

# Little Falls' Historic Contexts

Final Report of an Historic  
Preservation Planning Project

Submitted to the  
Little Falls Heritage Preservation Commission  
And the City of Little Falls  
July 1994

Prepared by:  
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# INTRODUCTION

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# INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

This historic context study of Little Falls was commissioned in 1993 by the Little Falls Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) and the City of Little Falls. The study was conducted by Gemini Research, and historic preservation consulting firm working under contract with the HPC.

The Little Falls Heritage Preservation Commission was created in 1992 to help enhance the quality of life within the city of Little Falls by encouraging the study, preservation, and reuse of the city's historical and cultural resources. As an advisory board to the City Council, the HPC works with members of the public, elected officials, the business community, and the city's institutions to ensure that plans for growth and change in Little Falls will include sensitivity to historic resources. Historic buildings, archaeological sites, and parks and open spaces which are important to the cultural heritage of the city may fall within the Commission's interest.

During the past two years, the Preservation Commission has been focusing its efforts on Little Falls' commercial buildings. In 1993 the HPC completed a project to inventory 155 commercial structures in downtown Little Falls. In 1993-1994 the HPC nominated a portion of downtown Little Falls to the National Register of Historic Places as an historic commercial district. The City of Little Falls and the HPC are now helping property owners rehabilitate historic properties within the downtown historic district through financial assistance programs, tax incentives, and other economic development initiatives.

This historic context study is the first step in a comprehensive planning process being undertaken by the Commission. The thoughtful management of Little Falls' cultural resources requires an understanding of what those resources are, how prevalent they are in the community, and how significant they may be at a local and statewide level. The purpose of this study is to organize the complex story of Little Falls' history into a set of several major historic themes. These themes identify the economic and social forces which shaped the city and influenced the construction of its historic buildings. The context study will be used by the HPC to help organized future historic sites survey, planning, historic site designation, and educational programming activities.

As the next step in this planning process, the HPC is preparing to comprehensively inventory historic sites throughout the city. The survey will bring to the Commission detailed information about the numbers, types, location, condition, and physical characteristics of Little Falls' historic properties. Buildings, structures, objects, open spaces, and landscape features may be included. The survey will enable the HPC to evaluate specific properties against the larger pool of sites within the city, identify properties which may be rare or endangered, allocated scarce resources sensibly, and justify significance with accurate information. The forthcoming survey will be organized around the historic themes developed during this context study.

## INTRODUCTION

Nine Heritage Preservation Commission members were involved in the context study—Barbara Abrahamson, Agnes Girtz, Jack Josephson, Donald Opatz, Roger Peterson, Art Warner, John Washlarowicz, Richard Carlson (ex-officio), and Cathy VanRisseghem (ex-officio). Conducting the study on behalf of the HPC was Gemini Research, a Historic preservation consulting firm. Susan Granger and Scott Kelly wrote the study with assistance from Kay Grossman, David Weihrauch, and Patricia Murphy. Research assistance support was provided by Jan Warner and Bruce Mellor of the Morrison County Historical Society and Richard Carlson and Susan Haugen of the City of Little Falls.

This context study is recommended by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) of the Minnesota Historical Society as an important component of the preservation planning of local heritage preservation commissions. The study was partially funded by the SHPO using funds granted by the National Park Service. The remainder of the funding was provided by the City of Little Falls.

## ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT

This historic context study is not intended to serve as a history of Little Falls. Instead, its central purpose is to identify some of the major events, forces, and individuals which created the city's cultural resources, and to tie events in Little Falls into a larger statewide and national perspective.

In the chapters that follow, a brief narrative introduces each historic theme and provides examples of the kinds of topics and buildings which are included. The historic sketches are only an introduction to each theme—local historians, students, residents, and others have written excellent and detailed studies of many topics mentioned in this report. Many of these works are listed in this report's bibliography.

In addition to an historic sketch, each chapter includes a list of the kinds of properties which fall within each context, a list of properties already designated as historic sites, preliminary HPC goals for the context, and a bibliography. Users of this report will notice that some of the contexts overlap, and that many historic buildings in Little Falls will fall within the scope of two or more contexts.

It is intended that all sections of this historic context study be revised and updated as more information about Little Falls; historic buildings is gathered, and as the HPC progresses further in its planning process.



# NATIVE AMERICANS AND EURO-AMERICAN CONTACT

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NATIVE AMERICANS AND  
EURO-AMERICAN CONTACT

# NATIVE AMERICANS AND EURO-AMERICAN CONTACT 9,500 B.C. – A.D. 1870

## HISTORIC SKETCH

This historic context encompasses the occupation of the present day Little Falls by Native Americans. It includes the occupation of the Little Falls area by prehistoric peoples (i.e., before written records, 9,500 B.C. – A.D. 1650), occupation of the area by Native Americans during and after their early contact with Europeans (A.D. 1650-1848); and the activities of early Euro-Americans who visited the area. The context's overall time span begins at 9,500 B.C., a current archaeological estimate of the first occupation of the area, and ends at 1870, the time by which most Native Americans left the area.

Most sites associated with this context are expected to be archaeological in nature, and therefore fall outside of the primary focus of this study, which includes the standing structures associated with the Euro-American settlement of Little Falls. This historic sketch is intended only to establish general parameters which will be used for the later development of this context.

Several archaeological sites in Morrison County and in the Little Falls area have been documented by archaeologists with the Minnesota Historical Society and the Institute for Minnesota Archaeology. Some of these sites are listed on the National Register and many others have been determined eligible for the National Register by the State Historic Preservation Office.

## NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Present day Little Falls is located near the southern edge of northern Minnesota's extensive pine forest in the transition zone where the mixed pine forests break open into small open prairies. Early inhabitants of Minnesota who arrived here after the receding glacier would have encountered spruce forest and newly formed lakes. After the initial reforestation of the area, the climate became warmer and drier and the Northern Plains' grasslands expanded to the east. Beginning about 3,000 B.C. the climate became cooler and wetter and the land reforested slowly, evolving into the vegetation pattern which was known by historic Native Americans (Johnson 1988, 1-5)

The region's natural environment provided a plentiful for indigenous peoples. By 2,000 B.C. Minnesotan's forests were essentially like they were at the time of the first Native American-European contact. The lakes and streams had abundant fish; the woods were dense with elk, whitetail deer, and wintering bison. Rivers provided building materials, fuel, and routes for water travel. In addition to the Mississippi, the Elk River, Pike reek, Swan River, the Platte River, and numerous small streams are located near Little Falls and were landmarks and occupation sites for a succession of prehistoric and historic peoples.

Little Falls is located at one of the largest falls on the Mississippi north of St. Anthony (present day Minneapolis). The falls were known by the Ojibwe as "Kakabikans" meaning "the little squarely cut off rock, of little falls". The site was known by the French as "Petit Chutes" and by the English as "Little Falls" (Mellor 1986, 6). The site was revered by Native Americans who, according to early accounts, painted the large rock outcroppings near the falls. The most well known, "Painted Rock", was located about one-fourth mile south of the falls on the eastern bank of the river. The original

appearance and configuration of the falls and riverbanks were altered as Euro-Americans changed the flow of the river when they began to build dams, boomage areas, canals, and ditches at the site (Mellor 1986, 7).

## PREHISTORIC NATIVE AMERICANS

Archaeologists believe that the site of present day Little Falls may have been occupied by peoples of the Paleo-Indian (9,500 B.C. through 6,000 B.C.) and Archaic (6,000 B.C. through 500 B.C. traditions.

The earliest human activity in the Little Falls area would likely fall within the following Paleo-Indian and Archaic archaeological contexts developed by the state Historic Preservation Office:

- Paleo-Indian Tradition (9,500-6,000 B.C.)
  - Clovis Context
  - Folsom Context
  - Lanceolate Point Eastern Fluted Context
  
- Archaic Tradition (6,000-500 B.C.)
  - Prairie Archaic Context
  - Riverine Archaic Context
  - Lake Forest Archaic Context

These two broad cultural eras comprise Minnesota's early prehistoric period, which ends about 500 B.C. It is believed that these people were primarily gatherers and hunters. Their sites primarily contain flaked stone tools, a few copper tools, and later, ground stone tools.

The next period of the area's prewritten history, termed the Middle Prehistoric period, dates from approximately 500 B.C. to A.D. 900 and is associated with the Woodland Tradition. Pottery and earthen burial mounds in linear, circular, and more rarely, effigy forms are some of the enduring characteristics of these cultures. Woodland Tradition burial mounds remain in Morrison County, although some have been plowed, bulldozed and otherwise destroyed. Winchell's *The Aborigines of Minnesota (1911)* lists several examples of earthworks and mounds in Morrison County and indicates that there are probably numerous other examples in the area. Some of these circular and elongated mound groups were located at the edge of, or within, the current city limits of Little Falls (Winchell 1911, 324-329). Historic contexts for this period include the following:

- Woodland Tradition (500 B.C. – A.D. 1650)
  - Early Woodland Context
  - Havana-Related Context
  - Brainerd Context
  - Central Minnesota Traditional Woodland Context

The Late Prehistoric period of the State's pre-written history begins with the first intensive cultivation of crops around A.D. 900, and extends until 1650, the time of the arrival of the first Europeans. In Central Minnesota it encompasses the late Woodland and Mississippian traditions. The late Woodland and Mississippian people supplemented their hunting and fishing practices with crops such as corn, beans, and squash. In central Minnesota, wild rice, rather than corn served as the staple vegetable food. Late woodland and Mississippian occupation of the present day Little Falls area would likely fall within the statewide Kathio and Psinonami Historic contexts.

Archaeological sites in Morrison County have been examined and recorded by several Archaeologists, geologists, and historians of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries including Nathan Richardson, Newton Winchell, W. H. Holmes, F.W. Putnam, Theodore Lewis, Warren Upham, Frances Eliza Babbitt, and Jacob Brower, and later archaeologists such as those from the Institute for Minnesota Archaeology (Birk 1989, 19). Among these sites is Mill Island, within the Little Falls City limits. Archaeological evidence suggests that native peoples occupied the southwestern side of the island near the lower end of the original Little Falls rapids (Breakey 1982).

Another important site is the Belle Prairie Village site, located about four miles north of Little Falls. Archaeologists have found evidence of ceramic manufacture and the use of local stone materials. Burial mounds also were recorded near this site by Winchell in 1911. The Belle Prairie Village archaeological site is on the National Register.

The mid-18<sup>th</sup> century Fort Duquesne site, which is two miles north of Little Falls at the mouth of the Little Elk River and the Mississippi, contains evidence of occupation dating to circa 600-1000 A.D. The site also is on the National Register. (Fort Duquesne is also mentioned below.)

## CONTACT AND POST-CONTACT PERIOD

The occupation of the Little Falls area by historic Native Americans and the period of their first contact with Euro-Americans falls within the statewide historic contexts:

### Contact Period Contexts (A.D. 1650-1837)

#### Native American

Eastern Dakota Context (1650-1837)

Ojibwe Context (1650-1837)

#### Euro-American

French Context (1650-1803)

British Context (1763-1816)

### Post-Contact Period Context (A.D. 1837-1945)

Indian Communities and Reservations (1937-1934)

St. Croix Triangle lumbering (1830's-1900)

By the time of permanent Euro-American settlement at Little Falls in the mid-1840, members of the Ojibwe, Dakota, Winnebago, and Menominee tribal groups were present in the area. The history of these groups is too complex to be presented in this context study, and is described only briefly. By the mid-1600s northeastern Minnesota

West and south of Lake Superior was occupied by the Eastern Dakota, with a large population center at Lake Mille Lacs, about 45 miles northeast of present-day Little Falls. The Dakota lived in semi-permanent villages and hunted, fished trapped and gathered food such as wild rice, as well as cultivated some corn and squash. By the late 1680s, two of the bands, the Sisseton and the Wahpeton, had begun to move out of central Minnesota and onto the plains of southwestern and western Minnesota.

The Ojibwe, an Algonquin-speaking people, were living near the upper Great Lakes between Minnesota and Quebec in the 1600s. Like that of the Dakota, their economy was based largely on woodland resources obtained by hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering. The Ojibwe had by this time experienced more extensive contact with Euro-Americans than had the Dakota. Commerce with French fur traders since the early 1600s gave them an edge in the acquisition of European trade goods and weaponry. Beginning around 1679, they acquired the role of middlemen between French traders and the Dakota living in Minnesota. The Ojibwe supplied trade goods to the Dakota in exchange for the right to trap animals in Dakota-controlled Lakes and woods (Granger and Kelly 1990, E2).

Beginning in the 1730s the Ojibwe gradually encroached on the Dakota lands in northeastern Minnesota as they expanded their trapping territories. By the mid-1700s these areas included the forest and prairie transition area near Little Falls. At about the same time the Dakota, who had been moving south and southwest, began to trade with French traders in southeastern Minnesota directly. This eliminated the need for Ojibwe middlemen and set the stage for antagonism in Ojibwe-Dakota relations. Territorial battles were fought with the Dakota over the control of hunting areas and Ojibwe encroachment between the 1730s and circa 1850. After about 1850 a shaky peace between the Dakota and Ojibwe prevailed (Granger and Kelly 1990, E2).

Little Falls was located in the area whose control was contested by warring factions of Dakota and Ojibwe. This friction created a buffer zone between the groups which was essentially unoccupied by either between circa 1760 and 1800. In 1825 the U.S. Government negotiated a boundary line between Ojibwe and Dakota-controlled lands which ran diagonally across the state. This line ran southeast to northwest just south of Morrison County.

By the early 1800s, the Ojibwe were divided roughly into two large tribal groups, the Lake Superior and the Mississippi. The Ojibwe familial and village groupings were complex, with each tribal group being comprised of an array of related bands and smaller sub-bands living in at least 30 separate villages. The Mississippi groups included bands that lived near the Crow Wing, Snake, Rice, and Red rivers, and Gull, Pokegama, Sandy, Mille Lacs, Red, Winnibigoshish, Leech, Cass, and Otter Tail lakes in central and north central Minnesota (Granger and Kelly 1990, E2-E3).

The Little Falls area is associated with an important Ojibwe leader, Hole-in-the-Day, the Elder, or Pugnageship. Hole-in-the-Day was born circa 1801 and grew up in north central Minnesota. As an Ojibwe chief he was recognized for his skill in leading Ojibwe groups in their conflicts with the Dakota during the 1820s and 1830s, in arbitrating inter-tribal disputes, and in negotiating with the U.S. Government during a time when the interests of native groups and Euro-American settlers were inherently and sometimes violently at odds. Hole-in-the-Day was a leader in land cession treaty negotiations in 1837 and 1842 and was pivotal in the negotiation of the 1843 peace treaty between the Ojibwe and the Dakota (Mellor 1994).

Around 1830 Hole-in-the-Day and his brother Strong Ground established a village on the western bank of the Mississippi at the Little Elk River about two miles north of Little Falls. During the 1820s and 1830s Hole-in-the-Day's band also occupied villages near the later site of Fort Ripley and at the Swan River. The Swan River village was located on the eastern bank of the Mississippi, about three miles south of Little Falls in the 1830s. The site had been previously occupied by earlier cultures and is on the National Register. In 1847 Hole-in-the-Day was buried, at his request, on a prominent bluff on the eastern bank of the Mississippi, on the northeastern edge of Little Falls.

The Ojibwe village of Crow Wing was located on the eastern bank of the Mississippi at the Crow Wing River, about 22 miles north of Little Falls. Crow Wing was an important trading and gathering point for widely dispersed bands of Ojibwe, as well as a place for Ojibwe to meet and trade with Europeans. A federal government Chippewa Agency was located about three miles northwest of the village at the confluence of the Gull and Crow Wing rivers beginning in 1851. Large numbers of Ojibwe (2,000-3,000 at one time in 1859, according to one account) gathered periodically at the agency between 1851 and 1869 to receive treaty annuity payments (Gilman et. 1979, 66).

Contact between the Ojibwe and Euro-Americans near Little Falls intensified after the 1837 Treaty of Prairie du Chien which opened the so-called St. Croix Triangle, including much of Morrison County, for white settlement and logging. For example, an Episcopal Mission to the Ojibwe was founded about one and one-half miles north of Little Falls near Hole-in-the-Day's Little Elk River village in October of 1839. The mission was staffed by Samuel Spates, Allen Huddleston, Enmegahbowh (also known as John Johnson), and George Copway. A cabin for Hole-in-the-Day, the Elder, was among the mission buildings. The mission was closed in 1841 because of the treat of Ojibwe-Dakota warring nearby (Birk 1989).

Beginning in 1849, Protestant missionary Frederick Ayer operated a school for Native American and white children about four miles north of Little Falls on the eastern bank of the Mississippi. Ayer's Mission formed the nucleus of a small Métis- or mixed blood – farming settlement. Ayer's school was apparently listed in the federal census of 1850 as the only boarding school or academy in Minnesota Territory (*LFDT*, June 12, 1948). The Ayer Mission archaeological site is on the National Register.

In 1848-1849 the federal government established Fort Ripley on the western bank of the Mississippi opposite the mouth of the Nokasippi River, about ten miles north of Little Falls. Part of the military reservation was located on the eastern bank of the Mississippi and a ferry connected the two. The fort was established to help maintain peace among warring groups of Winnebago, Ojibwe, and Dakota who were fighting over control of the resources in the surrounding area. The presence of the fort also secured passage along the "Woods Trail" which ran up the eastern side of the Mississippi. The fort consisted of a complex of one story, wood frame, clapboard-covered buildings which could house 600 men. Much of the lumber used to construct these buildings was sawn at the newly-established sawmill in Little Falls. The fort site is on the National Register (Parker ca. 1975).

The Winnebago, a tribal group whose language origin is Siouan, were living in seven large villages' east of the Minnesota in 1806. Many Winnebago were killed during fighting with the Ojibwe and U.S. government troops in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Between 1816 and 1855 the Winnebago ceded their lands to the U.S. Government and were moved to reservations successively located in Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota and Nebraska. One of these reservations was located near Long Prairie on the western bank of the Mississippi River. Established in 1847, this reservation encompassed the southern portion of Morrison and Todd counties and the northeastern portion of Stearns County. In the late 1840's, just as Euro-American settlement began at Little Falls, the Winnebago and the Menominee were transported by the federal government from Iowa up the Mississippi by steamboat and then by wagon to the reservation. The Winnebago remained there until 1855 when they were again forced to move, this time to land near Mankato. The Winnebago hunting and gathering practices were similar to that of the Dakota and Ojibwe, but they did much more extensive agricultural cultivation. No standing structures from the Winnebago era apparently exist in Morrison County.

