul. . . . This plan ties in with an old idea at the University of Minnesota itself, of developing a complete campus free of through traffic.”<sup>154</sup>
- 1957 A newspaper article offered an initial sketch of the bridge and a description of the bridge as if traveling the new Washington Avenue route in a car. “Our car moves east through the tunnel under the university mall now, past two bus depots, one at Church Street, and gradually upward till we leave the tunnel at the Washington and University Avenue ‘Y.’”<sup>155</sup>
- 1960 “On the east end the new span will cross over a depressed East River Road and then move to grade on Washington Av. as it crosses the campus.” “At some future time it is hoped by the university and the state highway department to tunnel the thoroughfare beneath the entire east section of the campus.”<sup>156</sup>
- 1964 “Plans for a \$3.4 million four-block tunnel running from the east end of the new Washington Av. bridge to Harvard St. near the University of Minnesota parking ramp are being studied by University officials and the Minnesota state highway department.”
- “The tunnel would carry motor and bus traffic. . . . Elevators would connect the lower level with the campus. There would be service lanes and pedestrian walkways on the ground level where Washington Av. now exists.”<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Frank Murray, “City, State Hassle over Bridge,” *Minneapolis Star*, December 12, 1955.

<sup>155</sup> Herm Sittard, “River Span May Rank with Great,” *Minneapolis Star*, November 7, 1957.

<sup>156</sup> Abe Altowitz, “New Washington Av. Span Nears Reality,” *Minneapolis Star*, March 16, 1960.

<sup>157</sup> “‘U’ and Highway Officials Study Plan for Four-Block Tunnel,” *Minneapolis Star*, September 30, 1964.

2002 Bridges clad in stainless-steel replaced the two wood pedestrian bridges that crossed Washington Avenue.<sup>158</sup>

“The recently redesigned terrace surrounding Coffman Memorial Union consists of a concrete plaza edged with period revival light fixtures (approximately 10 feet in height) that rest on overscaled bases. The lights are set in a lawn panel on the south retaining wall of Washington Avenue. In the 2002-3 design by Ellerbe Becket, twenty-nine black ash were planted on small hillocks just beyond the footprint of the underground garage framing the terrace, the lawn, and the Coffman facade. All vestiges of earlier Art Deco beds (ca. 1941), circulation, and the small pavilions that led to the underground parking area have been eliminated. The grade depression and wall construction at Washington Avenue also eliminated all of the original grade crossings.”<sup>159</sup>

“The landscape of the lower mall around Coffman Memorial Union has been altered several times since its Art Deco plaza was installed in the 1940s. Most notably, new buildings and the overhaul of the Union, one that stripped the interior and much of the interior of its Art Deco character, was undertaken in the 1970s. Another Coffman remodeling that included the complete removal of the Art Deco plaza and parking garage entrances on the plaza and the construction of new pedestrian bridges and reconstruction of Washington Avenue, was designed by Ellerbe Becket and completed in 2002.”<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Landscape Research, 12.

