



tour **SAINT PAUL**

payne
avenue



immigration
history
mainstreet

immigrationhist

St. Paul is known for its “Main Street” commercial districts that grew to serve the immigrants who settled the city’s neighborhoods a century ago. One of the liveliest of these districts is the East Side’s Payne Avenue, known in the 1930s as the “downtown of northeastern Ramsey County.”

Set on the hills overlooking downtown St. Paul and the Mississippi River, the East Side has always been separated from the rest of the city, first by the marshy ground of the Trout Brook and Phalen Creek beds on the east side of Downtown, and then by the railroads that followed those corridors. Payne Avenue became the primary business district for the East Side, serving its many neighborhoods.

If one characteristic defined the East Side throughout its history, it is that it has been a place for newcomers. In the late nineteenth century, the Irish, Germans, Swedes and Italians made the East Side their home. Today both new Americans - from Asia, Latin America and Africa - along with many long-time St. Paul residents are revitalizing Payne Avenue with the same spirit that others showed when they first arrived.

“Global Beat on Main Street” identifies Payne Avenue today- a street that provides central meeting places, remains mindful of its heritage and is anxious to incorporate new cultures that enrich this strong, growing part of St. Paul.



torymainstreet

The Role of Phalen Creek

By the time St. Paul was settled in the 1850s, Phalen Creek had cut a corridor from Lake Phalen to the Mississippi River just east of Downtown. The meandering creek was destined to have a long-lasting impact on the East Side neighborhood -- its water power and the valley that the creek created both led to the economic investment that brought in settlers.

The creek provided the water for the Drewry Brewery and the Excelsior Brewery (later Hamm's) by the 1860s. After the Civil War, two railroads were built in the Phalen Creek valley, and attracted industries that brought people to the East Side.

The Seeger Refrigerator Company began at Wells and Arcade in 1910, merged with Whirlpool in 1955, and remained until 1984. In 1909 a fledgling firm from Two Harbors opened its sandpaper-making plant at East Seventh and Arcade. From this beginning, Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing (now 3M) became a business anchor on the East Side. Known to several generations simply as "The Mining," 3M is still a major employer and corporate leader in St. Paul.

The changing economic scene since the 1970s led to closure of many of the old industries, such as Whirlpool and the Hamm's Brewery (although there are efforts to renovate the brewery buildings). But in the last decade, the new four-lane Phalen Boulevard follows the route taken by the railroads 120 years ago, and is providing the impetus to clean up old industrial uses and reclaim the land for new investment served by efficient transportation. The railroads in the Phalen Creek valley and Phalen Boulevard today both created an economic base and jobs —factors that brought working people to settle the neighborhood.



Lower Payne and Railroad Island

After the Civil War, railroads surrounded Brunson's neighborhood, which later became known as Railroad Island. The neighborhood continued to grow and still contains Victorian houses built in the late nineteenth century on Burr, Minnehaha, DeSoto, Mt. Ida, and other streets.



The Railroad Island neighborhood also grew from its proximity to the Phalen Creek ravine (Swede Hollow) to the east. By the 1900s it became a center for Italian immigrants, some of whom started in Swede Hollow before moving up to the street. In 1911, St. Ambrose Church was started to serve the Italian residents in the neighborhood. By that time, Railroad Island was filled with Italian restaurants and stores, with business conducted in the Italian language. Long-time food and beverage businesses, including Morelli's and Yarusso Brothers restaurant, date back to the early twentieth century and continue to operate on Lower Payne Avenue today. The Christ Child Society, forerunner of today's



Merrick Community Services, was founded in 1908 as a settlement house to help build the community and continues to provide services to East Side residents today from its location at Minnehaha and Edgerton.

Today, Railroad Island again provides homes to new Americans, including Latino and Asian families, as well as African-Americans. The Hope Community Academy, in the former Hamm's Brewery office building at Minnehaha and Payne, is a charter school founded to serve Hmong students on the East Side.