The Ojibwe ceded most of their Minnesota lands in eight major land cession treaties signed between 1837 and 1889. Most of the land in the Little Falls area was formally ceded by the Ojibwe in 1837. Land retained by and returned to Ojibwe people resulted in seven Ojibwe reservations which were established between 1850 and 1875. Between 1860s and 1910s, the consolidation of the Ojibwe people onto reservations, the allotment of reservation land based on the Dawes Act of 1887, and the subsequent sale of non-allotted acres, continued to erode tribal land holdings. Many of these policies were strongly influenced by mining, lumbering, railroad, and agricultural interests associated with spreading Euro-American control over Minnesota. By the end of the 1930s, most of the state's approximately 16,000 Ojibwe were living on the state's seven major Ojibwe reservations (Granger and Kelly 1990, E3-E4).

The diaries and published accounts of many of Little Falls' first European-American settlers report that there were a number of Ojibwe encampments near the edges of the city in the 1850s, and there were violent incidents between Dakota and Ojibwe near the town. There were also tension-filled and sometimes violent encounters between native people and Euro-Americans in and near Little Falls. During the U.S. Government-Dakota Conflict of 1862, there were no incidents of violence in Morrison County, although many of the county's settlers fled the area because of skirmishes in nearby counties. Because of the unrest, the villagers in Little Falls built a stockade for protection.

## EARLY EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN EXPLORATION

Because of its location on the Upper Mississippi, the region encompassing present day Little Falls was visited by several early European and American explorers and missionaries. The Diaries, maps and scientific logs kept by these visitors provide the earliest written descriptions of the Little Falls area (Mellor 1986, 6-7). For example, the constriction of the Mississippi's flow at the site, the roaring falls and rock outcroppings, and Mill Island were described by a number of explorers and missionaries who visited the area in the 1800s. Descriptions of meetings with the Ojibwe, Ojibwe and Dakota skirmishes, the Native American communities have also come from early Euro-American journals.

While exploring the Mississippi Headwaters area for the U.S. Army in 1805, Lieutenant Zebulon Pike visited the Little Falls area and provided what may be the oldest written account of the site. Pike spent the winter of 1805-1806 on the western bank of the Mississippi about four miles south of Little Falls. The fort built by Pike and his men had a vertical log stockade with blockhouses and a gate facing the river. The fort was occupied between October of 1805 and April or 1806. The fort is significant as the first U. S. military post built in what is now the state of Minnesota. Pike report that he met with members of several tribal groups at the site. The site of Pike's fort is on the National Register (Birk 1986).

Other explorers include Henry Schoolcraft who describer the Little Falls area in his journal in 1820. Schoolcraft visited the area during the summer of 1822 during the trip in which he "discovered" the Mississippi Headwaters. J.C. Beltrami descended the river and the falls in September of 1823, also recording his observations. In 1836 and 1837 French explorer and scientist Joseph Nicollet passed through the area three times. In August of 1836 Nicollet camped two miles north of Little Falls at the Little Elk River.

## THE FUR TRADE

As described above, between about 1650 and 1870 tribal people and European and American traders in the Upper Great Lakes area, including north central Minnesota, engaged in a rigorous commercial exchange of fur pelts for trade goods. The fur trade was spurred by an energetic world market in fur pelts, and helped shape the economies of both tribal groups and Euro-Americans. The complex commercial contacts and widespread intermarriage between tribal people and Europeans in the region played an important role in the political, economic, and social events that marked the contact period.

One of the most important fur trading sites near Little Falls is a site which is believed to be the remains of Fort Duquesne, a French wintering fort of at least four structures. The site is located two miles north of Little Falls on the western bank of the Mississippi just north of the Little Elk River. The fort is believed to have been built in 1752 by the Marin family near the end of the French presence in Minnesota. It is one of the earliest and best preserved French sites known in the region and is on the National Register (Birk 1984; Birk 1989).



The Ojibwe village of Crow Wing was occupied by traders aligned with the American Fur Company beginning about 1826. Traders lived here continuously after 1837. Fur traders William Aitken and Allan Morrison traded here in the 1840s, for example, beginning in the 1840s Crow Wing was a major fur trading center and stopping point on the Red River oxcart trail. The Euro-American population of Crow Wing in 1859 was about 100, and by the 1860s had increased to about 600 people (Gilman et al. 1979, 67).

The Settlement of Swan River, located about four miles south of Little Falls, was also an important trading post by 1837. A later post at Swan River was established in 1848 by William Aitken of the American Fur Company (Gilman et al. 1979, 68). By 1850 Swan River has a post office hotel and other amenities.

Philander Prescott also had a post near Little Falls in Morrison County in 1824-1825. Other early fur traders in the vicinity of Little Falls included Charles LaRose and Charles Chaboillier. A post on the eastern bank of the Mississippi near Royalton was operated by August Bellangier and Baptiste Roy for Allan Morrison (Gilman et al. 1979, 68).

## HISTORIC PROPERTIES

### EXPECTED PROPERTY TYPES

#### Prehistoric Native Americans

- Burial Sites
- Fishing sites
- Limited Activity sites
- Other archaeological sites
- Village sites
- Wild ricing sites

#### Contact and Post-Contact Period Native Americans

- Battle Sites
- Burial sites
- Ceremonial sites
- Council or meeting sites
- Fishing sites
- Limited activity sites
- Maple sugaring sites
- Military forts
- Missions
- Other archaeological sites
- River landing sites
- Trading sites
- Village sites
- Wild ricing sites

#### Early European and American Exploration and Fur Trade

- Burial sites
- Dwelling
- Temporary encampments
- Trading Posts
- Trading Sites
- Trading camps

## PRESERVATION ISSUES

### LITTLE FALLS HERITAGE PRESERVATION SITES

No current listings.

### NATIONAL REGISTER SITES

There are seven archaeological sites within a several-mile radius of Little Falls listed on the National Register. None of the sites are within the city limits of Little Falls.

### HPC PRESERVATION GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The HPC was instrumental in the City of Little Falls' recent efforts to preserve and interpret the burial place of Hole-in-the-Day, the Elder. The HPC intends to continue to support this effort.

The HPC encourages the preservation of the archaeological resources at sites such as Fort Duquesne, LeBrouquet Park, and Maple Island Park.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Context bibliography appears later in this report

**TRANSPORTATION**

**TRANSPORTATION**

## TRANSPORTATION 1848-1945

### HISTORIC SKETCH

The second historic context has as its focus the transportation systems which were essential to Little Falls' economic development during Euro-American settlement. Historically Little Falls has been geographically well-positioned along the state's major transportation arteries. Its location on the Mississippi River and its place within the state's expanding network of roads and railways has played a major role in the community's development.

Since Little Falls' founding, the Mississippi River, early trails, two railroad lines and several federal, state and local highways have linked the city with raw materials, supplies, customers, and people elsewhere in the region. These transportation corridors have also served as conduits for the flow of information, ideas and cultural exchange.

The city's logging industry, factories, agricultural processing plants, and small businesses have all been dependent on these transportation links.

The time limits of the context begin in 1848 when permanent Euro-American settlement at Little Falls began, and end in 1945, the ending date for this study.

### MISSISSIPPI RIVER, FERRIES, AND BRIDGES

The Mississippi River and its numerous tributaries was the major transportation corridor through central Minnesota for generations of Native Americans, fur traders, explorers, and soldiers, as well as for the first Euro-Americans who settled the Little Falls area. Canoes, flat boats, rafts, wanigans, and steamboats were used to move about on the river and ship goods and materials. Until the arrival of the railroad in 1877, Little Falls was a town dependent on horse-drawn vehicles and river transport. Throughout the city's existence the Mississippi has been an important focus of activity in Little Falls.

While steamboat travel on the Mississippi between St. Anthony Falls and Sauk Rapids (located several miles downriver from Little Falls) was somewhat regular between 1850 and 1879, the season was brief as river shallows and sandbars ran the steamboats aground. Steamboats could not travel upriver as far as Little Falls because their passage was stopped by the falls and shallow water at Souk Rapids. During the late spring of 1858 unusually high water made it possible for the *Anson Northrup* to travel upriver past Little Falls at twice (Hart 1952, 9). Portions of the river north of Little Falls were somewhat more navigable. Between circa 1870 and 1920 steamboats travelled occasionally on the upper Mississippi between Little Falls and Grand Rapids, towing rafts, carrying supplies to logging camps, and moving goods between a number of landings. Steam boating near Grand Rapids was hampered by several rapids and by logs which jammed the river. Steamboat traffic on the Upper Mississippi declined as railroad lines were built.

One of the most important uses of the Mississippi River and other nearby streams was driving of logs down the river. Logs were commonly cut during the winter months and were moved by skids or sleighs to the edges of river and steams to await the spring thaw. When spring came, hundreds of thousands of logs, end marked by their owners and often rafted together in huge free-floating rafts, would fill the river from bank to bank. The task of marking, rafting, guiding, unclogging, sorting, and removing the logs from the river was difficult and dangerous. Log jams which backed up for miles were not infrequent, and logs which had been jammed into the river bottom still resurface in the river around Little Falls today. The need to more efficiently move logs down the river and to create large boom areas for gathering and sorting logs led Upper Mississippi lumbermen to lobby for Army Corps improvements of the Mississippi in the 1880s and for the building of dams including the 1887-1888 dam at Little Falls.

While the Mississippi provided a powerful fluid highway, it also presented an often difficult and sometimes dangerous barrier to land travel. A number of early ferries, some of them short-lived, were used by Euro-Americans to ford the river. Ferries preceded bridges and were also used between circa 1859 and 1884 when bridges did not completely span the river at Little Falls. Early ferries included one at Fort Ripley, about ten miles north of Little Falls, which was operated by the federal government beginning about 1848, and William Aitkin's Swan River ferry, which was established in 1848. In 1857 William Sturgis established a ferry just north of Little Falls which he operated until about 1860. In 1868 the Morrison County commissioners established ferries which were eventually located at Belle Prairie (about two miles north of Little Falls) and Bellevue (a few miles south of Little Falls) (Winchell 1881,609).

Little Falls' first bridge over the Mississippi was constructed during the winter of 1857-1858 by the Little Falls Manufacturing Company, a venture which had been established in 1854 as the Little Falls Company by William Sturgis, James Fergus, and Calvin Tuttle. The bridge was located just south of the present bridge. The bridge ran from the eastern bank of the Mississippi to Mill Island on top of the Little Falls Company's dam, and from the island to the western side. According to one source, "By early spring (of 1858) the bridge was in service, though it had minimal use because there were virtually no improvements on the west side of the river...." (Peavy and Smith 1990, 29). The eastern portion of the bridge was damaged when the dam broke through in 1859, was presumably repaired with the dam during the winter of 1859-1860, and apparently washed out with the dam in 1860. The western portion of the bridge was used for approximately eight or nine years and was blown down in a windstorm. Part of the bridge was apparently moved to Sauk Rapids (Mellor 1988, 1: Peavy and Smith 1990, 26).

The second bridge, a double span metal truss bridge, was completed in March of 1884 near Oak Street, now Broadway Avenue. The bridge met Oak Street at its eastern end, but angled to the northwest, north of the present location of West Broadway, at its western end. The completion of this bridge raised property values along Oak Street and stimulated commercial construction nearby, according to an 1891 issue of *Northwest Magazine* (Smalley 1891, 21). The bridge was used until 1902 and moved to Fort Ripley in 1903. It was used at Fort Ripley until the 1940s (Mellor 1988, 1).

The 1884 bridge was replaced by a bridge constructed in 1902 at approximately the same angle. It was known as the Broadway Bridge and as the "new Wagon Bridge". This steel bridge rested on concrete piers. It served the city until 1942.

Between circa 1901 and 1921 a second wagon bridge was located just north of, and parallel to, the 1880 Northern Pacific railroad trestle near 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue North (Mellor 1988, 2).

The present bridge at Broadway, known as Memorial Bridge, opened in August of 1942 linking East and West Broadway Avenues. The bridge is a reinforced concrete structure on steel pilings which has a concrete deck and iron railings. A temporary wooden bridge was built along its north side for use during construction. Memorial Bridge was renovated in the early 1980s (Mellor 1988, 1).

Railroad Bridges are discussed below under Railroads.

## EARLY ROADS AND TRAILS

Travel upon Morrison County's numerous waterways was supplemented by trails which cut through the forests and across the prairies. Many of the trails used by early Euro-American were the same as those used by Native Americans. Later county and state highway in the region were built along these older routes. Logging roads and trails were also established in the forests as crews penetrated the woods during the winter months and hauled logs to the nearest frozen waterway.

Little Falls is located on the "Woods Trail", the easternmost portion of the several routes which comprised the Red River Oxcart Trails and linked fur trading posts in the Red River Valley with St. Paul. Portions of the trail near Little Falls were cut in the autumn of 1844 by traders travelling northward from St. Paul. The trail became popular because it avoided regions then being controlled by Dakota Indians, and for the next year 80 carts used the route (Gilman et al. 1979, 55).

Near Little Falls the Woods Trail followed the eastern bank of the Mississippi between Sauk Rapids (where it joined the so-called "middle Trail" into St Paul) and the Ojibwe village of Crow Wing, about 22 miles north of Little Falls. At Crow Wing the trail forded the Mississippi River and continued westward toward the Red River Valley. Goods being hauled along the Woods Trail from St. Paul were transferred from wagons to oxcarts at the Crow Wing settlement in preparation for the rest of the journey to the Red River (Gilman et al. 1979, 66)

The Woods Trail closely followed the eastern bank of the river. Present day State Highway 371 roughly follows its route north of Little Falls. A number of small hotels and inns were established along the Woods Trail north and south of Little Falls in the 1840s and 1850s. Fort Ripley, established along the trail in 1848-1849, held surveillance over the trail and minimized conflicts between groups of Winnebago, Ojibwe, and Dakota and members of the oxcart teams.

The surveyors of the original town site of Little Falls aligned present-day First Street with the wagon-rutted Woods Trail when they laid out the town in 1855. According to account of early settlers, Red River carts loaded with furs passed through Little Falls each autumn on their way southward toward St. Paul (LFDT, n.d., 1915).

A few years after Fort Ripley was established in 1848-1849, the portion of the Woods Trail between Fort Ripley and Sauk Rapids was improved as part of a military road which was built to link Fort Ripley with Point Douglas south of St. Paul. The improvement of the Point Douglas-Fort Ripley Road began in 1852 and was completed in 1858 (Gilman et al. 1979, 56). Stagecoaches travelling the road between St Paul and Crow Wing provided regular service to Little Falls in the 1850s and 1860s.

## RAILROADS

Railroads began exerting their considerable influence over the growth and development of the city of Little Falls as early as the 1860s when plans for the first rail lines began. Railroad lines provided a shipping network upon which all farmers, manufacturing plants, and retail businesses depended. Railroads served as vital communication links by bringing telegraph and mail services to the community. Stagecoach, wagon, and boat trips, which were slow and uncomfortable by comparison, were abandoned as soon as the speed and convenience of railroad passenger cars became available.

Railroad connections through Little Falls were essential to the city's eventual industrial success. In 1887, when construction of the dam and power plant began and industries began to view the city as a prospective site, Little Falls already possessed an excellent, ten-year-old transportation system with which to import raw materials and export the products of manufacturing plants and farmlands. As factories were constructed, spur lines were built to their sites to facilitate the loading and unloading of goods and raw materials.

The Western Minnesota Railroad (later controlled by the Northern Pacific) constructed the first railroad line through Little Falls in 1877. This line ran along the eastern side of the Mississippi between Sauk Rapids and Brainerd, linking St. Paul with the Northern Pacific's main line which ran east and west between Duluth and Moorhead. In 1877 a depot was built northeast of downtown between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Street East and 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue North. When the Northern Pacific's main line reached the pacific coast six years later in 1883, the Northern Pacific became the first railroad to complete a transcontinental route across the northern tier of states. With the completion of the main line, Little Falls was directly on the route between the twin Cities and the Pacific Northwest.

The city's second railroad line was built westward from Little Falls to Morris (a distance of 85 miles) beginning in 1880 by the Little Falls and Dakota Railroad Company. The line ran east and west north of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue West on the west side of Little Falls and then crossed the river on the first railroad bridge in Little Falls which was constructed in 1880. The Little Falls and Dakota had been organized in Sauk Centre in 1879 with the goal of building a line between Little Falls and Drown's Valley on the Minnesota-South Dakota border. The line had been in the planning since at least 1872. Little Falls attorney Nathan Richardson was vice president of the company. Soon after its completion the line came under the control of the Northern Pacific and was acquired by the Northern Pacific in 1990.

Rail service was further improved in 1888-1889 when the Northern; Pacific shortened the length of the trip between St. Paul and its main line by constructing the Little Falls and Staples "cut-off" which bypassed Brainerd. The cut-off crossed to the western bank of the Mississippi just south of Little Falls, and continued to the northwest. When the cut-off was completed, a new northern Pacific depot was built on the western side of the Mississippi, just north of West Broadway (completed in 1900, on the National Register). Near the depot on the western side of the tracks was a large round wooden water tank which was a familiar landmark on the west side. The Northern Pacific continued to use its original set of tracks which travelled northeast out of the city toward Brainerd.

In 1889, when the cut-off was completed, Little Falls was at the hub of a rail network with Northern Pacific-controlled lines extending outward from the city in four directions. By the turn of the century, Little Falls had become an important point along the Northern Pacific line, ranking behind on the Twin Cities and Duluth in the volume of freight shipped (Roberts and Roberts 1993, 11). Railroad freight service continued to be essential to the city's economy well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The first railroad bridge in Little Falls was built in 1880 when the Little Falls and Dakota line was built westward from the city, and linked to the Northern Pacific on the eastern bank. This bridge was located near present day 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue North near the current Burlington Northern crossing (Mellor 1988, 2).

The so-called South Railroad Bridge, a steel and wooden railroad trestle, was built in 1899 when the Northern Pacific cut-off was built and the depot was moved to the west side. The bridge carried the Northern Pacific over the Mississippi near present day 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue South. The current Burlington Northern crossing at this site was replaced in 1990 (Mellor 1988. 2).

Morrison County's third railroad line, the Minneapolis, St. Paul and Sault Ste. Marie (Soo Line) does not pass through Little Falls. The 36 miles of track was built through the southeastern corner of the county, south of Pierz, in 1907. It is a portion of a line which was built northeast through central Minnesota from Brooten to Moose Lake, passing through Albany and Onamia.

In addition to providing transportation, railroad companies also actively influenced the settlement of Little Falls and the surrounding region. The Northern Pacific, for example, owned and sold thousands of acres of farmland in Morrison County which they had originally obtained through congressional land grants. Several Little Falls attorneys and real estate firms served as land agents for the railroad or acted as brokers for these transactions.