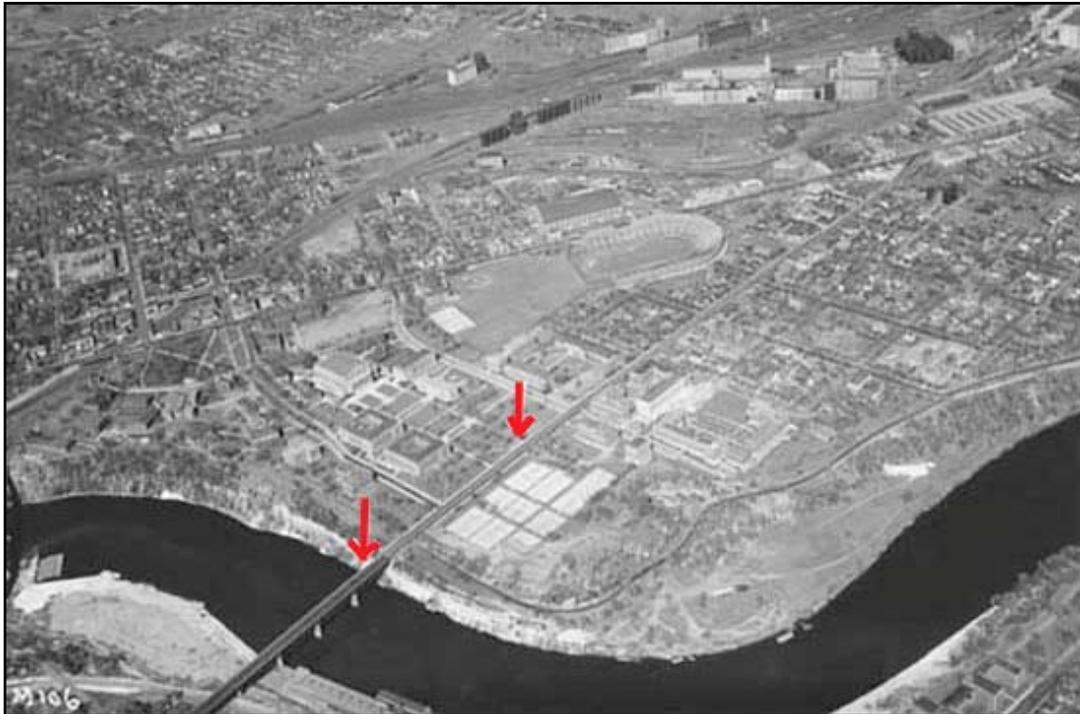
<sup>159</sup> Landscape Research, 14.

<sup>160</sup> Landscape Research, 66.



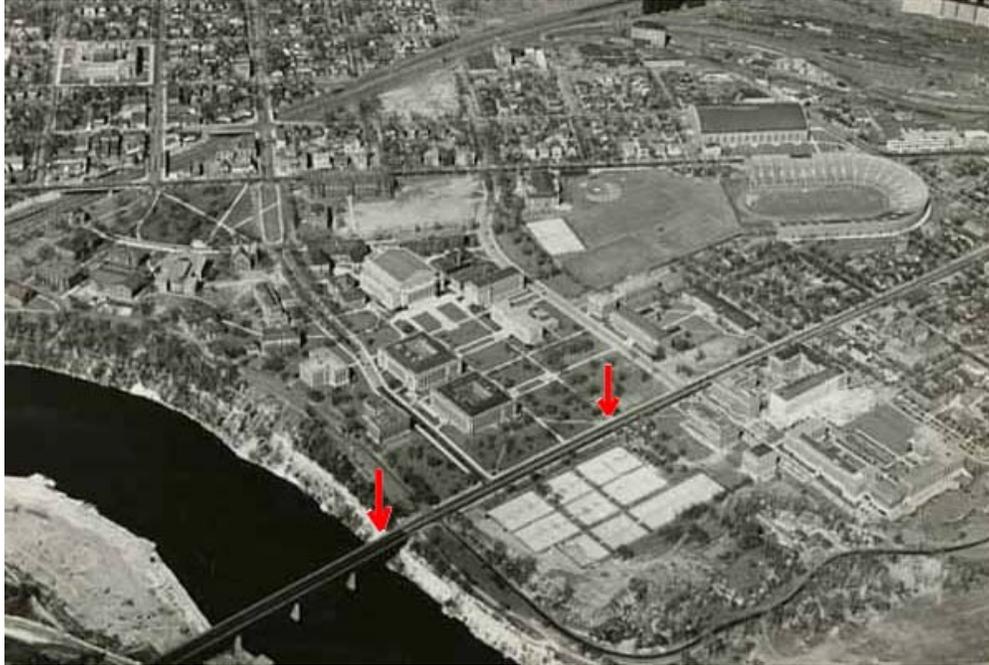
War Savings Stamps billboard on University of Minnesota campus facing Washington Avenue, 1918