Years ago, the Italian community gathered to eat, drink and play bocce at places like Yarusso's. The original family still runs the place and serves up traditional Italian fare, but are now motorcycle enthusiasts hosting regular bike nights! An authentic neighborhood gathering spot since 1933, Yarusso's has seen it all and has the pictures to prove it. The floor to ceiling photo collection of Italian- American East Side History alone makes it worth a stop.

www.yarusso.com.



Down in the Hollow

Swede Hollow

In St. Paul, popular history has always identified Swedes with East Side neighborhoods. As early as the 1860s, newly arriving Swedish immigrants made their way to settle in the abandoned shacks of fur trappers on the banks of the Phalen Creek ravine. Called "Svenska Dalen," or Swedish Dale, the modest neighborhood soon was known as Swede Hollow.

The Swedes fixed up the old shanties, added on rooms, and built privies for sanitary facilities. Bridges were constructed across the creek, which served as the equivalent of an open sewer. Many of the men in the Hollow were day laborers, climbing the long stairway out of the ravine each day to work. Women took in sewing or laundry, and





One Swede Hollow settler remembered winter evenings in their house: "Sometimes he (father) sang folk tunes accompanied by his dragspel (accordion) which he kept under the bed. In the evenings friends often came to share the warmth, drink coffee, take snuff or smoke their curved Swedish pipes. Mother spun wool or knitted and listened to the talk from her place in a corner under a picture of King Oscar II of Sweden." (Nels M. Hokanson)

often cared for boarders in the home in addition to their families. The high point of Swedish settlement in the Hollow was around 1900. By 1915, most Swedes moved out of the ravine and north along Payne Avenue. But Swede Hollow continued to be an initial entry point for new residents, and Italians replaced Swedes in the Hollow. Arriving by trains, many immigrants were met by Joseph Yarusso, one of the first Italians in the Hollow, who took it upon himself to help the newcomers. The Italians, like the Swedes before them, eventually moved up the hill and became largely identified with the Railroad Island neighborhood.

Mexican Americans, who came to St. Paul beginning in the 1920s, inhabited Swede Hollow until the 1950s. In 1956, the City Health Department found that Phalen Creek was contaminated and also recognized the health hazards of housing with no sewer or water facilities. The last residents were moved out and the City burned the remaining buildings in the ravine. The area was ignored and remained wild and overgrown for many years with the creek piped underground. In the 1970s, residents, the City and the St. Paul Garden Club joined together to create a nature center in the old ravine. Today, the Swede Hollow Park can be accessed at Drewry and Beaumont.

The unique character of Swede Hollow provided inspiration to local artists. Many of these original sketches, engravings and paintings are currently housed at the Minnesota History Center. Go to www.mnhs.org to plan a visit.