Property types associated with railroads include the familiar passenger depots and their surrounding platforms, as well as freight depots and railroad warehouse structures. While freight structures were often not as architecturally distinctive as passenger depots, these unassuming buildings often handled all freight which entered and left a city, including the raw materials, supplies, manufactured goods, and retail inventory.



Freight shipped via rail in Minnesota reached a peak in 1929 (Prosser 1966, 56). Soon thereafter, personal automobiles competed heavily for railroad passenger traffic, and gasoline powered trucks becomes more economical for the shipment of all but the largest and bulkiest goods and materials. Railroad passenger service through Little Falls eventually ended, but large-scale railroad shipping on the Burlington Northern continues today.

## HIGHWAYS, AUTOMOBILES, AND TRUCKS

Little Falls entered the automobile age soon after the turn of the century. Jay W. Berg owned the first car in Morrison County in 1901 or 1902. By the mid-1920s automobiles were common in the city and in rural Morrison County, and the physical environment of Little Falls became increasingly influenced by the automobile. Soon more middle class and working class families began to buy cars as mass production reduced the prices. The popularity of cars also brought a new property type—the automobile garage – to Little Falls.

Gasoline powered trucks replaced the previous means of delivering services in town. Horse-drawn wagons, drays, surreys, and buggies were replaced by small delivery trucks used by dairies, laundries, the postal service, and other businesses which hauled, collected or delivered goods. Gasoline powered tractors and other machinery and implements transformed production on area farms. Electricians, physicians, veterinarians, and other small businessmen began to use trucks to provide services. Large carrier trucks, and eventually semi-trucks and trailers, replaced railroad boxcars as the preferred methods for hauling goods over long distances. Gasoline powered buses began to compete with railroad passenger service beginning in the 1920s.

The introduction of the automobile also brought new lines of commerce to the city as automobile repair shops, dealerships, tire and parts stores, trucking firms, and gas and service stations were established. In many cities, including Little Falls, the first automobile mechanics and salesmen were blacksmiths, bicycle shop owners, electricians, livery stable owners, machinists and farmers who already possessed the skills, interest, and tools to fix the earliest cars. Livery owner Franklin P> Farrow, for example, established a service garage in Little Falls in 1908 and later sold Empire and Maxwell cars, as well as operating an early trucking line between Little Falls and Pierz (Fuller 1915, 481-482).

Little Falls had a number of early automobile dealerships. For example, Eich and Murphy, which was established in 1901 by Joseph H. Eich and Thomas Murphy, sold buggies, wagons, mowers, rakes, harnesses, International farm machinery, and Studebaker cars and trucks. The business was known at various times as Eich and Siefert, Eich and Sons, and Eich Brothers and was located at 34 east Broadway beginning about 1937. Fords were sold in Little Falls beginning about 1908 when Fred Carlson established a Ford dealership. The business continued under various owners and at various locations. The Central Auto Company, later La Fond Motor Company, was established in 1911 at 127 1<sup>st</sup> Street SE. In 1914 the business moved to 114 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue SE and began selling Buicks. Arthur La Fond's business was the oldest continuous Buick dealership in the U.S. at the time of his death in 1980. Another early dealership, Burton Chevrolet, was established circa 1923 by Barney Burton. About 1942 the business became Anton Chevrolet Company (*LFDT*, June 12, 1948).

As auto and truck use increased more federal, state, and county funds were allocated to road paving and bridge building. Much to the push for improved roads in the state came from farmers who depended on passable roads to profitably ship their grain and livestock.

The Jefferson Highway (U.S. Highway 10), a heavily –travelled interstate tourist route between the Gulf of Mexico and Canada, was improved in the 1920s. It approached Little Falls from the south on the eastern bank of the Mississippi, ran north on First Street East, west on Broadway to the west side, and then northward out of Little Falls on Second Street NW (now Lindbergh Drive). U. S. Highway 10 and State Highways 371, 27, and 28 also pass through Little Falls on portions of East & West Broadway, 1<sup>st</sup> Street East, 1<sup>st</sup> Street West, and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue NE. These streets became major commercial thoroughfares and were the site of gas stations, motels, cafes, and other automobile-oriented businesses.

Tourism around Little Falls also received a tremendous boost with the proliferation of the automobile and the improvement of the state’s roads. Automobile touring became popular in the 1920s, bringing business to the city’s hotel, and eventually, motels. Camping with tents and early camper-trailers became popular in the 1930s, and “tourist camps” and picnic sites in Little Falls were established and improved.

## STREETCARS

At least one, or perhaps several, plans for a streetcar system in Little Falls were made in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but a streetcar line was never built. In 1888 W. M. Fuller and S. Stoll were reportedly making plans for a “street railway” in the city. The October 1891 issue of *Northwest Magazine* also reported that plans were afoot for a streetcar line which would run from the Northern Pacific depot northeast of downtown to the factories and mills located along the water power canal on the west side (Smalley 1891, 21).

## AVIATION

Pilots in the Little Falls area, many of them farmers and businessmen, began to call for the establishment of an airport, located southeast of the city, opened in May of 1947. The airport was at first leased to the Little Falls Flying Service which was owned by Charles Huebner and Sherman Fredrickson. The facility was dedicated as Lindbergh Airport on May 21, 1967.

## STATE HISTORIC CONTEXTS

Little Falls’ Transportation context falls within four of the statewide historic contexts developed by the State Historic Preservation Office: “St Croix Triangle Lumbering, 1830s-1900s”, “Early Agriculture and River Settlement, 1840-1870”, Railroads and Agricultural Development, 1870-1940”, and Northern Minnesota Lumbering 1870-1930s’.

## HISTORIC PROPERTIES

### EXPECTED PROPERTY TYPES

#### Rivers, Ferries, and Bridges

- Bridges

- Ferry crossings

- Landings

- Shipping offices

- Warehouses

#### Early Roads and Trails

- Bridges

- Inns

- Roadbeds

#### Railroads

- Bridges, railroad

- Depots, passenger and freight

- Offices of related organizations

- Rail cars

- Railroad offices

- Section houses

- Shops and roundhouses

- Tracks

#### Highways, Automobiles, and Trucks

- Auto and truck dealership

- Bridges

- Gas and service stations

- Inns

- Motels

- Offices of related organizations

- Repair shops

- Roadbeds

- Roadside attractions

- Roadside drive-ins and cafes

- Roadside parks and campgrounds

- Trucking facilities

#### Aviation

- Airports

- Landing strips

- Offices of related organizations

- Homes of individuals significant to the context

## PRESERVATION ISSUES

### LITTLE FALLS HERITAGE PRESERVATION SITES

No current listings

### NATIONAL REGISTER SITES

Northern Pacific Depot	200 1 <sup>st</sup> street Northwest
Little Falls Commercial Historic District	Downtown Little Falls

### HPC PRESERVATION GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The HPC supports and recent renovation of the northern Pacific Depot and encourages continuing efforts to preserve the structure.

In 1994 the HPC will begin to conduct a comprehensive standing structures survey of Little Falls in order to identify properties which are significant to this context.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Context bibliography appears later in this report.

**LOGGING**

**LOGGING**

# LOGGING 1830S – 1945

## HISTORIC SKETCH

The historic context entitled Logging encompasses one of Little Falls' most important and unique enterprises. The logging industry attracted the first Euro-Americans to settle permanently at the site, and the locating, marking, cutting, driving, catching, milling, planning, and transportation of logs dominated the economy of the city through 1920. Many of the property types associated with this context are located near the banks of the Mississippi and include dams, boom area, sorting facilities, mills factories, water power structures, warehouses, and storage areas. Elsewhere in the community, sites associated with the processing of timber and the transportation of logs and finished wood products may be standing. These include offices, warehouses, factories, storage buildings, and other sites. A number of buildings in downtown Little Falls are associated with the context, as well as the homes of persons who worked in the logging industry. The context begins when logging first began in the area around that 1830s, and ends with 1945, the ending date of this study.

## EARLY HISTORY

Situated just south of the confluence of the Crow Wing and the Mississippi rivers, present day Little Falls is located in the northwestern corner of the so-called St. Croix Triangle, a large region of forested land which was ceded by Native Americans in 1837. These treaties opened the first Minnesota Lands to Euro-American settlement and marked the beginning of the wholesale harvesting of Minnesota timber.

In the early 1800s, Jack pine, white pine, red or Norway pine, black and burr oak, birch, poplar (also known as "popple"), and aspen covered the hills around Little Falls. Logging interests initially preferred white pine, but later other varieties become acceptable. Although hardwoods were seldom used, there was some cutting of hardwoods in western Morrison County for railroad ties. By about 1875 Norway (red) pine began to be used for bridge structures and other buildings that required long timber and by 1900 some logging enterprises began to cut tamarack for ties and cedar for fencepost (Hidy et al. 1963, 148-149). Pulp producers used spruce and poplar (Mellor 1990, 7). In 1915, mixed hardwood and pines covered about three-quarters of the county, and about one-quarter of the county was open prairie.

Hidy, Hill, and Nevins divide Minnesota lumbering into four geographic areas which are defined by river systems. These areas were each associated with a river system which drained the forests. The first was the area along and near the western bank of the St. Croix River. The second region, which includes Little Falls, encompassed the drainage basin of the Upper Mississippi and its tributaries. The third was the area within the watershed of the St. Louis River which empties into Lake Superior at Duluth, and the fourth encompassed the state's northernmost forests along streams that flowed westward into the Red River and northward into the Rainy River (Hidy et al. 1963, 115). The logging of an area began in regions that were within easy reach of the rivers. At about the same time as logging began in earnest in central and Northern Minnesota, the construction of logging railroads and the development of sophisticated power machinery revolutionized the logging industry. These improvements played a major role in shaping its development.

Itinerant logging crews began to penetrate the forests around Little Falls searching for white pine in the late 1830s or early 1840s. William Boutwell, a missionary to the Ojibwe, described what may be the earliest log drive down the river past present day Little Falls when he reported observing soldiers from Fort Snelling rafting logs down the river in May of 1834 (Mellor 1986, 6). It was not until 1848, when the first sawmill was erected at St. Anthony on the Mississippi (the present site of Minneapolis), that logging around Little Falls began in earnest. By 1869 there were 15 sawmills in and near St. Anthony which were hungry for northern Minnesota's lumber. Several Minneapolis lumbering interests began buying land and stumpage rights in the Little Falls area, felling the timber, and driving it down the Mississippi.

The construction of timber processing facilities at the site of Little Falls began in 1849, on the eastern bank of the Mississippi. In 1848, a group of six speculators established the Little Falls Mill and Land Company with the goal of building a dam and sawmill at the site. An important local market for the mill was Fort Ripley, then under construction about ten miles north of the site. Half-owner of the company was James Green who in 1849 built the first wing dam and a boom to guide logs into his mill pond, and began to construct a sawmill on the eastern bank of the river. By 1850 Green had died and the dam, mill, and nearby land were sold to a new entrepreneur, William Sturgis. According to one account, the mill at Little Falls sawed the first lumber north of St. Anthony (Peavy and Smith 1990, 17).

Logging began in Little Falls just as the state was being settled, and the market for lumber was almost insatiable. In addition to houses, barns, factories, churches, and bridges, lumber was used for furniture, tools, implements, wagons, and countless other durable goods. As Blegen has written, (the logging industry in Minnesota) supplied lumber at a time when state and nation were growing furiously, when buildings were being erected by the millions, when even the fastest growing railroads found it difficult to supply freight cars in sufficient numbers to transport the immense quantities of lumber ordered in many parts of the United States (Blegen 19963, 3190).

## WATER POWER

Little Falls did not become a logging center of statewide significance until after 1888 when the Little Falls dam, power plant, and water canal were constructed. These facilities produced a cost-effective source of power, while the boomage area created by the dam provided a massive holding area for the catching, sorting, and storage of logs which were driven down the river. The construction of the dam attracted Little Falls' two largest logging-related firms, Pine Tree Lumber Company and Hennepin Paper Company, as well as many other manufacturing interests.

## IMPACT OF LOGGING

The local impact of the construction of the dam and the opening of Pine Tree, Hennepin Paper, and other industries was phenomenal. Little Falls doubled in size within a year of the dam's completion, and mushroomed to 2,354 people in 1890, according to an 1892 issue of *Northwest Magazine*.

Scores of new dwellings were required for the new population. The old merchants pulled down their wooden stores and put up substantial blocks and new ones came in.... With prosperity came public spirit and a desire for creditable public buildings...On the west side of the Mississippi, where the mills are located, a new business center was created with a number of stores and office buildings, while at the same time the old business streets on the east side were wholly changed in appearance by the number of new structures.

The building movement in the line of housing stimulated by two building and loan associations, has been active on both sides of the river, but is most noticeable on the west side, which was all a forest when work was begun on the dam. Now there are groups of houses here and there for a distance of a mile up and down the river, and a populous suburb half a mile west of the river has made a large public school house necessary in that quarter (Smalley 1892, 24).

By 1895 the city had doubled again to a population 5,116. In 1910 Little Falls had a population to over 6,000. (See Figure 9.)

By 1899 the Weyerhaeuser group, which owned Pine Tree Lumber Company in Little Falls, was sawing 18 percent of the timber on the Mississippi above Minneapolis and 26.7 percent of the lumber in Northern Minnesota (Hidy et al. 1963, 178). Even though the market was strong, the price of lumber was volatile and the fluctuations of the national economic climate were frequently felt in Little Falls.

The logging industry in Little Falls had a major impact on the cultural development of the community, as well as an impact on the economy and the physical environment. The town of Little Falls was periodically and seasonally filled with loggers, as well as being home to employees with more permanent jobs in the industry. For many years the majority of Little Falls' population was male, and the town had a reputation for being rough and lively during its early years. Much of the routine of the community was dominated by the daily and seasonal cycles of the industry. Logging work was intense, with long hours, harsh physical demands, frequent danger, and a transient lifestyle. These factors combined to create a colorful and complex culture surrounding the logging industry. This cultural heritage is unique to Little Falls and other Northern cities which share this logging heritage. (Many works including Rector 1983 provided excellent descriptions of the loggers' challenges.)

The logging industry in Little Falls reached its peak during the mid-1890s, just a few years before Minnesota's highest output of lumber which occurred in 1905 (Cheyney 1916, 1950). As timber supplies were depleted in north central Minnesota, logging interests moved further north and northeast in the state, and eventually out of Minnesota and into the Pacific Northwest. By the late 1910s timber supplies in the Little Falls area had been depleted almost entirely and the corresponding decline in the timber industry had a major impact on Little Falls and the surrounding region. The closing of the Pine Tree Lumber Company in 1920 led to economic decline in the community as several hundred jobs were lost.



At the same time that timber resources were becoming scarce, the nationwide market for timber products was also declining as steel, concrete, aluminum, and plastic were replacing wood in many applications. Hidy, Hill and Nevins write,

The per capita American consumption of softwoods had dropped from 381 board feet for the United States in 1904 to 311 in 1914, and this shrinkage of nearly one-fifth would continue rapidly as the figure sank to 259 in 1919 and 215 in 1929. In 1917 Midwest retailers testified that between 1907 and 1914 they had lost 42 percent of the fencing trade, 35 percent of the shingle business, 15 percent of the siding, and 14 percent of the flooring trade to substitute materials. (Hidy et al. 1963, 315).

## LUMBER-RELATED COMPANIES IN LITTLE FALLS

The two largest logging-related companies in Little Falls were the Pine Tree Lumber Company and the Hennepin Paper Company. In addition to these two giants, Little Falls had dozens of other companies which cut, transported, planed, finished, or otherwise handled timber products and used them in manufacturing. Some of these companies are listed below.

The Little Falls Lumber Company was one of the earliest lumber companies in Little Falls. It was established by a St. Cloud investor, N.P. Clarke, in 1882 on the eastern bank of the Mississippi. The mill and its 27 acre site was purchased by Pine Tree Lumber Company in 1890 as its first plant in Little Falls, and eventually demolished in 1910.

The Anderson Company, established in 18989, was located on the western side of the river. The company was owned by Lars, August and John H. Anderson. The Andersons produced harrows, slides, grain tanks, and other wood products (Roberts and Roberts 1993, 31).

Molde Millwork was also located on the west side. Molde made hundreds of pews for Minnesota churches and many ornate saloon sideboards or back bars which were installed in taverns throughout the state. The company is listed in the 1907-08 city directory at 206 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue Northeast when it was owned by Andrew Molde (1907-08 city directory)

The business listings of the 1907-08 city directory list two planning mills-the A. K. Hall mill with an office at 112 2<sup>nd</sup> street NE, and Pine Tree Lumber Company with an office at 735 1<sup>st</sup> Street NE (1907-08 city directory).

## PINE TREE LUMBER COMPANY

The Pine Tree Lumber Company, established in June of 1890, is significant to the statewide history of the logging industry because it represents the Weyerhaeuser empire's expansion into Minnesota and because it served as the principal sawmill of the Weyerhaeuser's for many years. In 1892 Pine Tree cut 32 million board feet of lumber at Little Falls, the largest amount cut by any single firm north of Minneapolis (Larson 1949, 238). Much of the cut wood was shipped out of Little Falls on the Northern Pacific. Pine Tree quickly became Little Falls largest employer, a position it held until it closed in 1920. The Pine Tree Lumber Company Office, located at 735 1<sup>st</sup> Street NE, is on the National Register.

The Pine Tree Lumber Company was owned by a group of lumbermen dominated by the Weyerhaeuser family but including the Mussers of Muscatine, Iowa, the Laird and Norton families of Winona. Owners of the company were: Frederick Denkmann, William H. Laird, Peter Musser, Peter M. Musser, Richard Musser, James L. Norton, Matthew G. Norton, Edward Rutledge, and Fred Weyerhaeuser. They were experienced lumbermen-members of the group who had been logging in Illinois, Iowa and Wisconsin since the 1850s. Like other leading lumbermen of the era, the Weyerhaeuser group was involved in all aspects of the industry from acquiring timberland to selling finished lumber. Pine Tree was headed by Fredrick Weyerhaeuser and Peter Musser and managed locally by their sons, Charles A. Weyerhaeuser and R. Drew Musser. (The Charles A. Weyerhaeuser and R. Drew Musser houses in Little Falls, both built in 1898, are still standing and are on the National Register). The Weyerhaeuser group had selected the site after carefully evaluating Little Falls, Brainerd and St. Cloud, and concluding that Little Falls had good water power, and abundant labor force, facilities for boom and storage, and an existing sawmill on the eastern side of the river from which to launch the venture (Hidy et al. 1963, 106). Later the Weyerhaeusers established mills at Cloquet, Virginia, and Minneapolis, as well as being involved in numerous other lumbering ventures.