*Photo: F. H. Holbrook, Minnesota Historical Society Collections*



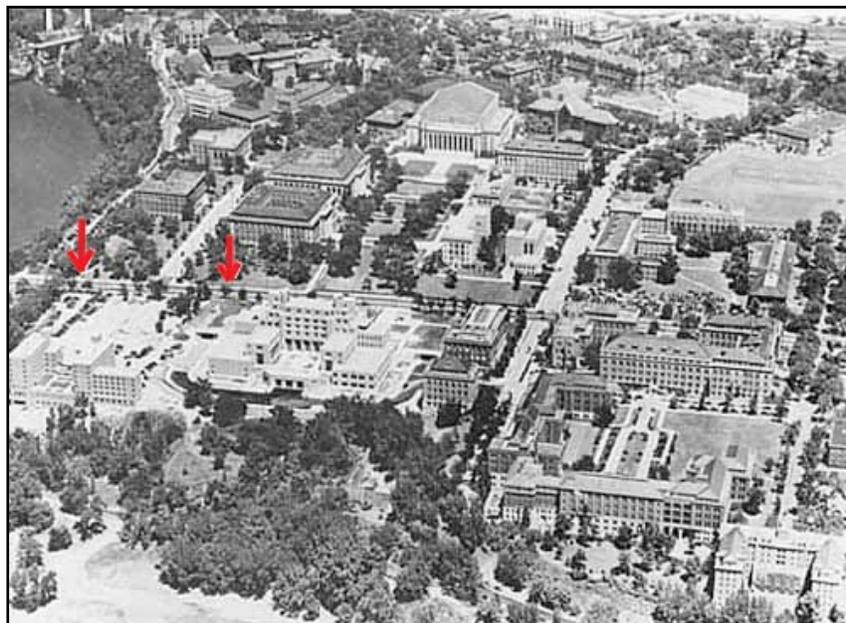
Aerial view of University of Minnesota, ca. 1935, red arrows point to Washington Avenue

*Photo: Minnesota Historical Society Collections*



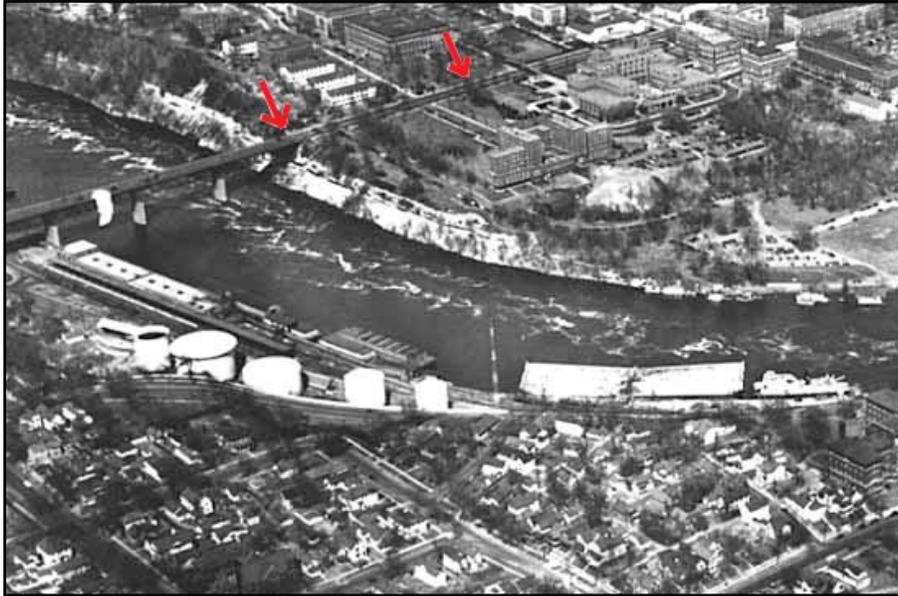
Aerial view of University of Minnesota, ca. 1935, red arrows point to Washington Avenue

*Photo: Minnesota Historical Society Collections*



Aerial view of University of Minnesota, ca. 1940, red arrows point to Washington Avenue