Off the Avenue

Other things to do in the area

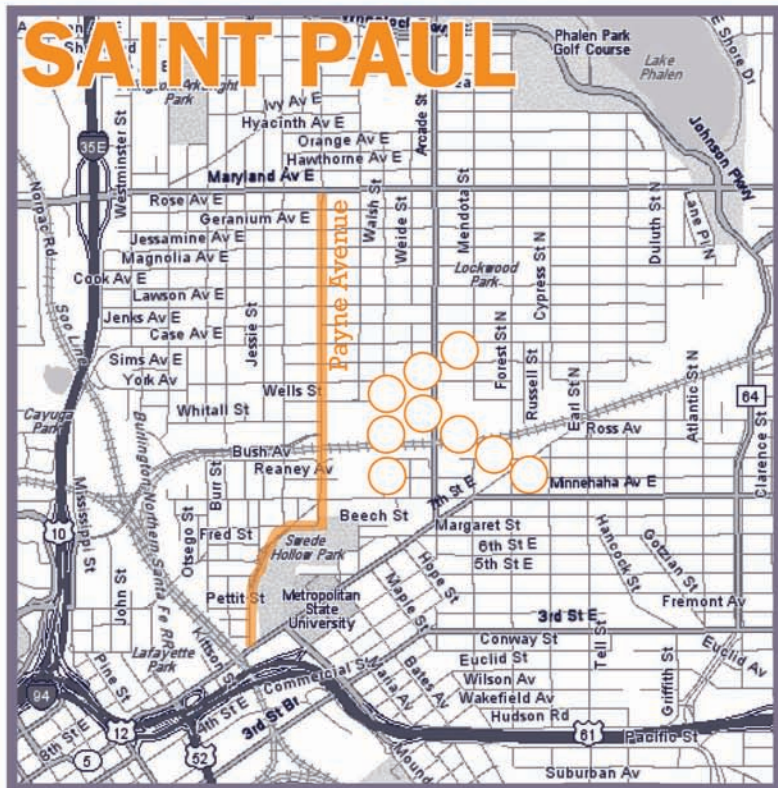
Just four blocks east is Arcade Street, where more small taverns, restaurants and shops can be found, as well as activities as such as indoor rock climbing, at Vertical Endeavors. The Polish American Club (PAC) is also worth a visit. Organized in 1928 by a growing Polish American Community on the East Side, today it welcomes members from all cultural backgrounds. The club is open Sundays to the public to hang out and play games, or just visit. Weekly events include Friday Fish Fries and live music and annually the club sponsors the May Day Celebration, Pow Wow, Oktoberfest, Booya Fall Festival, and others.

Phalen Park and Lake, just a couple miles to the northeast, is a centerpiece of the East Side. Since about 1900, area residents and visitors have enjoyed canoeing, swimming, fishing, or just relaxing here. There are several types of boat rentals, a golf course, a swimming beach and also trails for running and walking. Call Saint Paul Parks and Recreation 651-266-6400 for information.

At the Minnesota History Center, check out Open House, a major new exhibit opening in January 2006. It tells the stories of the people who lived in a house in “Railroad Island” --from the first German immigrants through the Italians, African Americans, and now Hmong who succeeded them. In this hands-on experience, visitors become detectives, piecing together the lives of the families who lived at 470 Hopkins Street. This seemingly ordinary house opens up to reveal a host of human stories. The exhibit runs through 2014.



SAINT PAUL



* Bus route 64 serves Payne Avenue. See www.metrotransit.com for schedule.

HISTORIC SAINT PAUL

Celebrate Heritage | Renew Neighborhoods | Strengthen Community



This guide was developed by Historic Saint Paul as part of the "Tour Saint Paul" interpretive guide series highlighting the cultural and historic resources of the city's neighborhoods. See www.historicsaintpaul.org for more information. It was made possible by:

City of Saint Paul Cultural STAR Program
 Minnesota Humanities Commission
 National Trust for Historic Preservation with funding
 provided by John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
 Ideal Printers www.idealprint.com



Many thanks to the Minnesota Historical Society for historic photos, East Side Neighborhood Development Company, Ramsey County Historical Society, Kitty Anderson, Mark Jensen and many others who contributed insight and knowledge.

Payne Avenue

Commercial Heart of East Side

“... Payne Avenue had it all: groceries, butchers, ice cream parlors, diners, bakeries, a blacksmith, an icehouse, coal sellers and more. The drug store would issue credit and when the bill was paid, you were given a bag of candy...” -Kitty Anderson, Owner of the Church Bookstore, still open after being in business since 1936.



Rice W. Payne arrived from Virginia in 1856 and while in St. Paul, made a 20-acre land investment outside of downtown. Payne soon returned to Virginia and served in the Confederate Army, but ensured his legacy in St. Paul by naming a street after himself.

Payne's development sat vacant until the 1880s when a viaduct over the railroads and streetcars created a path to Payne Avenue and the commercial district began to develop. Many of the early buildings constructed before 1900 are still distinctive on Payne Avenue.



LEFT: 932-936 Payne: Built 1900; housed the H.F. Peterson Dry Goods Company; later the Johnson and Sons Mortuary.