In 1890 Pine Tree purchased the former Little Falls Lumber Company mill which had been built on the eastern bank of the Mississippi by N. P. Clarke in 1882. The company immediately began sawing lumber at the small mill, constructing new boom and sorting facilities, searching for a site for a new mill, and negotiating for timber rights in the regions' forests. By the end of 1892 Pine Tree owned or held timber rights to over 274,000 acres of timber in north central and northern Minnesota (Hidy et al. 1963, 108).

In April of 1892 Pine Tree opened a much larger state-of-the-art facility on the opposite side of the river in Little Falls which was known as the "west side mill". Hidy, Hill and Nevins write that "Without a doubt, the new plant of the Pine Tree Lumber Company epitomized the existing stage of sawmill technology near the end of the century" (Hidy et al 1963, 168). The Westside mill was built under the supervision of Frank McDonough of Eau Claire, an expert builder of sawmills (Mellor 1992). The main building was two stories high and had a fireproof boiler house with ten boilers, two band saws and one large gang saw, trimmers, slab and edge cutters, and lath and shingle machinery (Mellor 1992; Hidy et al. 1963, 162, 168).

The number of employees at the Pine Tree Lumber Company appears to have varied considerably depending on the market for their product, the season, and other factors. For example,

One commentator relates that the Pine Tree Company employed about 450 men when running day and night and 150 men on the river and their payroll was about \$60,000 per month when ordinary workmen get \$1.50 per day. A former employee of the firm, on the other hand, stated that employment figures ran as high as 800 men (Larson, *Minnesota History*, Spring 1973, 164).

During the summer of 1893, 600 men were employed at Pine Tree's two mills, not including the crews working in the woods and on log drives (Warner 1992). In 1913 the company had 400 full time employees during the seven-month sawing season, and by 1915 Pine Tree was the city's largest enterprise, with more than 60 million feet of northern pine cut into lumber each year (Fuller 1915, 193). By the time it closed in 1920, Pine Tree had sawed over 1.5 billion feet of lumber and boosted Little Falls' population by several thousand (Mellor 1992).

In 1907 Pine Tree formed a retail subsidiary, the Morrison County Lumber Company, to sell its lumber in a series of small retail lumberyards, many located in railroad towns. The company sold pre-cut homes and architectural components under the "Bilt-well" trademark (see figure 10). In 1918-1919 Pine Tree constructed a building in downtown Little Falls to house the offices of the Morrison County Lumber Company. The Morrison County Lumber Company remained in business under the management of R. Drew Musser after the Pine Tree mill was closed in 1920. The company continued to operate in the building until December 1960.

The Musser and Weyerhaeuser families have historically played important roles in the social and cultural life in the Little Falls community. (See also the Public and Civic Life and Culture Development contexts.) For example, in 1911 Maud Moon Weyerhaeuser (wife of Charles A. Weyerhaeuser) and Sarah Walker Musser (wife of R. Drew Musser) were among the organizers of the Musical Art Club that brought classical performers to Little Falls. In 1919 Mrs. Weyerhaeuser financed the construction of a new performance hall for the club, named the Maud Moon Weyerhaeuser Hall (in downtown Little Falls, on the National Register). Richard Drew Musser helped organize the American National Bank and served as its president from 1928 to 1945, was active in the Lion's Club, helped to found the local golf course, country club, Carnegie Library, and St. Gabriel's Hospital, and made many contributions to the First Congregational Church of Little Falls. Charles A. Weyerhaeuser was also an important philanthropist and businessman whose influence extended beyond the walls of the Pine Tree mill. For example, in 1908 Pine Tree donated 3,000 acres of land to the state in what eventually became Itasca State Park.

## HENNEPIN PAPER COMPANY

Another large Little Falls firm, the Hennepin Paper Company, began local operations in 1890. Hennepin Paper had been organized in Minneapolis in 1889 by two prominent lumbermen, Benjamin R. Nelson and Thomas B. Walker, who began to produce newsprint paper at a mill in Minneapolis in 1889. By the early 1890s Nelson and Walker were searching for a site to build a new pulp mill which could feed their Minneapolis paper plant. In 1890 they chose a site at the southern end of the cater canal in Little Falls and built a \$50,000-\$60,000 pulp mill which opened the same year (Mellor 1990, 6-17, 47-48).

The original pulp mill, built in 1890, was made of locally manufactured brick. It is described as a

Two story 10' X 80' building located over the canal outlet with a basement used for the flume and wheelpits. Power was furnished by three vertical water wheels set in a granite flume resting on native bedrock. This flume was said to be one of the most substantial and heavy pieces of hydraulic work in the west. Four pulp grinders were installed that used from 12 to 15 cords of wood to give a daily (24-hour) output of 10 tons of dry pulp. Construction of the pulp mill cost between \$50,000 and \$60,000 (Mellor 1990, 6)

In 1891 Hennepin added a large paper mill to its pulp mill in Little Falls, replacing the company's Minneapolis mill. For most of the 1890s, Hennepin was Minnesota's only mill making pulp for newsprint and its only newsprint manufacturing plant. Hennepin was a national competitor in the production of newsprint paper for several decades. Its steadily increasing output created a huge demand for spruce and poplar cut in the forests north of Little Falls and driven down the Mississippi—a market for these types of trees which had not existed prior to 1890 (Mellor 1990, 14,17).

By 1897 Hennepin had also begun producing manilla paper using pine "deadheads", or sunken logs. In 1899 the company began manufacturing fiber wrapping paper in addition to its output of newsprint and manilla paper (Mellor 1990, 16). These remained among the company's major products for many years.

The number of employees varied seasonally and also from year to year. The mill was closed periodically when market declined. In August of 1919 the company employed 108 males and 8 females. In 1940 when the mill reopened after a fire, 60 men were employed in three shifts. (Mellor 1990, 25, 30).

In 1946 Hennepin Paper was acquired by Time, Inc. and production of magazine print paper was introduced. Time soon sold the company to the St. Regis Paper Company which incorporated the new Hennepin Paper Company in 1947 and introduced a new product line of ground wood book, writing, and specialty paper, and, later, paper for telephone directories, catalogs, paperback books, and drawing paper (Mellor 1990, 33-34). After 1947 the company was sold several times. By 1954 there were 120 employees, making the city's largest industrial employer (Mellor 1990, 37). By 1982 Hennepin Paper Company was manufacturing 40 to 45 percent of all the colored construction paper used in this country (Mellor 1990, 46).

Today Hennepin Paper is the state's oldest operating pulp and paper mill and is still in business at its original location.

## STATE HISTORIC CONTEXTS

Little Falls' Logging Context falls within two of the statewide historic context developed by the State Historic Preservation Office: "St. Croix Triangle Lumbering, 1830s-1900s" and Northern Minnesota Lumbering, 1870-1930s".

## HISTORIC PROPERTIES

### EXPECTED PROPERTY TYPES

- Boom areas
- Dams
- Factories
- Furniture works
- Lumberyards
- Offices
- Office of trade and labor groups
- Planning mills
- Power facilities
- Sash, door and millwork factories
- Sawmills
- Warehouses
- Workers' housing
- Houses of persons associated with the context

## PRESERVATION ISSUES

### LITTLE FALLS HERITAGE PRESERVATION SITES

No current listings

### NATIONAL REGISTER SITES

Pine Tree Lumber Company Office	735 1 <sup>st</sup> Street Northeast
Charles A. Weyerhaeuser and Richard D. Musser Houses	Highland Avenue
Little Falls Commercial Historic District	Downtown Little Falls

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Context bibliography appears later in this report

**AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRY**

**AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRY**

## AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRY 1848 – 1945

### HISTORIC SKETCH

The historic context entitled Agriculture and Industry encompasses the production, harvesting, and processing of raw and manufactured goods in Little Falls. All industries with the exception of logging, which is the subject of a separate context, are included within its scope. Also included within the context is the history and activities of labor unions in the city. The time frame begins in 1848 when permanent Euro-American settlement at the site of Little Falls began, and ends in 1945, the limits of the context for the purposes of this study.

Morrison County's natural resources-water power, pine and deciduous trees, tillable soil, clay deposits, and veins of granite and slate-formed the basis for the city's agricultural and industrial development. In addition to farming itself, and logging, the Little Falls economy has always been heavily based on industries and services which cater to agriculture. Many of the city's earliest industries processed the harvest of the region's fields, while others manufactured heavy, durable goods such as farm implements, lumber, and wagons which were purchased by the state's growing number of farmers. The manufacture of building materials such as bricks, ironwork, and concrete products has also been important. The expansion and decline of local industries and their successes and failures had a significant impact on the population, economic health, and physical development of Little Falls.

Little Falls' companies sited their businesses near sources of power and transportation such as the Mississippi River and the Northern Pacific's first railroad line through east Little Falls. Woodframe factories, warehouses, and other facilities were built throughout the city, and several cream-colored brick industrial complexes, ranging from one to four stories in height were constructed. It is not yet known how many of the city's early industrial complexes are extant. There are also some examples of so-called worker's housing in Little Falls which merit identification in the forthcoming historic sites survey.

### AGRICULTURE

In addition to its timber resources, Morrison County has large areas of productive tillable soil and pastureland. The southern and southwestern parts of the county, in particular, are suited for farming with flat plains and gently rolling hills. Open prairies and logging cutover regions exposed Morrison's rich glacial drift and alluvial soil to agriculture. These rich farmlands provide the natural resources which supported one of Little Falls' two greatest industrial bases-the collection, marketing, and processing of agricultural products. Protestant missionary Frederick Ayer apparently broke the first land in Morrison County in 1848, launching agriculture in the area (*LFDT*, June 12, 1948)

Morrison County farmers first grew wheat, oats, rye, barley, and flax and raised hogs, cattle and poultry. Corn and potatoes became increasingly important after about 1905. The quality of Morrison County grain was recognized by honors awarded at the Minnesota state agricultural fairs of 1908 and 1909 (Fuller 1915, 85). In 1915 about one-half of Morrison County's land area was under cultivation or being used as pastureland by approximately 2,622 farms. In 1990 approximately 60 percent of the county's gross income was derived from agricultural production and there were 3,200-3,330 farms in Morrison County (Mellor 1990.)

Morrison County farmers also owned large numbers of dairy cattle, helping to make central Minnesota one of the Midwest's leading dairy-producing regions. In 1915 the county had seven cooperative creameries and eight independent creameries which were collecting and processing the milk of 19,400 dairy cows. In 1915 Morrison ranked 18<sup>th</sup> in the state in the number of creameries (Fuller 1915, 87).

Little Falls served a trade area which extended nearly to the boundaries of Morrison County. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries farmers living as far away as Motley to the northwest, Fort Ripley to the north, North Prairie to the south, Swanville to the West, and Pierz to the east hauled their grain to Little Falls. Brainerd and St Cloud, 35 miles to the north and south, were Little Falls' major competing markets.

As the trade center for the surrounding farmlands, Little Falls was visited regularly by farmers who brought grain to the city's flour mills and elevators, livestock and produce to buyers and processing plants, and milk to the city's creameries. Most agricultural products gathered and produced in Little Falls were shipped to larger markets such as Duluth and the Twin Cities on the Northern Pacific. One of the first grain elevators in the city was the Sawyer and Davis 25,000-bushel-capacity elevator which was located near the Northern Pacific depot on the east side. The elevator was built sometime before 1881 (Winchell 1881, 612). The business listings of the 1907-09 city directory listed four elevators, all located along the Northern Pacific tracks on the east side. They were the Monarch Elevator at 6<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway SE, the Northwestern Milling elevator at 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and 6<sup>th</sup> Street NE, the Merchants Association elevator along Broadway Ave NE, and the Little Falls Milling elevator at 1<sup>st</sup> Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NW (1907-08 city directory).

Among the city's early agricultural processors were the flour mills described below, as well as Little Falls Packing Company, the Little Falls Milling Company, Dewey Produce, Central Creamery, the Farmers' Cooperative Creamery, Little Falls Produce, the West Side Cooperative Creamery, and the Sanitary Milk and Ice Cream Company.

Little Falls Produce was established in 1920 by Pete Wielinski who purchased his brother Vince's produce business. The Little Falls Packing Company was established in 1890 on a site it was still occupying in 1948. Its building was destroyed by fire in 1925 and rebuilt on the same site. Clarence Buckman was part owner of the company (*LFDT*, June 12, 1948). Dewey Produce and the Central Creamery were located on the southern side of West Broadway in two brick buildings which were constructed for Charles A. Lindbergh, Sr., as investment properties about 1905 (MHS photo).



The Little Falls Creamery was located at 1<sup>st</sup> and Front Street SE in 1907 when Frank Moore was the butter and cheese maker (1907-08 city directory). The Beaver Dam Creamery's Office was located in the West Hotel Building in 1907 (1907-08 city directory). The Farmers Cooperative Creamery was established in 1916 and became associated with Land of Lakes in 1921. The Sanitary Milk and Ice Cream Company was established in 1930 by Leonard Sobiech in the northern part of the newly-built West Side Cooperative Creamery building. The company had nine employees in 1948 and supplied milk and ice cream to Camp Ripley, among other customers (*LFDT*, June 12, 1948).

Little Falls also sponsored a Saturday Market Day when area farmers brought produced into the city to sell in stalls along Kidder Street (also called Market Street). Many farmers would arrive in Little Falls late on Friday evening and begin to trade before dawn on Saturday. Between about 1930 and the 1970s the Little Falls market served as a statewide exchange for the trading of baby feeder pigs in what was dubbed the "world's largest little pig market."

In addition to serving as a collection and marketing point for farm products, Little Falls was a trade and service center where Morrison County's farmers purchased lumber, hardware, feed, seed, clothing, groceries, durable goods, and the services of veterinarians, attorneys, doctors, dentists and blacksmiths. Among the city's most visible business were a large number of implement dealers. With 25 percent of the county's population living outside of Little Falls in 1900, the farm market was extremely important to Little Falls merchants who aggressively advertised to farmers in the local newspapers.

The First agricultural society in Little Falls was organized in 1884 and intermittently held agricultural fairs for about ten years. Between about 1905 and 1910 fairs were held in Little Falls by a group of Little Falls businessmen. An agricultural society was organized again in 1911. The group purchased a fairground on the edge of Little Falls and held its first annual fair there in 1913. There were four buildings on the fair grounds in 1915 (Fuller 1915, 89). During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, agricultural fairs were also held in Motley by an agricultural society which held its first fair in 1910. The county fairgrounds were located on the southeastern side of Little Falls until circa 1990 when they were moved to a new site northeast of the city.

## WATER POWER

Little Falls is located at the Mississippi River's largest, natural waterfall above St. Anthony. The falls are unusually stable because of the strength and density of the underlying slate shelf which does not wear away and recede like the softer sandstone and limestone that underlays other falls in the river. The potential of these falls to power machinery-at first sawmills and other logging equipment-proved irresistible to a succession of adventures and entrepreneurs. The industrial development of the falls resulted in the platting of the Little Falls town site, and the harnessing of the water power is largely responsible for Little Falls' meteoric rise as an important lumbering, agricultural processing, and manufacturing site. Little Falls' industrial development was also made possible by an excellent rail system which is described under the transportation context. Railroads both exported the products of the city's manufacturing plants and surrounding farms, and imported raw materials and manufactured goods.

Permanent Euro-American settlement at the falls began in 1848 when a group of six speculators established the Little Falls Mill and Land Company with the goal of building a dam and sawmill at the site. Included among the investors were fur traders, a lumberman, and military officers attached to nearby Fort Ripley, a frontier post which was then under construction about ten miles north of Little Falls. Half-owner of the company was James Green who in 1849 built the first wing dam and a boom to guide logs into his mill pond, and began to construct a sawmill on the eastern bank of the river. By 1850 Green had died and the dam, mill, and nearby land were sold to a new adventurer, William Sturgis.

The town of Little Falls itself was not born until 1854 when speculators James Fergus and Calvin Tuttle joined Sturgis in forming the Little Falls Company (later the Little Falls Manufacturing Company). In 1855 the Little Falls Company increased the operation of the sawmill and attracted a few other timber processors to the site. The company laid out the town site on part of the 2,000 acres of land which they had been granted by the federal government. As Little Falls grew, the hub of the community and its economic backbone was the Little Falls Company's dam and lumber mill.

Just as Little Falls was gathering momentum, however, the first of a series of economic disasters struck. In the spring of 1856 the dam and sawmill were flooded resulting in a \$40,000 loss as logs were washed away in the high water. Troubles for the dam and mill did not end with the 1856 flooding. The 1856 flood was followed during the summer by a grasshopper plague which devastated crops in Morrison County, and by nationwide financial panic of 1857 which crippled fledgling businesses. Little Falls lost one-third of its population during the next three years, land values plummeted, and the Little Falls Manufacturing Company (as it was now called) fell into financial disarray (Peavy and Smith 1990, 26).

Sturgis, Fergus, and Tuttle's venture, which had built a bridge over the Mississippi during the winter of 1857-1858, faced expensive repairs to the structure when it was damaged by a break in the dam in 1859. The dam was repaired during the winter of 1859-1860, but completely washed out during the summer of 1860, finally spelling doom for the company. Little Falls' first boom, which had begun with such promise in 1854, had ended.

Several plans were made to rebuild a dam at Little Falls. A group of flour mill owners from St. Anthony explored the idea in 1870, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers included a dam and navigation lock at Little Falls in an 1874 plan for improvement of the river. The completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad through Little Falls in 1877 further stimulated interest in the industrial development of the site. Army Corps improvements of the river above Little Falls began in 1880 and continued through the next several decades, trying the future Little Falls dam project into a larger scheme of river improvements.

The Mississippi at Little Falls remained unharnessed until 1887 when the Little Falls Water Power Company was formed by a group of lumbermen, local entrepreneurs, and Eastern investors. Aided by a grant from the federal government and public financing, the company built a \$200,000 dam with a 20-foot head in 1887-1888, making it the second largest source of water power in the state behind Minneapolis' St. Anthony Falls.

It extended across both channels of the river and rested on the northern end of Mill Island, was 830 feet long and 40 feet wide and was capable of generating 10,000 horsepower. (The dam was later improved, and electric power was eventually sold to several other communities in the region.) A steady flow of water was ensured by the series of dams and reservoirs which were constructed farther up river by the Army Corps between the 1880s and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In addition to providing power, the dam created a massive reservoir which could be used for holding and sorting the thousands of logs which were being driven down the Mississippi, making Little Falls an excellent site for logging-related industries. As the dam and power plant were being planned and built, attractive incentives such as free building sites, discounts on power costs and local tax exemptions, were offered to prospective industrialists. These inducements proved successful and several enterprises were immediately drawn to the community. Construction of the dam and boom area was a decisive factor in the siting of the Weyerhaeuser group's Pine Tree Lumber Company and the Hennepin Paper Company in Little Falls. These companies and other lumbering-related firms are described under the Logging context.