*Photo: Minnesota Historical Society Collections*



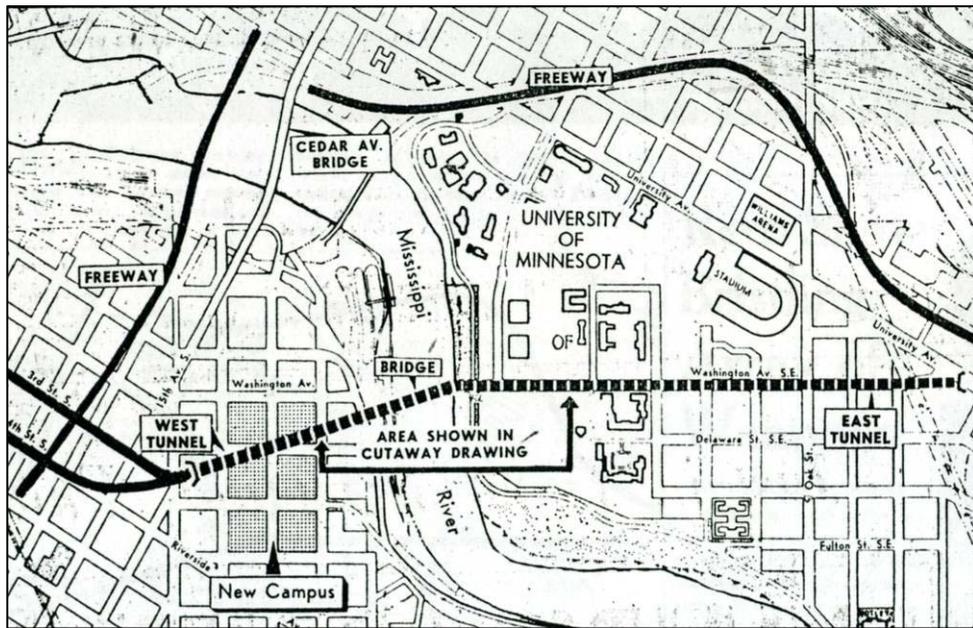
Aerial view of University of Minnesota, January 7, 1950, red arrows point to Washington Avenue