960 Payne: Built 1886; one of the best preserved and most architecturally distinctive buildings on the Avenue. The two-story building retains a tiled Mansard roof with gabled dormers and an ornate

oriel window with a tiny gable-roofed balcony on the Case Avenue façade.

BELOW: 963-965 Payne (Payne Avenue State Bank): Built in 1923, the Bank was designed by W. L. Alban in the Beaux Arts style. The only architect-designed building on the Avenue, the two-story brick building has a feeling of permanence and solidity created by the four colossal Ionic columns on the façade, with a large cornice enhancing the Classical styling. From its location on a central corner of the business district, the State Bank building is an important visual landmark on the Avenue.

987-989 Payne: Built 1897; housed Palmquist Brothers Grocers and Anderson Brothers Meat Market. Recently, the building won an award for rehab from the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission.



The high point of Scandinavian immigration to St. Paul coincided with the development of the Payne Avenue business district, and Swedes were prominent as businessmen along the Avenue from the 1880s to the World War II era. As late as 1937, a Swedish magazine devoted an entire issue to the Twin Cities, with one article entitled “The All-Swedish Street in St. Paul: Payne Avenue.” The commercial buildings on Payne Avenue are a visible remnant of the strong Swedish community that was present during its first 75 years.

Just as Payne Avenue provided a business district for the Swedes, today the street offers a colorful variety of cultures in its stores, services and restaurants.

ABOVE: The East Side Arts Council organizes activities from workshops to outdoor entertainment programs throughout the year visit them at 977 Payne.





Italian breadmakers.



Making the traditional Scandinavian Lutfisk, 1936.

There have always been cross-cultural dynamics at play in the Payne Avenue neighborhood. Take Serlin's Café for an example (open since 1946, and still on the Avenue): it's been a multi-cultural gathering place since way back. The story goes that "it was started by a Jewish family, whose son married a Swede, who served up legendary egg and tuna sandwiches to the Friday Catholic regulars."

Today, a stroll up Payne still presents a collage of different ethnicities on the Avenue. The evidence is in the red and white "boot of Italy" banners on Lower Payne, followed further up the street by a shiny, new Mexican supermarket living next door to a Thai restaurant in a rehabbed structure originally built by a Swede.

Independent, entrepreneurial spirit and authenticity also help create the sense of place here. You won't find the big chains, here: there is a bookstore of Christian literature that has been on the avenue since 1936, and a shoe store specializing in "safety boots" since 1948, where Doc Marten's were probably sold as orthopedics before they were hip. You still get your free piece of pie with every meal at the corner café, and you can get 3 made-fresh-daily corn tortilla shells for a dollar at the panaderia.

The long standing "mom and pop" businesses are a testament to the resolve of owners and loyalty of patrons, to stick it out through the years of urban flight. Now another wave of immigrants bring new determination and upstart enterprises to the community, and Payne Avenue enters an exciting period of revitalization and interest in preserving its cultural history.

Harvest Festival

Payne Avenue annually hosts one of the oldest and most well-known St. Paul street fairs, the Harvest Festival. The East Side Commercial Club, a group of local businessmen, inaugurated the Payne Avenue Street Fair and Carnival in 1906 as a way to attract business. They published a souvenir booklet highlighting the contributions and business enterprises of community leaders who they called the “brains and sinew of this district.” Queen Anna Skon presided over the first “Carnival,” the beginning of a tradition that continues today. The Harvest Festival is typically held on the third week in September.



RIGHT: Payne Avenue looking South from Jenks 1952 Harvest Festival.

BELOW: Farmers' market shoppers are serenaded with music from the Andes.



Farmers' Market

The Payne Avenue Farmers' Market usually takes place every Tuesday around the beginning of July through the end of October. The Market is a great spot to pick up produce and



flowers, and catch live music later in the day. It also fosters ongoing entrepreneurship by local residents and farmers; reduces the cost of purchasing fresh foods; and serves as a physical symbol of neighborhood cohesiveness. See www.esndc.org for current schedule.