Spearheading the 1887-1888 development was the Little Falls Water Power Company which had been formed in 1887. In 1888 the officers of the company were W.H. Breyfogle of Louisville, Kentucky, President, and M.M. Williams of Little Falls, secretary and treasurer. In addition to building the dam, the company invested in real estate in the city, in a residential contracting firm which had built 23 houses on Water Power Company land by 1905, and in the city's lighting and water companies (Warren 1905, 616-619).

The 1887-1888 project included a 1,000 foot long, 80 foot wide, and 13 foot deep canal which was built along the western side of the river, parallel with its flow. The canal had head gates at the northern end, a waste way at the lower end, and a wheel house, races and facilities for electric power. Railroad track spurs and sites for prospective factories were located on both sides of the canal. Among the first to locate along the canal were two flour mills, the Minnesota Milling Company and the Little Falls Milling Company, both described below. Hennepin Paper Company (described in the Logging context) built its mill at the southern end of the canal, and several other plants were built along or near the site.

The harnessing of the Mississippi's water power and the subsequent siting of major lumbering, milling, and manufacturing plants in the city spurred a tremendous post-1887 economic boom in Little Falls. Little Falls doubled in size within a year of the dam's completion, and mushroomed to 2,354 people in 1890. Downtown Little Falls experienced a building boom. In addition to creating jobs, the dam and power plant provided Little Falls' residential and commercial area with an excellent lighting system and water supply. Welcome public improvements were made and major new public buildings were erected. The city increased in size geographically as new additions were platted and hundreds of new houses were constructed. By 1895 the city had doubled again to 5,116. In 1910 Little Falls had a population of over 6,000. (See figure 9.)

## MILLING AND BREWING

Flour milling had been one of Morrison County's earliest industries with small mills built before the mid-1880s on a number of the county's rivers and streams. The construction of the 1880 dam, however, made flour milling on a large scale possible at Little Falls, and the industry expanded to become one of the cities most important.

The Little Falls Milling Company originated as a smaller mill at Swan River five miles south of Little Falls. It had been built by New York-born Alfred Tanner, who also owned other mills in the county. Tanner later leased the Little Elk mills three miles northwest of Little Falls. When the Little Falls dam was constructed in 1888 Tanner moved the Little Elk mill building into Little Falls, and later improved the facilities. The company is listed at 1<sup>st</sup> Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue SW in the 1907-08 city directory. Sons L. V. Tanner and H. H. Tanner assumed the business in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The mill was still operating in 1915 and was making flour, feed, cereals, and meal from wheat, rye, graham, buckwheat, and corn grown by surrounding farmers. The facilities included two elevators and a feed mill in addition to the flour mill (Fuller 1915, 194-194).

The Riverside Milling Company (later known as the Minnesota Milling Company) was a four story brick mill which was built on the water power canal circa 1888. It was later owned by Northwestern Milling, which was established in Little Falls in 1893. The company was purchased by John W. Stephenson in 1909. Northwestern made flour under such brand names as "Gold Dust" and "King of Minnesota" and employed 27 men in 1915 (Fuller 1915, 195). The Northwestern Mill was later known as Gopher State Milling and was demolished in 1939.

The 1907-08 city directory also lists the Rich Prairie Milling Company, owned by Charles Gravel, which had an office at 115 Broadway Avenue East. (1907-08 city directory). Another company, the Little Falls Mill and Mercantile Company, had a tin-covered three story elevator on the Northern Pacific railroad tracks in 1942 (MHS photo).

The Kiewel Brewing Company was established in Little Falls in 1893 by Jacob Kiewel, a Prussian-born brewer who had previously lived in the Fergus Falls area. He purchased an existing Little Falls brewery which had been established in 1880 and expanded the facility to include a three story brick building. According to Fuller, "the brewery, malt and bottling houses occupy a whole block of ground in the extreme northeast part of the city" (Fuller 1915, 196). At one point the brewery also owned a building near the western end of the Broadway Bridge (MCHS photo). Kiewel's sons also entered their father's business and continued to operate it after his death in 1928. The brewery was acquired by Grainbelt Brewery in the 1950s and one of Kiewel's sons, Frank Kiewel, eventually became president of Grainbelt (Robertson and Robertson 1993, 33). The Kiewel Brewery was demolished circa 1983.

A Little Falls branch of the Minneapolis brewing Company (later Grain Belt Brewery) was located in a one and on-half story wood frame building on the Northern Pacific tracks near 5<sup>th</sup> Street and Highway 27 East (MCHS historic photo).

## OTHER INDUSTRIES

Industries existing before the boom of 1887-1888 included relatively small sash, door, and blind factories, planing mills, and flour and feed mills sited either on the river banks or along the Northern Pacific tracks. The list of industrial plants increased dramatically after 1888. The business listings of the 1907-08 Little Falls city directory identify the following as the city's major industries in that year: 4 grain elevators (Monarch, Northwestern Milling, Little Falls Milling, Merchants Association), 4 cigar makers, 3 flour mills ( Little Falls Milling, Northwestern Milling, Rich Prairie Milling), 2 creameries (Beaver Dam, Little Falls Creamery). 2 planing mills (A.K. Hall and Pine Tree), 1 brewery (Kiewel), 1 foundry and machine shop (Little Falls Iron Works), 1 horseshoe factory (Giant Grip), 1 lumber manufacturer (Pine Tree), 1 marble and granite works (R. W. Carlson), 1 office furniture factory (Molde), and 1 paper mill (Hennepin Paper).

Clara Fuller, in her 1915 history of Morrison County, indicates that there were 13 major industries in the city in that year, with a combined workforce of approximately 620 workers. Fuller's list includes the following (Fuller 1915, 197):

Company	Workforce
Pine Tree Manufacturing Company	400
Hennepin Paper Company	90
P.O. Duclos Brickyard	30
Northwestern Milling Company	26
Kiewel Brewing Company	16
Sylvestor and Nichols	13
Little Falls Power Company	12
Little Falls Iron Works	10
Little Falls Milling Company	10
Little Falls Plumbing and Cycle	8
Little Falls Creamery	5
Cigar industry	4

Cigar factories included those operated by Henry W. Veneers, J.C. Raymond, and Peter Lauerman.

The Giant Grip Horseshoe Company moved to Little Falls from Duluth circa 1906. The 1907-08 city directory lists the plant near the water power canal at 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue SW, and lists the officers as W.H. Cooley, President, and Fred Clayton, vice president (1907-08 city directory).

The Little Falls Iron Works was established in 1891. It produced castings, machinery components, and architectural ironwork and was owned in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century by John Denis and in 1915 by Denis and Simon P. Brick. An early MHS photograph shows the Little Falls Iron Works in a small, false-fronted wood frame building near railroad tracks on the western side of the river (MHS photo, undated). The 1907-08 city directory lists the shop at 206 1<sup>st</sup> street SW (1907-08 city directory). In 1915 the Iron Works occupied a brick building and employed between 10 and 30 workers (Fuller 1915, 196).

One of the city's most long-lived industries is Larson Boats (now two companies, Larson Boats and Crestliner) which in 1989 was the city's largest industrial employer. Larson Boats has been in continuous operation since 1913. The Boat works was established by Paul Larson (1894-1983), the son of Swedish immigrants who moved to Little Falls in 1898. Other members of the family including Carol Larson, Roy Larson, and Len Larson eventually joined the firm. The company's first building was located on the eastern side of the city. Larson moved his business to a three story tile and brick building in 1925. This building burned in 1949 and was rebuilt on the same site. The company moved to a new plant on the western side of Little Falls in 1959. Larson Boats has often an innovator in the boat-building industry, and in 1922 Paul Larson became the first Johnson Motors dealer in Minnesota. Larson Boats began making aluminum boats circa 1945 under the name of Larson Watercraft (later Crestliner), and began making fiberglass boats in the 1950s. In 1959 Larson Boats employed about 300 workers (*Heritage of Leadership* 1988).

A Munsingwear knitting factory opened in Little Falls in 1943. In 1948 there were about 250 employees on the payroll, most of them women. On 1948 the factory was located in the Harrison-Peterson Building at 30 East Broadway. A previous sewing factory had been operating in the same building at least as early as the 1920s. Munsingwear later moved to a building near the present site of Larson Boats Works on the west side.

## BRICKMAKING

By 1892 Little Falls had three major brickyards, all of which operated west of the city. According to an 1892 issue of *Northwest Magazine*, these yards produced about 10 million bricks yearly and shipped them to St. Paul, Minneapolis, Duluth, Superior, and other cities. The article described the hue of the brick as ranging from cream-colored and light yellow to cherry red (Smalley 1892, 26). Bricks from both the Duclos Brickyard and the Scott Brickyard were used to build the Northern Pacific's Como Shops in St. Paul.

The Duclos Brick Manufacturing plant, established by Canadian-born P.O. Duclos before 1891, was located about two miles west of the city. In 1915 about 30 men were on the payroll during the peak of the season. In 1915 the plant was located in a two story building and was producing kiln-fired facing brick.

The Minnesota Brick Company was owned by E. Rothwell, N.L. Dargis, and W. D. Robson in 1891. The plant was located on 100 acres of land and was producing about 3 million bricks annually (Smalley 1892, 30).

The Martin Scott Brickyard was established by Martin Scott, a native of Maine who came to Little Falls in 1880. The company was later known as Scott-Spandrel. The yard supplied the brick for the Riverside Mill (circa 1888), the Morrison County Courthouse (1891), the Little Falls City Hall (1891), and the powerhouse and gatehouse of the Little Falls Water Power Company (circa 1888) (Smalley 1892, 30).

## MINING AND QUARRYING

The granite which underlies much of Morrison County was quarried at three major sites in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and was used as foundation material for many local buildings and for cemetery monuments (Granite Quarries and Granite Works file, MCHS). The hard, dark slate which underlies the river bed at Little Falls was also quarried from outcroppings on or near Mill Island before 1888. This slate was also apparently used in some building foundations in the city (Fuller 1915, 50). Iron ore has also been harvested from the county, and various companies have tested the county for gold, beryllium, and other minerals.

The Agram Quarry, located in Agram Township southeast of Little Falls, was first quarried in the late 1890's by the Little Falls Granite Company. The company had been formed in 1897 by Joseph J. Robbers, Lewis L. Robbers, Charles Hall, George Hall, and J.F. McCauley. In 1899 the company opened a cutting and polishing works in Little Falls which was located on the west side. The company worked both the Agram and Gravelville quarries and in 1899 was quarrying dark gray, light gray and red granite which was being used for monuments, building construction, and bridge construction. In March of 1901 the Little Falls Granite Company operation was purchased by the newly-organized Davidson Granite Company.

The Gravelville Quarry, located on County Road 45 about two miles south of Freedom, was also worked by the Little Falls Granite Company, and after 1901, by the Davidson Granite Company. During the 1930's granite from Gravelville was used in W.P.A. construction projects in Little Falls.

The Buh Quarry, located in Buh Township, was worked by J.P. Mundy as early as 1906 and was subsequently known as the Kraker Quarry. In 1917 the Kraker Quarry was purchased by John Sparry of St. Cloud who incorporated the Little Falls Black Granite Company in 1918. The company operated a cutting works along the Northern Pacific tracks near 6<sup>th</sup> Street NE between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE (MCHS photo, undated). The Little Falls Black Granite Company had an annual payroll of \$50,000 in 1926 and operated the Buh Quarry through at least the mid-1930s. During the 1930s granite from the Buh Quarry was used in W.P.A. construction projects in Little Falls.

The Little Falls Granite and Marble Works was established as early as April of 1907 by Russel W. Carlson. Carlson's cutting works is listed at 202 Broadway Avenue E in the 1907-08 city directory. It apparently folded around 1909.

The Little Falls Granite Works was established in 1911 by G.W. Karlson and Fred Olson. The company was owned by A.A. Nelson and Spencer R. Nelson in 1948.

Iron ore was discovered in northwestern Morrison County in 1905 on what is a southern extension of the Cuyuna iron range. The county's iron ore mining focused around Randall, located about ten miles northwest of Little Falls. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century John Vertin, Charles A. Lindbergh, Sr., and Judge J.T. Hale were among the Little Falls citizens who were investing in the county's mining industry. Ore was also discovered northeast of Little Falls circa 1912. Stephen J. Vasaly and C. B. Buckman of Little Falls were among those who had interest in this mining effort in 1915 (Fuller 1915, 207-209).

## STATE HISTORIC CONTEXTS

Topics within the Agriculture and Industry context fall within four of the statewide historic contexts established by the State Historic Preservation Office. The earliest river-related farming and industries are generally encompassed by "Early Agriculture and River Settlement, 1840-1870," while post-railroad activity falls within "Railroad and Agricultural Development, 1870-1940." Little Falls' industry also falls within the "St. Croix Triangle Lumbering, 1830-1900s" and the "Northern Minnesota Lumbering 1870-1930s" context.

## HISTORIC PROPERTIES

### EXPECTED PROPERTY TYPES

#### Agriculture, marketing, and processing

- Barns
- Breweries
- Canning factories
- Creameries and dairies
- Farmhouses and farmstead structures
- Flour mills
- Grain elevators and bins
- Grain exchanges
- Offices of trade, farming, and related organizations
- Other factories
- Seed and nursery companies
- Stockyards
- Warehouses, agricultural
- Warehouses, industrial

#### Other Industries

- Auto factories
- Brickyards
- Candy factories
- Cigar factories
- Furniture factories
- Implement manufacturers
- Iron works and foundries
- Offices of trade and related organizations
- Other factories
- Presses and publishers
- Quarry offices
- Sash, door, millwork factories
- Sawmills
- Wagon factories
- Warehouses, industrial

#### Houses of individuals significant to the context

- Employees
- Owners
- Housing built specifically for workers
- Labor union sits, offices, meeting halls



## PRESERVATION ISSUES

### LITTLE FALLS HERITAGE PRESERVATION SITES

No current listings.

### NATIONAL REGISTER SITES

Little Falls Commercial Historic District

Downtown Little Falls

### HPC PRESERVATION GOALS AND STRATEGIES

In 1994 the HPC will begin to conduct a comprehensive standing structures survey of Little Falls in order to identify properties which are significant to this context.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Context bibliography appears later in this report

**COMMERCE**

**COMMERCE**

## COMMERCE 1848 – 1945

### HISTORIC SKETCH

This historic context addresses the commercial development of Little Falls. It includes such commercial activities as retailing, wholesaling, banking, professional services, tourism, and entertainment. (Businesses which produce or refine raw materials such as creameries, breweries, and grain elevators are discussed under the Agriculture and Industry context. Gas stations and automobile dealerships are discussed under the Transportation Context.) The Commerce context also encompasses the founding and activities of various commercial and trade organizations such as the Little Falls Board of Commerce. Property types associated with this context range from wood frame and brick storefronts, to hotel, automobile showrooms, office buildings, and banks. While most of these buildings are located immediately west and east of the Mississippi River in downtown Little Falls, others are scattered along major transportation routes leading into and out of the city. The context also includes homes of the city's business people. This context begins in 1848 with the first permanent Euro-American settlement of the site, and ends in 1945, the ending date for this context study.

In 1994 the Little Falls Heritage Preservation Commission completed a project to survey, research, and nominate to the National Register a large collection of commercial buildings in downtown Little Falls. In an effort to avoid reproducing this recent work, the historic sketch below is brief. The documents which resulted from the HPC's project, Roberts and Roberts, "Little Falls Commercial Historic District final Survey Report" (1993) and Granger et al., Little Falls Commercial Historic District, National Register Nominations (1994) provide detailed information on the Commerce context and should be consulted when working in this context.

Like the city's various industries, commerce in Little Falls has experienced several periods of dramatic expansion. Commerce was first stimulated in the 1850s when the town site was founded and its first industrial development occurred. Little Falls' role as a trade center for the surrounding farm regions began during this period, and was strengthened by the construction of Northern Pacific through town in 1877. A much larger commercial boom occurred in the late 1880s through the early 1900s following the construction of the 1887-1888 dam and power plant, and improvement of railroad services, and the siting of major industries in the city. After 1888 Little Falls population increased rapidly, providing a profitable market for goods and services. Beginning in the late 1880s, several blocks of wood frame storefronts in downtown Little Falls were replaced by substantial brick commercial buildings. A large number of the buildings still standing from the 1888-1915 expansionary period have been nominated to the National Register as the Little Falls Commercial Historic District. In the 1920s and 1930s, improved highways enabled north central Minnesota to become more accessible to tourists and again stimulated Little Falls' commercial economy.

## BANKING

Banks in Little Falls were essential to commerce in the city as they provided the capital and cash flow on which commercial transactions depended. Branch banks and lending services apparently filled this role until 1880 when the Morrison County bank was founded as Little Falls' first bank. The bank occupied the southwestern corner of First Street and Broadway Avenue, the city's main commercial intersection which eventually became known as "Bank Square". The bank was reorganized in 1891 as the German American National Bank. The German American's first officers were Harold Thorson, president; Charles A. Weyerhaeuser, vice president; J.D. Anderson, cashier; and S.A. Smerts, assistant cashier. In 1914-15, the bank constructed a new, Classical Revival style building on the same site.

Other banks in Little Falls included the First National Bank and the Merchants National Bank. In 1891, the First National Bank moved from the site which it had occupied since its organization in 1888 into the new Butler Block, one of the first brick business blocks to be built in the city in the late 1880s. This bank occupied the northeastern corner of Bank Square, opposite the German American Bank. A third bank, the Merchants National Bank, was founded in 1902 with G. F. Kirscher as its president, H. A. Warner as cashier, and Jerome McCusker as vice president. It was housed in the Union Block at 62 East Broadway before moving to a new site at 75 East Broadway.

Interestingly, a *Minneapolis Journal* article of 1913 reported that Little Falls led all cities in the state in per capita bank deposits (Fuller 1915, 96).

## RETAIL TRADE

Orlando Churchill, a native of Illinois and a friend of Little Falls Co-founder James Fergus, arrived in Little Falls in 1855 to manage the town's first store, the Little Falls Company's general store. The store was located on the present site of the First National Bank at the northeastern corner of Broadway and First Street. It offered items such as dry goods, groceries, tools, clothes, shoes, agricultural equipment, and other necessities to both wholesale and retail customers. Like other early business in the city, however, the store was adversely affected by the collapse of the local economy in late 1850s.

As Morrison County was settled, farmers were drawn to Little Falls at least a 30-mile radius to sell grain and produce and to purchase supplies and services. Agriculture-oriented business such as lumberyards, implement dealers, and hardware stores were an important part of the commercial economy.