*Photo: Norton and Peel, Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

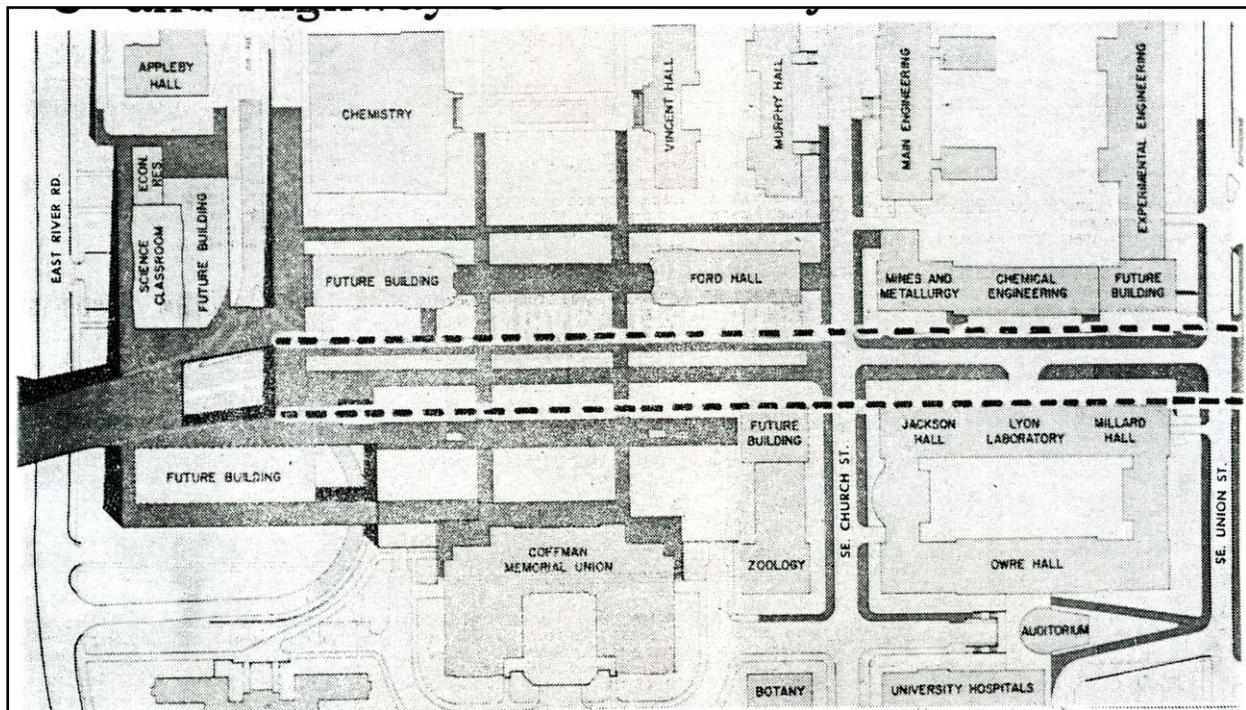


Aerial view of University of Minnesota, August 14, 1956, red arrows point to Washington Avenue

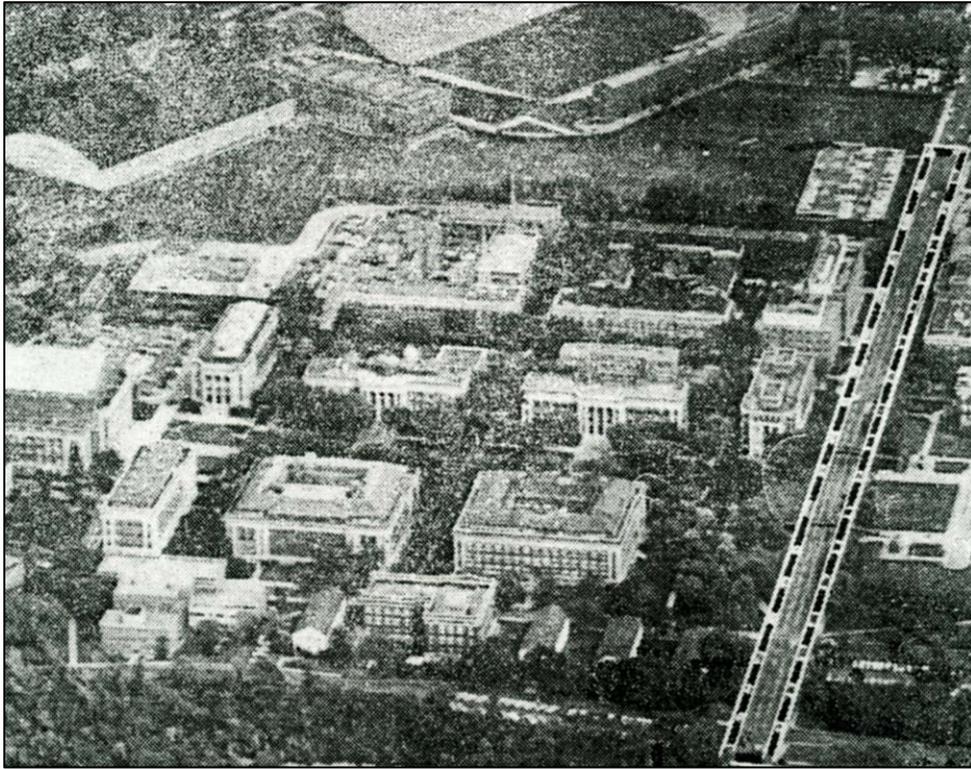
*Photo: Norton and Peel, Minnesota Historical Society Collections*



Drawing showing the location of a tunnel.  
 From Herm Sittard, "River Span May Rank with Great," *Minneapolis Star*, November 7, 1957



Drawing showing the location of a tunnel.  
 "U" and Highway Officials Study Plan for Four-Block Tunnel," *Minneapolis Star*,  
 September 30, 1964.



The tunnel location superimposed on an aerial photo of the campus.  
“‘U’ and Highway Officials Study Plan for Four-Block Tunnel,” *Minneapolis Star*,  
September 30, 1964.