Retail merchants in Little Falls sold everything from axes to zippers. The business listings of the 1907-08 Little Falls city directory list merchants who offer bicycles, books, coal, confections, ice, ice cream, paint, pianos, and wallpaper, among other items. The largest retail establishment in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was Burton's Clothing and Shoes, a store founded by Barney Burton who had come to Little Falls in 1886.

Among Little Falls' early businesses which dealt in heavier trade goods were its lumberyards, implement dealers, and automobile and truck dealerships. Little Falls' early automobile garages and dealerships are discussed further under the Transportation context.

## SERVICES

Service businesses in the city included barbershops, bakeries, pharmacies, laundries, millineries, livery stables, mortuaries, photography studios, tailor shops, insurance agencies, and accounting offices.

Also falling within the service category is the Little Falls Business College which was located in downtown Little Falls. It was founded in 1905 by R. B. Millard. The school taught classes in subjects such as banking, typing, accounting, and commercial law and had an enrollment of between 100 and 200 in 1915.

## PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

The Commerce context also includes Little Falls of professionals including doctors, lawyers, dentists, veterinarians, and others. Many of these early professionals maintained offices in the upper floors of the buildings in downtown Little Falls.

The first attorney in Morrison County was James Hall, who came to Little Falls in 1856. Between that year and 1915, there were approximately 20 attorneys who practiced in the city (Fuller 1915, 125-127). Many Little Falls lawyers also held the offices of city attorney and county attorney, and served as local judges, state legislators, and U.S. senators and congressmen. Among these are well-known attorneys Nathan Richardson, Charles A. Lindbergh, Sr. Christian Rosenmeier, Gordon Rosenmeier, and John Simonett.

Little Falls' earliest physicians were probably doctors Smith, Jodon, and Metcalf who practiced in Little Falls circa 1856-59. About 10 physicians practiced in the city from the 1860s to the 1890s, and by 1915 there were nine doctors in Little Falls. The establishment of St. Gabriel's Hospital by the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls in 1892 and its eventual expansion into a major regional hospital attracted doctors to the area including Dr. G. M. A. Fortier, the first hospital physician. Early dentists in the city included Lewis J. Wright (who began practicing in 1895), S. R. Fortier (who began in 1906), C.H. Longley (who began in 1915), and C.J. Olsen (who began practicing in 1929).

## BUILDING TRADES, ARCHITECTS, AND CONTRACTORS

The Commerce context also includes the architects, contractors, brick masons, plasterers, electricians, plumbers, and others engaged in the building trades in the city. Only a few of these craftsman and builders are mentioned below.

Early contractors included Alonzo D. Harrison, who built the Little Falls City Hall (1890-1891), the Weyerhaeuser House (1898), and the Musser House (1898), and W. Wolke who supervised construction of the Franciscan Sisters' motherhouse beginning in 1891. The firm of contractor William E. Harting and Son employed 12-15 men during the summer months around the turn of the century.

Among the city's other early carpenters were Philip W. Bidwell, James Eggleston, Stephen P. Fuller, Charles H. Laird, and Frank I. Schlieff (Winchell 1881, 612-620). A later builder, Edward S. Bednark, was a building contractor in the city for 34 years.

An annotated list of many of the architects who practiced in Little Falls before World War II is contained in Roberts and Roberts' report of 1993.

## HOTELS, TOURISM, AND ENTERTAINMENT

Hotels have existed in Little Falls since 1855, and the first hotel was erected as the city itself was being built. It was the Elk Horn House (also known as Batters' Hotel), which was built by Joseph Batters in 1855, shortly after the organization of the Little Falls Company. The Elk Horn House, razed in the 1920s, stood at the northwestern corner of First Street and Second Avenue SE. Also dating from the early days of Little Falls was the Northern Hotel, known soon after opening as the Ault Hotel. Owner John Ault touted his operation as "the largest establishment north of St. Anthony" (Peavy and Smith 1990, 27). The large two story, T-shaped building, later known as the Vasaly House, was located at the northwestern corner of Broadway Avenue and First Street before it was razed.

During the industrial boom which followed the completion of the dam in 1888, a number of hotels were erected. The Antlers Hotel, built in 1890, had been funded by southern investors who owned large amounts of real estate in Little Falls. During its first few years the Antlers was a center of Social Activity and was host to parties, banquets, and dances. It was located too far from the east side's railroad depot to be profitable, however, and closed and reopened several times. It was razed in 1951 after serving Our Lady of Lourdes parish as a church, school, convent, and rectory for many years. The Buckman Hotel was originally owned by Lumberman, businessman, and Congressman Clarence B. Buckman. The three story, cream-colored brick building was constructed in 1893 and rebuilt in 1902 after a fire. The Buckman is still a landmark in downtown Little Falls and is under renovation. Other hotels of this period include the Columbia (later Wards Hotel), a three story brick building on Second Street NE, and the Midland Hotel, a two story brick building on East Broadway.

Early Little Falls also had many saloons, billiards halls, and restaurants which were patronized by large numbers of loggers and other seasonal workers in the town. Later entertainment businesses in the city included bowling alleys and movie theaters.

The physical beauty of the Little Falls area has been appreciated by visitors since long before the town site was founded. Picnicking, hunting, fishing, and camping in the area have been popular since at least the 1850s. At the turn of the century tourists arrived on passenger trains or by horse-drawn hack to enjoy fishing and boating at Lake Alexander, Green Prairie and Fish Lakes, and at countless other local spots. In the late 1910s and early 1920s the improvement of Minnesota's highway system made north central Minnesota's lakes for more accessible to the general public and stimulated the development of a successful recreation and tourism industry. Parks, campgrounds, picnic areas, boat launches, and resorts sprang up throughout Morrison County.

The City of Little Falls responded by improving Pine Grove Park in 1923 and establishing a municipal campground north of town. In 1931 Lindbergh State Park opened on the western bank of the Mississippi. During the same period, the establishment in 1931 of Camp Ripley, the Minnesota National Guard training facility located 15 miles north of Little Falls, also increased traffic through the city and attracted customers to restaurants, motels, theaters, and gas stations. Restaurant buildings erected during the 1920s and 1930s included the Sand Café and the Black & White Café, both located in downtown Little Falls.

The Post-1920 increased in tourism stimulated the construction of the 37-room Elks Hotel, built in 1923 near the southern edge of Downtown. In 1939 James and Jack Madden bought the building from the Little Falls Hotel Corporation and renamed it Pine Edge Inn. By 1948, it was Little Falls' largest hotel, housing six apartments, 50 guest rooms and four dining rooms.

One of the city's first motels was the Wigwam Inn, built in the 1930s by Oscar Rydquist on Highway 371. The motel consisted of a gas station and four individual teepee-shaped sleeping units built of painted, galvanized tin nailed over wooden frames. From early photographs, the property appears to have been an excellent example of fanciful 1930s roadside architecture which was designed to attract the attention of motoring tourists.

Many of the cottage and resort owners at Lake Alexander became early customers of Larson Boat Works, a Little Falls boat manufacturer which has been in continuous operation in the city since 1913. Paul Larson's company supplies boats and motors to customers throughout Minnesota just as the state's tourism and fishing industries were growing. Larson Boat Works eventually became one of Little Falls' largest employers. (The company is also discussed in the agriculture and Industry context.)

## STATE HISTORIC CONTEXTS

Little Falls' commercial development falls within four statewide historic contexts developed by the State Historic Preservation Office: "Early Agriculture and River Settlement, 1840-1870", "Railroads and Agriculture Development, 1870-1940", "St Croix Triangle Lumbering, 1830s-1900s", and "Northern Minnesota Lumbering, 1870-1930s".

## HISTORIC PROPERTIES

### EXPECTED PROPERTY TYPES

#### Retail

- Dry goods stores
- Feed stores
- Groceries
- Hardware stores
- Implement dealers
- Lumber yards
- Other commercial buildings
- Warehouses

## Service

- Auto dealers and repair shops
- Banks
- Blacksmith shops
- Business offices
- Entertainment businesses (dance halls, theaters)
- Funeral homes
- Gas stations
- Hotels
- Restaurants
- Tourism sites

## Professional

- Offices of doctors, dentists, and lawyers

## Wholesale distribution

- Warehouses
- Wholesale headquarters

- Offices of trade groups and related organizations
- Houses of individuals associated with the context

## PRESERVATION ISSUES

### LITTLE FALLS HERITAGE PRESERVATION SITES

No current listings

### NATIONAL REGISTER SITES

Burton-Rosenmeier House  
Little Falls Commercial Historic District

606 1<sup>st</sup> Street Southeast  
Downtown Little Falls

### HPC PRELIMINARY GOALS AND STRATEGIES

In 1993-1994 the HPC nominated a portion of downtown Little Falls to the National Register as the Little Falls Commercial Historic District. The HPC is currently supporting the revitalization of historic commercial building in the city by helping property owners seek tax incentives, financial assistance, and technical information on historic rehabilitation.

In 1994 the HPC will begin to conduct a comprehensive standing structures survey of Little Falls in order to identify properties which are significant to this context.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Context bibliography appears later in this report



**PUBLIC AND CIVIC LIFE**

**PUBLIC AND CIVIC LIFE**

## PUBLIC AND CIVIC LIFE 1848 – 1945

### HISTORIC SKETCH

This historic context includes the history of government, politics, and public services in Little Falls. It encompasses the activities, institutions, and organizations which represent Little Falls citizens' efforts to achieve law and order, participate in politics at local, state, and national levels, provide health care and education, and organize countless other municipal services to ensure a healthful, safe and smoothly-run city. The context includes civic leaders and representatives, and programs such as the depression-era Works Progress Administration (W. P. A.), as well as military service and the National Guard. The activities of the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls have also been placed within this context because of their public service nature. The time frame runs from 1848 when Little Falls was permanently settled by Euro-Americans, to 1945, the limits of the context for the purpose of this study.

### GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Morrison County was organized in 1856, two years before Minnesota became a state and the same year that the plat of Little Falls was filed. The county was named for fur traders Allan and William Morrison. At the fall election of 1856, voters elected county officials William Trask, Elliot J. Kidder, and W.W. Stebbins, as county commissioners; Nathan Richardson as registrar of deeds; James Fergus as judge of probate; Jonathan Pugh as sheriff; W. B. Fairbanks as district attorney; and W.W. Tuttle and John Fry as assessors.

The first Morrison County Courthouse, a Greek revival style woodframe structure located at Broadway and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street SE in Little Falls, was started in 1856 and completed in 1867. It was moved from the site in 1890 when the current courthouse was constructed and used as a commercial building. It was eventually razed. The current cream-colored brick, Richardsonian Romanesque style courthouse was designed by architect C.A. Dunham and built by Foster and Smith in 1890-1891 of brick and granite obtained locally.

The Village of Little Falls was incorporated February 25, 1879. On March 18, 1879, the first official city election was held with the following officers elected: Leon Houde, president; Peter Medved, trustee; O.A. Churchill, recorder; John Wetzel, treasurer; and James McCauley, justice of the peace. Fire protection, law and order, street improvements, and health issues dominated the business of the council, during its early years. The village presidents and mayors of Little Falls were usually prominent businessmen of the community. The list of these names could also substitute for a "Who's Who" directory of the Little Falls business community. Fuller, in her 1915 history of the county, provides a list of the council presidents and mayors of the city through 1915.

On March 14, 1889, voters approved the incorporation of the City of Little Falls, Nathan Richardson, the man who would eventually hold more public offices than any other citizen, was named the first mayor. An impressive brick city hall was erected by contractor Alonzo O. Harrison in 1890-1891 on First Avenue Southeast. The building contained all city offices and the fire and police departments. The current Little Falls City Hall at 100 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast was formerly the city's water treatment plant. It was built in the 1930s and became the city hall in 1977.

## PUBLIC SERVICES

Mail service to Little Falls was provided by the federal government beginning in the 1860s. Rural delivery was established circa 1900 and home delivery was instituted in 1904. A succession of Little Falls men and women served as postmasters, and before 1909 the post office generally operated out of the postmaster's place of business. The first federally-owned post office building was designed by James A. Wetmore, constructed in 1916 at 27 East Broadway, and is still in use today.

The North Star Hook and Ladder Company, the city's first fire department, was organized circa 1878 as a volunteer organization. Both the fire and police departments were located in the city hall. In 1915, the fire department had two paid members. In 1915, the police department consisted of five members, including a chief and four policemen (Fuller 1915, 185-186).

The first jail was a square-hewn log structure which was built near the courthouse and was still standing in 1915, although it had been covered with clapboard (Fuller 1915, 76). It was replaced by a yellow brick jail built in 1888. A combined county jail and sheriff's residence was built circa 1931 from designs by St. Paul architects Toltz, King and Day.

Morrison County officials operated a county poor farm between 1887 and 1889 on a farm near Belle Prairie. After 1890 the care of the poor became a township and municipal, rather than county, responsibility. Social services were later returned to county jurisdiction.

Electrical power was introduced in Little Falls after the completion of the dam in 1888. In 1889 the Little Falls Water Power and Electric Company had 22 customers and 225 lights. Although the power plant was improved in 1892, 24-hour electrical service was not provided until 1902. In 1913 the city government installed a "white way" of electric street lights on ornamental iron lamp standards along both sides of 1<sup>st</sup> Street South. Thanks to the power produced by the dam. Little Falls was the first community outside of the Twin Cities to have a "white way". Little Falls Water Power and Electric was consolidated into Minnesota Power and Light Company in May of 1924. Little Falls served as a division headquarters for the Minnesota Power and Light's statewide network of facilities.

Many of the city's large scale public improvements were designed and constructed by the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) during the 1930s. Little Falls' Water Treatment plant, for example, was built by the W.P.A. during this decade. Workers employed by the W.P.A. built the rock walls at Pine Grove Park in 1932, and improved Lindbergh State Park in 1935. At Camp Ripley, workers constructed over 100 buildings, built massive black granite walls, and made other improvements.

The W.P.A. workforce at Camp Ripley numbered 300-700 workers in 1936 alone. W.P.A. workers also compiled 1,500 family biographies which are now in the collections of the Morrison County Historical Society.

## PUBLIC EDUCATION AND THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

The first public school in Morrison County was located in Little Falls and was established in 1855. The first high school class was graduated in 1893. The woodframe high school was destroyed by fire in 1897 and was replaced the same year by a three story brick building which was still standing in 1915. This building was later called Washington School and converted in a grade school. A new brick Collegiate Gothic style high school was completed in 1914.

Other early school buildings in Little Falls included Columbia School (built in 1892). Hawthorne School (built in 1894), and Lincoln School (built in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, burned and rebuilt in 1903).

Efforts to organize the Little Falls Public Library began in 1892. Many merchants and others in the community contributed money to purchase the library's first books. Tax support of the library began in 1893. Little Falls citizens who helped organize the library include Mrs. M. M. Williams, W. M Fuller, S. R. Davidson, Rev A. A. Joss, Mrs. A. A. Joss, Sadie Fuller, Charles A. Lindbergh, Sr., J. H. Rhodes, and John A. Burkey. The Library was first located in rented rooms in the Butler Block. In 1902 the library board of trustees applied to Andrew Carnegie of \$10,000 in grant funds to construct a library building. The contributors who matched the original Carnegie grant included Charles A. Lindbergh, Sr., and members of the Weyerhaeuser and Musser families. The Craftsman style library was designed by Minneapolis architect Fremont D. Orff and dedicated in February of 1905. Today the Little Falls' Carnegie library is recognized as one of the best preserved and most architecturally distinctive of the 65 Carnegie libraries in Minnesota. One of the important forces behind building the library's collection was Jenny Lind Brown Blanchard who was librarian beginning in 1911.

## PARKS

Little Falls has an extensive system of public parks which were created through the foresight of local residents. Perhaps the most-well known park in Lindbergh State Park just outside the southwestern city limits on Lindbergh Drive. The park was named for Charles A. Lindbergh, Sr., a progressive Republican Congressman, and was established in 1931 when 110 acres of land were donated to the state by the Lindbergh family in his memory. It was improved by the W.P.A. in the 1930s. The park was increased in the 1960s to its present 328 acres. Several of the park's buildings are on the National Register.

Adjunct to Lindbergh State Park is the house where Charles A. Lindbergh, Jr., spent summers as a boy. Lindbergh was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his solo flight across the Atlantic in 1927 and won a Pulitzer Prize for his book *The Spirit of St. Louis*. The Minnesota Historical Society now owns and interprets the site, which is on the National Register.

Another early park, Pine Grove Primeval Park, is located on the west side of Little Falls on West Highway 27. The park is within a 57-acre tract of timber which harbors one of the few remaining stands of virgin white pine trees in the state. The park was created through donations for Charles A. Weyerhaeuser, M. M. Williams, A. R. Davidson, R. Drew Musser, and other citizens, and was improved by the W.P. A. in the 1930s.

## CAMP RIPLEY

Camp Ripley is located approximately ten miles north of Little Falls on Highway 371. The Minnesota National Guard's camp was established in 1931 just south of the site of Historic Fort Ripley (described in the Native American context.) Senator Christian Rosenmeier, who served ten years in the state legislature (1922-1932), introduced the legislation that established the military reservations. During the summer of 1932 the first group of guardsmen encamped at Ripley. By 1936 130 buildings had been constructed. By the end of the 1930s the camp had the capacity to train an infantry division of approximately 9,000 men in two weeks. Camp Ripley is now the largest National Guard training Camp in the country.

## CIVIC LEADERS

Many individuals in Little Falls made valuable contributions to the civic life in the community by holding public office and serving on various boards, committees, and organizations. Many of Little Falls' most important civic and political leaders were downtown business people, and much of Little Falls' local government activity occurred in their offices and places of business, as well as in City Hall (for example, see Roberts and Roberts 1993). Downtown Little Falls served as a political focal point of the community and was the site of political gatherings and events of public importance. While not all political leaders were merchants, Little Falls' business people served as mayors, city councilmen, county commissioners, and filled many other elected and appointed city and county offices, as well as a number of state and federal positions.

The political influence of women in Morrison County has its roots in social groups, study clubs, and various other volunteer organizations which were forerunners for woman's political activism. Women's organizations were important, particularly in the years before World War II, because they allowed women to work toward specific improvements at the local and state levels without threatening the existing social order.

Five of the city's most well-known political leaders who held state and national offices are briefly discussed below.

Clarence B. Buckman (1851-1917) was a businessman involved in agriculture, lumbering, and other ventures in the city. He was appointed U.S. Deputy Marshall in 1912. Buckman was the owner of the Buckman Hotel, a downtown Little Falls landmark. He represented the 6<sup>th</sup> District in the U.S. Congress from 1903-1907 and served several terms in the state legislature (1881-1903).

Charles A. Lindbergh, Sr., (1859-1924) was a progressive Republican congressman who represented central Minnesota in the U.S. Congress from 1907 to 1917. He was also an unsuccessful candidate for governor in 1918. Lindbergh began to practice law in Little Falls in the spring of 1884 and worked with various partners, including his brothers. He served one term as Morrison County Attorney in 1891-1892. His first office was in the Marotte Brick Block and in 1892 Lindbergh's law firm was located in the Butler block. Lindbergh specialized in real estate and land sales and represented several large Little Falls companies including the Pine Tree Lumber Company, as well as other Weyerhaeuser-Musser interests (Larson, *Minnesota History* 1973, 1590).

Nathan Richardson (b. 1829) was a well respected early settler, businessman, attorney, politician, and historian. When Morrison County was organized in early 1856, Richardson was elected as the first Registrar of Deeds and ex-officio clerk of the first county board of Commissioners. He was the first mayor of the city of Little Falls in 1889 and was re-elected to that office for the next five terms. Defeated in 1894, he was reelected in 1896 and was mayor for several more terms. He was also the first postmaster, serving eleven years, and served as Chairman of Township Supervisors and as County Attorney. He was elected to the state legislature in 1867, 1872, and 1878. Richardson worked for many years to secure legal justice for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, and provided many acknowledged, as well as anonymous, charitable services to the citizens of the community (Mellor 1994).

Christian Rosenmeier (1874-1932) moved to Little Falls circa 1914 as a young attorney. He held the office of County Attorney through 1920 and became involved in two area banks. IN 1922 he was elected to the Minnesota Senate. At the time of his death in 1932 he was chairman of the Senate Rules Committee. In the senate he introduced legislation which created the C. A. Lindbergh State Park at Little Falls and the National Guard Camp at Fort Ripley. The Burton/Rosenmeier House, which Rosenmeier purchased in 1914, is on the National Register (Jenkinson and Roberts 1985).

Gordon Rosenmeier (1907- 1989), son of Christian Rosenmeier, was a prominent Little Falls attorney. He served in the state senate from 1940 until 1971 and was considered to be one of the most powerful men in the Minnesota Legislature. He also lived in the Burton/Rosenmeier House.

The civic contributions of Little Falls women are described less frequently in most published historical accounts. Eight of these women are highlighted below:

Jenny Lind Brown Blanchard (b. 1873) was the head librarian of the Little Falls public library beginning in 1911 and was pivotal in establishing the library's modern collection. She was an active member of the First Congregational Church where she organized the Highland Club for young women. Blanchard was a member of the Civic Improvement League and the Musical Art Club, assisted in the organization of the Lake Region Library Club, was president of the State Library Association, and was a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution. She was co-founder of the local chapter of the Red Cross (Foster 1924, 31).

Sadie Barton Brown (b. 1876) taught in Little Falls public schools for eleven years and was principal of the Hawthorne School for six years. She was a member of the Board of Education for six years and its president for three. Brown was a 21-year member of the library board, a member of the Civic Improvement League, and 6<sup>th</sup> district president of the state federation of women's clubs for four years. During World War I she was county chairman of the Women's Committee of the Council of Defense and chairman on the Liberty Loan Drive. She was a member of the Farm Bureau board of directors, and child welfare board, and the Junior Red Cross committee. She was also the chairman of the Women's Committee of the Republican Party, a charter member and the first president of the Shakespeare Study Club, and a charter member of the Musical Art Club (Foster 1924, 39).

Clara Kingsley Fuller was the editor of the Transcript Publishing Company, a daily and weekly newspaper in Little Falls, from 1908 until her death in 1941. She acquired the position when her husband, W.M. Fuller who was secretary, treasurer and editor of the company, died in 1908. Clara Fuller remained as editor, president and major stockholder of the Transcript Publishing Company until her death in 1941.

Grace Hill LaFond (b.1876) taught in Little Falls schools for four years and in 1917 began working at the *Daily Transcript*. She became co-publisher and eventually publisher when her publisher husband, Edward M. LaFond, died in 1947. Her civic contributions included her service as public library board member, secretary of the Junior Red Cross for two years, city chairman of the Women's Committee of the Council of National Defense during World War I, County chairman of YWCA drive in 1917, county chairman for a Russian Relief in 1922, and vice chairman of the county Republican committee (Foster 1924, 167).

Sarah Walker Musser was a well-known philanthropist and member of social, cultural, and charitable organizations. She was involved in the Civic Improvement League, Public education, and efforts to provide social services for the community. She helped establish Carnegie funding for the library. She was a member of the state board of education during the 1910s.

Bertha Matilde Rhodes (b. 1875) operated a private kindergarten in Little Falls for several years. She organized the Junior Boy Scouts, helped campaign for the city gymnasium, and organized public support for the improvement of the high school. She was the founder and first settlement worker of the Civic Improvement league and its first juvenile court officer (Foster 1924, 267).

Gertrude Hilborn Staples, who moved to Little Falls in 1888, was the first women to be elected to Little Falls Board of Education. She was prominent in church, educational, civic, and charitable work (*Nichols' Headlight*, November 1899, 7).

Maud Moon Weyerhaeuser moved to Little Falls in 1898 after marrying Charles A. Weyerhaeuser. She was known for her organization and involvement in many social, cultural, and charitable groups in Little Falls. She served on the board of the public library for many years and helped establish Carnegie funding for the library. Weyerhaeuser was a member of the Civic Improvement League and helped establish the Musical Art Club which is discussed in the Cultural Development context. She was a member of the United Charities board, the Woman's City Club, and the Y.W.C.A. national board (Foster 1924, 341).

Civic leaders whose contributions postdate 1945, the ending date of this study, include Minnesota Supreme Court Justice John Simonett who served 14 years on the Minnesota Supreme Court and retired in 1994, and his daughter Anne Simonett who was appointed Chief Judge of the Minnesota Court of Appeals in 1994.

## SOCIAL SERVICES

Throughout Little Falls' history, many individuals and groups have organized to enhance the quality of life in the city. Groups like the Child Interest Club and the Little Falls Civic Improvement League sponsored numerous improvements and amenities which were dedicated to the public good. Religious groups, such as the Franciscan Sisters, the Knights of Columbus, and the Women's Guild of Little Falls, also provided necessary social services as the community developed.

The Child Interest Club was the outgrowth of a 1914 group called "The Young Mother's Club". By 1924 it had broadened its scope of work to include any activity of benefit to child life. The club raised money to help hire a community nurse, urged the passing of laws for the abolition of child labor, gave clothing and groceries to the poor, and Athling beach and skating rink and helped the playground at St. Otto's orphanage.

The Little Falls Civic Improvement League was founded by Bertha M. Rhodes. She also served as the group's first settlement worker and the first juvenile court officer. The league was responsible for the placements of nurses in schools beginning in 1917. Other activities of the Civic Improvement League included clean up and health campaigns, juvenile court work, deaf and crippled children benefits, children's street fairs, story hours, and financial support of a free bed at the hospital (Foster 1924, 179).

## HOSPITALS

One of the first public hospital was Hall's Hospital, established by Dr. Elmer E. Hall in February 1914. The hospital was devoted mainly to surgical cases (Fuller 1915, 361). Many of the city's largest health-related institutions in Little Falls were established by religious orders. The city's largest and most long-lived hospital, St. Gabriel's is discussed below under the Franciscans.

## FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF LITTLE FALLS

On March 1, 1891, the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls was established as an independent diocesan religious order. During the next 100 years, the sisters established schools, hospitals, and social institutions in Little Falls and elsewhere. As their activities expanded, their original convent on the southern edge of the city grew to encompass a large complex of buildings. The early history of this French-Canadian order, which was founded in Belle Prairie, is beyond the scope of this study and is documented in Ahles 1977 and Lorsung 1990.

Sister Mary Frances Beauchamp was elected as Mother Superior of the new order in 1891. The Sisters immediately began to raise funds to build a convent in Little Falls which was a house hospital and orphans' home as well as the motherhouse.



In 1891 Major Ashley Morrill, a prominent land and mill owner in Little Falls, donated a 5-acre plot of land at the southern end of Little Falls for the new motherhouse. Construction of the new four story brick convent began in June of 1891.

The Sisters moved into the still-incomplete building in the fall of 1891. By December a group of orphans that had been placed in the care of the Sisters had moved in, and the hospital had received its first patient. St. Gabriel's Hospital formally opened January 15, 1892. Dr. G. M. Fortier was the first doctor and surgeon.

In 1893 Rock Island, Illinois, one of the places the Sisters had gone in their efforts to raise money, asked the Franciscans to establish a hospital in Rock Island. The first patient was admitted in 1893, beginning a long history of the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls developing, building and staffing hospitals throughout the United States.

By 1893 the Sister's activities in Little Falls were expanding as well. The number of orphans in the St. Cloud Diocese who were placed in the care of the convent was increasing. In response, the Sisters built St. Otto's Orphanage in 1895 at a cost of about \$25,000 on a site south of the convent. In 1919 when the Sisters' 25-year contract for operating the orphanage expired, the St. Cloud Diocese chose to move the orphanage to St. Cloud. The people of Little Falls "were saddened and stunned by the news and were determined to do everything in their power to keep the orphans where they were" (Lorsung 1990, 36). Nevertheless the orphans were transferred to the diocesan facility in St. Cloud in 1924. The vacated orphanage was remodeled to become St. Otto's Home for the Aged. North and South porches were added to the building and a separate building, which was once used a cottage for orphaned babies, was converted into a service building and garage (Lorsung 1990, 37).

By 1915, with 54 sisters, 10 novices, and 5 postulates, the Franciscan Sisters had outgrown their Motherhouse, which was also serving as the hospital. In May of 1915, they began to construct a new three-story 50-bed fireproof hospital. In 1916, after Minnesota state law required that all hospital employ registered nurses, the Sisters established the St. Francis School of Nursing. In 1922 the sisters began St. Francis High School, discussed under parochial education in the Cultural Development context.

By 1954 there were approximately 100 Franciscan Sisters engaged in teaching more than 2,500 students and children of the diocese of St. Cloud. In addition to two schools of nursing, the Sisters operated St. Francis High School for girls, five parochial schools, four catechetical schools, and the St. Cloud Children's Home. In 1954 there were 130 sisters engaged in Hospital work in ten hospitals located in Minnesota and Wisconsin, 35 sisters operating three homes for the aged, and 27 sisters caring for 140 dependent children at the St. Cloud Children's Home (*St. Cloud Register*, August 27, 1954).

## STATE HISTORIC CONTEXTS

Little Falls' Public and Civic Life context falls within four of the statewide historic contexts developed by the State Historic Preservation Office: "St. Croix Triangle Lumbering, 1830s-1900s", "Early Agriculture and River Settlement, 1840-1870", Railroads and Agricultural Development, 1870-1940", and "Northern Minnesota Lumbering, 1870-1930s".

## HISTORIC PROPERTIES

### EXPECTED PROPERTY TYPES

#### Government, politics, public services

- Armories
- City halls
- Courthouses
- Fire stations
- Hospital and clinics
- Jails
- Police stations
- Politicians' offices
- Poor farms and poor houses
- Post offices
- Sewage treatment plants
- Social service buildings
- Utilities plants
- Waterworks

#### Other public improvements

- Bandstands
- Bridges
- Cemeteries
- Dams
- Parks
- Picnic areas
- Playgrounds and sports facilities
- Prominent natural features
- Recreational structures
- Sidewalks, unusual paving
- Statuary and monuments

#### Houses of individuals associated with the context

Offices of related organizations

#### Institutional campuses

- Administration buildings
- Auditoriums
- Barnes
- Chapels
- Classroom buildings

Dormitory/residence halls  
Fences, walls  
Garages  
Greenhouses  
Gymnasiums  
Hospitals  
Infirmaries, clinic  
Kitchens, refectories  
Landscape features  
Laundries  
Libraries  
Orphanages  
Maintenance buildings  
Outbuildings  
Powerhouses  
Schools  
Staff housing  
Storage buildings  
Water towers

## PRESERVATION ISSUES

### LITTLE FALLS HERITAGE PRESERVATION SITES

No current listings

### NATIONAL REGISTER SITES

Little Falls Carnegie Library	108 3 <sup>rd</sup> Street NE
Morrison County Courthouse	Broadway and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Street
Burton-Rosenmeier House	606 1 <sup>st</sup> Street SE
Little Falls Commercial Historic District	Downtown Little Falls

Just outside of the city limits:

Lindbergh State Park W.P.A./Rustic Style Historic Resources	Pine Creek Twp.
Charles A. Lindbergh House	Pine Creek Twp.

### HPC PRESERVATION GOALS AND STRATEGIES

In 1994 the HPC will begin to conduct a comprehensive standing structures survey of Little Falls in order to identify properties which are significant to this context.

### BIBLIOGRAPOHY

Context bibliography appears later in this report.

**CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

**CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

# CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT 1848 – 1945

## HISTORIC SKETCH

This historic context encompasses social, cultural, religious, and artistic life in Little Falls. It includes the activities, institutions, and organizations which the citizens of Little Falls founded in an effort to create social interaction and to bring physical beauty, culture, art, music, and recreation into their lives. The development of fine arts, journalism, and the cultural impact of ethnicity are included within its scope. Property types include structures such as churches parochial schools, lodge halls, institutional buildings, band shells, and the homes of individuals associated with the context. The time span for this context begins in 1848 with the first permanent Euro-American settlement at the site of Little Falls, and ends in 1945, the ending date for this study.

## ETHNICITY

Little Falls' cultural characteristics have been strongly influenced by the choices, behavior and contributions of its ethnic groups. Factors as diverse as income stratification, voting behavior, musical taste, architectural style, and religion have all been influenced by ethnicity. Many ethnic groups were easily identified by the separate church parishes or congregations which they formed. Little Falls' early ethnic makeup included immigrants from French Canada, Germany, Poland, the British Isles, and Scandinavia. Little Falls also contained Morrison County's concentration of "Old Stock" or Yankee Americans. In many Minnesota communities these New Englanders founded the first businesses and industries. In 1860 there were 55 people in Little Falls who had been born in Mid-Atlantic states and in 1880 there were 443 people who had been born there (Wright 1981, 62).

The French Canadians arrived in Morrison County in the mid-1800s. Using Crow Wing--which has been a major fur trading center since 1837-- as a kind of anchor, homesteading French Canadians spread down along the eastern bank of the Mississippi to Belle Prairie and Little Falls. Belle Prairie had between 30 and 40 French Canadian families by the end of the 1850s and more continued to arrive during the next three decades. Many French Canadians in the Little Falls area worked as lumberjacks and river drivers for logging companies. By 1863 the Catholic parish at Belle Prairie numbered 160 families, some of whom were sixth-generation family members in the community. By 1855 French Canadians comprised one-third of the population of Little Falls. Land records show that Belle Prairie, Little Falls, and Ripley Township in Morrison County had numerous landowners with French surnames in 1892 and that many of the same names persisted into the late 1970s (Rubenstein 1981, 41).

German immigrants from Bavaria, Westphalia, Slovenia, and other regions settled Morrison County in large numbers. In fact, Morrison County is located within one of the most heavily German Catholic parts of the U.S. German-speaking people were Minnesota's single largest immigrant group during the years 1860-1905, and a large concentration of those Germans who were Catholic settled in Morrison, Todd, Stearns, and nearby countries. Many German Catholics were attracted to central Minnesota through the missionary efforts of Father Francis X. Pierz. In the 1850s, while living in northern Minnesota, Pierz wrote a series of articles, published in Germany and elsewhere, which publicized the economic opportunities of central Minnesota's virgin farmland.

German immigrants to Little Falls established ethnic-based parishes, businesses such as the German American National Bank, and cultural organizations such as community bands and orchestras.

Polish-speaking immigrants arrived in rural Morrison County about 1868 and were in Little Falls by at least 1876. They were part of a large immigration of poles to Minnesota which began in the 1860s but increased considerably in the 1880s. Many of the state's Polish immigrants settled in cities and towns rather than on farms, and found work in the logging industry. They settled in ethnic clusters in Morrison County and brought with them the desire to continue to practice their religion in their own language and with their own customs. Like German Catholics, they established ethnic-based parishes such as St. Adalbert's in Little Falls which served as social and religious centers for their community.

Scandinavian immigrants to the Little Falls area included Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes. Norwegians comprised between two and ten percent of the population of many Morrison County townships in 1905 and worked in the logging industry. Swedes comprised 10-25 percent of the population for many townships in 1905, particularly in central and western Morrison County. Charles H. Lindbergh, Sr., was one of Little Falls most well known Swedish immigrants. The county had some Danish farmers in the Northwestern and southwestern townships in 1905, but very few Finns.

Many immigrants to Little Falls maintained distinct customs, dress, language, social groups, and other cultural traditions into the 1920s. The loyalty challenges of World War I, however, convinced many immigrants to make fewer overt references to their ethnicity and to appear more "American". Many church groups in Little Falls began to hold more services in English during World War I, and in the 1910s many businesses dropped words such as "German" from their names.

## RELIGION AND PAROCHIAL EDUCATION

Religion played a central role in the lives of the immigrants who settled Morrison County and Little Falls. As one historian has written, "For many of the state's ethnic groups, the immigrant church was the hub around which community life rotated. Frequently the first institutions founded within ethnic enclaves, churches and synagogues, provided religious, social and economic services that softened the shocks of adjusting to life in an alien culture" (Chapman 1989, 509).

Early settlers to Little Falls started church groups very soon after moving to the area. Churches served an important social function as they brought people together on a regular basis. Members of a particular congregation met together as often as three or four times a week, and church meetings were by far the largest regular assemblies in community life. For many women, the church and its auxiliary associations were likely to be the only organizations to which they belonged outside the home, and close friends were often drawn from sister members (Morain 1988,13-14). Churches also were a means of fostering order, enforcing certain behaviors and instilling convictions or individual responsibility on the early citizens of Little Falls and Morrison County.

Predominantly Catholic since its beginnings, Little Falls still counted more than 65% of its population as Catholic in 1989 (Yzermans 1989, 674). Protestant denominations were also well represented in Little Falls, some of them with strong historic ethnic traditions.

The history of religion in Little Falls is intertwined with the history of education. Parochial education helped maintain cultural identity, and parish schools served as social centers for many ethnic communities. Many of Little Falls' educational, medical, and charitable organizations and institutions were also founded by the city's Protestant and Catholic congregations and religious groups.

The history of Little Falls' religious orders, including the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls and the Benedictines who taught in Little Falls' parochial school, fall within the scope of this context. The Franciscans are discussed in some detail under the Public and Civic Life context, however, because of the public service nature of their health care and charitable institutions.

## CATHOLIC CHURCHES

The Catholics were a diverse group. The French-Canadian, German, and Polish immigrants to the Little Falls area first co-existed within the established parishes but soon split to form a new ethnic-based parishes. These parishes helped preserve the language, customs, art and music of immigrant groups. As churches were established, they also served as political, union, and fraternal, and social meeting halls.

The first Catholics arriving in the Little Falls area were the French Canadians who worshipped at the LaCroix Mission which was established in Belle Prairie, several miles north of Little Falls, in 1838 by a priest from Michigan. In 1852, the mission was served by central Minnesota's well-known missionary Father Pierz. The LaCroix Mission is the second oldest Catholic Church in northern Minnesota. Mass was held in Little Falls in 1859 as a mission served by Father Joseph Buh, pastor in Belle Prairie (Yzermans 1989, 671). The Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls established their first convent at the mission in Belle Prairie.

### *SAN SALVADOR (HOLY REDEEMER)/ ST. FRANCIS XAVIER*

In 1867, the first Catholic parish in Little Falls was established under the direction of Father Ignatius Tomazin and was named San Salvador, or Holy Redeemer. By 1870 there were 30 Catholic families within the parish, most of the French Canadian descent. As German immigrants came to Little Falls they attended San Salvador until 1886 when they formed their own parish, Sacred Heart.

After several years of planning, in 1892 the parish built a new church which was used until 1949. This church was dismantled in 1958 (Yzermans 1989, 674).

## *SACRED HEART*

The Sacred Heart parish was formed in 1886 under the direction of Father William Lange. Parishioners were comprised mostly of German-speaking immigrants who had been members of San Salvador parish. A church was built in 1887, and veneered with brick in 1892. The parish built the first parochial school in Little Falls, St. Aloysius. In 1896 the school had an enrollment of 175 German-speaking Catholic students and was taught by five Benedictine Sisters. By 1912, the parish had grown and the church was enlarged. A home was purchased in 1928 to serve as a convent for the teaching sisters. (Yzermans 1989, 672).

## *ST. ADALBERT'S*

As Polish immigrants arrived in Little Falls, Catholic Poles attended either Holy Redeemer or Sacred Heart churches. By 1896, Polish Catholics began to plan to establish their own parish. In May of 1900 St. Adalbert's was incorporated and Father John Guzdek was the first pastor. A new church was built at 307 7<sup>th</sup> Street SE in about 1897. It was veneered with brick in 1900 and a new rectory was built in 1903.

During the 1920s, St. Adalbert's was the largest parish in the city. The church was extensively damaged by fire on November 29, 1953. On November 10, 1957, the parish was informed that it would lose its resident pastor and the parish was to be attached to St. Mary's parish (Yzermans 1989, 673). The church building was razed in 1971.

## *OUR LADY OF LOURDES*

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish was organized in 1917 when Polish Catholics living on the west side of the city asked for permission to organize a parish. The former Antlers Hotel, which was built in 1890 near 208 W. Broadway and had stood vacant for several years, was purchased and remodeled as a temporary church, school, rectory, and convent. Father John Musial was the first pastor. Construction of a new church located at 208 W. Broadway, began in 1922, and the dedication was held June 3, 1923.

In 1919 a parish school was established in the former hotel building and staffed by the Benedictine Sisters. By 1942, the parish agreed to build a new school and convent for the teaching sisters, and on October 12 1952, the parish school was dedicated. The former Antlers Hotel was razed in 1951 and a new rectory was built in 1953.

## *ST. MARY'S*

In 1944, Bishop Busch issued a decree dissolving St. Francis Xavier and Sacred Heart parishes and from the two formed St. Mary's parish. At the time of the merger the parishioners once again faced some of the cultural and language barriers which had divided the parishes a generation before. Both church buildings were used until 1946 when Sacred Heart burned. The parish used the St. Francis church until 1949 when a new St. Mary's School was completed and services were held there. St. Mary's new church and rectory were built in 1956 and dedicated in 1957. The Colonial Revival Style church was patterned after the historic St. Joseph's Cathedral in Bardstown, Kentucky.



## *ST. FRANCIS HIGH SCHOOL*

The Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls began teaching high school classes in 1922 with the goal of educating novices who were coming to the convent from small towns and rural areas where there was often little or no opportunity for a high school education (Lorsung 1990, 34). From this beginning, in 1926 St. Francis High School was established. The school was located in the original Franciscan Convent, a building which had also spawned the Sister's hospital, home for the aged, and orphanage home. (See the Public and Civic Life context for more information on the Franciscan order).

When the school term opened in 1926, there were 16 girls enrolled in St. Francis' boarding and day school. In 1931, construction began on a new school building which could accommodate an enrollment of over 200 pupils, including provisions for 100 residents. The school was enlarged in 1942.

## PROTESTANT CHURCHES

As with most Catholic parishes in Little Falls, some Protestant churches were founded as ethnic churches. For example, the First English Lutheran Church, organized in 1891, was largely a Norwegian congregation that was affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. Some services were still being held in Norwegian as late as 1926. Zion Lutheran Church, which was organized circa 1896 by a German-speaking congregation, continued to hold services exclusively in German until 1919. Here were also Swedish Methodist, Swedish Lutheran, and Swedish Mission Friends groups in the city.

### *FIRST METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH*

The first Protestant services in Little Falls were apparently Methodist services held in the 1840s. The first organized Protestant congregation was the English-speaking congregation of the First Methodist Episcopal Church, founded in 1857. The church was organized under Rev. A. J. Nelson. The group's first church building was at 2<sup>nd</sup> street NE and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NE and was built in 1857. The congregation declined in membership and the church was sold to San Salvador Catholic parish in 1870. The congregation reformed and a second church was built on 2<sup>nd</sup> street NE in 1885 and moved slightly to the north in 1895. It was enlarged in 1903 and altered again in 1915. A parsonage was built in 1905. First Methodist merged with First Congregational in 1969 to form First United Church.

### *FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH*

First Congregational Church was organized in Little Falls in 1859. The first pastor was Rev. E. Newton. The first church building was built circa 1876 at 4<sup>th</sup> street NE and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NE. IN 1892 this church was moved to the side of the lot and incorporated into a new brick veneer structure which was dedicated on November 2, 1893. A gymnasium was added in 1912 and a parsonage was built in 1915. St. John's Evangelical and Reformed Church merged in First Congregational in 1947. First Congregational merged with First Methodist to form First United Church in 1969.

### *FIRST UNITED CHURCH*

This congregation was formed in 1969 through the merger of the First Methodist Church and the First Congregational Church, discussed above. A new church was built on 1<sup>st</sup> Street East after the merger.

### *EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF OUR SAVIOR*

Like many early Episcopal churches in the state, Little Falls' Episcopalian Church was first organized as a missionary effort by Bishop Henry Whipple. The group held its first services in Little Falls in 1858. A church was built circa 1879 on 1<sup>st</sup> Street NE and moved to the present site at 113 4<sup>th</sup> Street NE in 1900. In 1903 the building was sold to the Swedish Methodists and moved to 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Wood Street SE. Our Savior's built a new church on the site in 1903 from designs by Chicago architect John Lutcliff. In 1980 the Church of Our Savior was nominated to the National Register on the basis of its distinctive design. The nomination states, "The Church of Our Savior is an excellent and well-preserved example of the second generation of Episcopal churches constructed in Minnesota. Its style is more an echo of England and a reflection of early twentieth century eclecticism than a variation on the Upjohn churches characteristic of Episcopal churches constructed in Minnesota during the late nineteenth century—the so-called 'Whipple Churches'" (Nelson and Skrief 1980).

### *SWEDISH METHODIST CHURCH*

A Swedish-speaking Methodist congregation was organized in 1902 and purchased the Episcopal Church in 1903. The congregation moved the church to 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Wood Street SE.

### *FREE METHODIST CHURCH*

The Free Methodist Church was founded in 1929 and met in various places until constructing a church on 7<sup>th</sup> Street NE circa 1935. IN 1964 the group purchased the former First Lutheran Church on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street NE.

### *ASSWMBLY OF GOD*

The Assembly of God Church was established in 1942 and a church was built in 1947 at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and East Broadway (Razed circa 1990). A parsonage was built in 1960 and a second church was built in 1990 at 3009 North County Road 76.

### *FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH*

Many of the Little Falls' earliest churches were started by the missionary wings of major denominations. The first services of the First Baptist Church were held in 1892 in a missionary railroad car operated by the American Baptist Publication Society which was stationed temporarily at Little Falls. A church was built in 1895 at 400 East Broadway and later razed. A new church was built in 1951 and enlarged with a school addition in 1963.

### *FIRST ENGLISH LUTHERAN CHURCH*

Organized in 1891, the First English Lutheran Church was a Norwegian-speaking congregation affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. The first church was built in 1893 at 413 3<sup>rd</sup> street NE and remodeled in 1926. Some services were still being held in Norwegian at late as 1926. A second church was built in 1962 at 408 Riverwood Drive.

### *ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERN CHURCH*

Zion Lutheran Church was organized circa 1896 by a German-speaking congregation. A church was built at 411 4<sup>th</sup> Street NE in 1902. Services were held exclusively in German until 1919. A new church was built in 1947 and a Sunday school wing was added in 1967.

### *BETHEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH*

A Swedish-speaking congregation organized Bethel Lutheran Church in 1892. The group purchased a Swedish Mission Friends church on 11<sup>th</sup> Street SW in 1893. This church was sold to the Presbyterians in 1902 and moved from the site. A new church was built in 1902 and a steeple and steps were added in 1916. A parsonage was built in 1912.

### *SWEDISH MISSION FRIENDS/GRACE CONVENT CHURCH*

The Swedish Mission Friends congregation organized in 1891 under the name Scandinavian Christian Mission Church. The group built a church on 11<sup>th</sup> Street SW in 1892 but sold it in 1893 to the Bethel Evangelical Lutheran congregation, another Swedish congregation, because their membership had declined. A second church at 2<sup>nd</sup> street and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE was purchased in 1902. A third church, Grace Covenant Church was built in 1967, at 1201 Riverwood Drive.

### *PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH*

In 1902 a Presbyterian group bought the Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church building at 11<sup>th</sup> Street SW and moved it to 315 4<sup>th</sup> Street SW. The congregation was still in existence in 1915 the church was razed in about the 1960s.

## FRATERNAL AND SOCIAL GROUPS

The history of fraternal organizations in Little Falls begins with the Masonic Lodge, the first permanent group, which was founded in 1879. A chapter of the women's counterpart group, the Order of the Eastern Star, was also founded. Some fraternal groups were small and informal and met in members' homes, while others were larger structured organizations and developed charters and constitutions and owned lodge halls. Buildings in Little Falls such as the Antlers Hotel, the Buckman Hotel, and the Pine Edge Inn housed numerous social gatherings. Many of the city's early fraternal groups and social organizations leased space on the upper floor of commercial structures downtown.

Geographer John Hudson describes these organizations:

The predilection that townspeople had for lodges and secret societies was a direct import from their northeastern or middle western, small town origins. Rare was the town that could not boast of a Modern Woodmen or Odd Fellows organization within two years after the first buildings appeared on the town site, and most fraternal organizations had their women's counterparts that were no less active. These were the social gathering points for town dwellers. Among the officers of the lodges, poetry clubs, church groups, and various auxiliaries were the names of all leading merchants and their spouses. Successful farmers, especially in later years, joined these groups but rarely participated to the same degree that townsfolk did (Hudson 1985, 125).

A post of the Grand Army of the Republic was established in Little Falls in 1883. In 12915 the group was meeting in Maurin Hall on First Street. A woman's counterpart group, the Woman's Relief Corps, was also established. An Odd Fellows lodge was founded in Little Falls in 1886. In 1915 they were meeting in a leased hall "which they have occupied twelve years and sub rent to almost all other orders in the city" (Fuller 1915, 122).

Winchell, writing in 1881, noted that secret societies were not as numerous in Little Falls as in many communities of its size (Winchell 1881, 611). One reason that secret societies and fraternal groups were less popular may be due to the fact that Morrison County's large numbers of Catholics were discouraged from splitting allegiances between the Church and fraternal or secret societies, most of which were quasi-religious in nature (Morain 1988, 22).

Little Falls did have many organizations that were extensions of churches, however. They included such groups as St. Joseph's Benevolent Society, the Knights of Columbus, St. Joseph's Society, the Catholic Order of Foresters, and the Highland Club.

Church groups, study groups, and other women's groups provide some of the few public activities available to women. Social, cultural, religious, and philanthropic organizations involved women in the development of the community. Through these groups, women could take an active role in civic affairs alongside men who traditionally were the founders and leaders of a community. Many Little Falls women became well-known and prominent public leaders through their within clubs and organizations. Jenny Lind Blanchard, organizer of many clubs including the local chapter of the Red Cross, Bertha Matilde Rhodes, founder of Little Falls Civic Improvement League and other social clubs, and Maud Moon Weyerhaeuser, who actively promoted arts and culture, are just a few of the women who helped develop the social and cultural aspect of Little Falls. (For more information see the Public and Civic Life Context).

Other social and cultural clubs organized in Little Falls included the Shakespeare Club, The Young Mother's Club (organized in 1914 by Mrs. Earl Wetzel), the Civic Improvement League, and the Red Cross. During the war years a number of organizations were also developed to aid in the war effort. During World War I, for example, Committees for the Council of Defense and the Liberty Loan Drive each had a women's and men's organization (Foster 1924, 39). More recent groups have included the Little Falls Lions Club, which was established in 1922, and the Rotary Club, which was chartered in 1940 with Clifford Olson as president. Civic groups are also discussed under Public and Civic Life context.

## THE ARTS

One of the most important cultural groups in the city, the Musical Art Club of Little Falls, was formed through the efforts of Miss Maybelle Brannen. At the initial meeting the following officers were elected: President, Miss Maybelle Brannen; first vice president, Mrs. V. Y. McNairy; second vice president, Miss Florence Millspaugh; secretary, Miss Leonilla Miller Wessel; treasurer, Miss Romona Randall. Programs consisted of local talent and the presentation of a paper on some subject of interest in the musical world. Out-of-town artists appeared on some of the later programs in 1911.

In 1911 Maud Moon Weyerhaeuser and Sarah Walker Musser became driving forces and generous benefactors of the group. Musser served as President in 1914 and 1915. Weyerhaeuser, executive board member and program chair, brought highly acclaimed classical performers to Little Falls. Weyerhaeuser, a soprano, was also a frequent performer, as was Laura McColm, sister of R. D. Musser. In March of 1919 the Maud Moon Weyerhaeuser Hall was dedicated on the second floor of the newly completed Morrison County Lumber Company building at 119 1<sup>st</sup> Street NE. Created of Maud Moon Weyerhaeuser as a gift to the community, the concert hall became the permanent home of the Musical Art Club. In 1924, the club had a membership of over four hundred.

## COMMUNICATIONS AND THE PRESS

The history of journalism in Little Falls begins with several short-lived newspapers led by the first newspaper established in Morrison County, the *Northern Herald*, which was founded by Charles French in the remarkably early year of 1856. After two or three months, he sold the office to the Little Falls Manufacturing Company. The *Northern Herald* was succeeded by the *Herald* which was published by C. E. Church from circa 1857 1859 when, according to Winchell "he yielded himself to the God Bacchus, and the Herald was discontinued." From that time until 1874, Morrison County was without a newspaper; then the *Little Falls Courier* was started by A. DeLacy Wood, who continued its publication about two years (Winchell 1881, 611). The *Little Falls Sun* was established in September of 1882 by the Sun Publishing Company and operated by various owners and editors until 1887 when it was sold to the *Transcript* (Fuller 1915, 103-104).

The first man to make a success of newspaper work in Little Falls was H. C. Stivers, who in 1876 began the publication of the *Little Falls Transcript*, one of the city's two most long-lived newspaper (Winchell 1881, 611). Stivers also published a daily called the *Daily Transcript* for about nine months in 1880. Between 1881 and 1889 the *Little Falls Transcript* was published by J.F. Pearson, and, beginning in 1889, by Wheaton M. Fuller. Fuller expanded the venture by organizing the Transcript Publishing Company and adding a daily paper, *Daily Transcript*, in 1892. The Transcript Publishing Company was owned by several local and outside investors including, from Little Falls, W.J. Fuller, A. R. Davidson, M.M. Williams, Edmund Rothwell, and Drew Musser (Fuller 1915, 103-104). Charles Lindbergh, Sr.'s name also appears in the original Articles of Incorporation of the Transcript Publishing Company in 1892.

The new firm was set up to publish a daily paper and to engage in other aspects of the printing business. Lindbergh was selected to serve as a member of the board of directors and as vice president with fellow officers John Berkey, president, and W. M. Fuller, secretary and treasurer. Fuller continued as editor of the daily and weekly newspaper until his death in 1908 when his widow Clara Kingsley Fuller, assumed the job. Clara Fuller remained president and major stockholder of the Transcript Publishing Company until her death in 1941. Edward M. LaFond, who had been business manager of the newspaper since 1906 and had worked there since 1899, was the next publisher. His wife Grace Hill LaFond, who had worked at the newspaper since 1917, became publisher upon his death in 1947. In 1907 the Transcript was located in the Victor Block at 206 East Broadway (Fuller 1915, 103-104).

The *Transcript's* largest competitor and the city's second-largest newspaper was the *Little Falls Herald*, established in 1889 by Seal and Cross. It was owned by a succession of individuals and partnerships until 1895 when it was purchased by Stephen C. Vasaly, Charles E. Vasaly, and Peter J. Vasaly. In 1907 the paper's office was located in the Herald Building on Kidder St. NE. The three men were still publishing the newspaper and operating its parent Herald Printing Company in 1915. (Fuller 1915, 103-104).

The *Morrison County Democrat* was established in 1886 by C. D. Auyer who published the newspaper until 1908. The paper folded in 1911. It was published in a succession of leased offices including, in 1907, offices at 115 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue S.E.

## STATE HISTORIC CONTEXTS

The topics included in the Little Falls' Cultural Development context fall within four of the statewide historic contexts developed by the State Historic Preservation Office: "Early Agriculture and River Settlement, 1840-1870", "Railroads and Agricultural Developments, 1870-1940", "St. Croix Triangle Lumbering, 1830s-1900s", and "Northern Minnesota Lumbering, 1870-1930s."

## HISTORIC PROPERTIES

### EXPECTED PROPERTY TYPES

#### Ethnicity

- Churches serving as ethnic centers

- Ethnic social halls

- Examples of ethnic influence in art and architecture

#### Religion and Parochial Education

- Cemeteries

- Churches

- Convents

- Parish halls

- Parochial schools

- Parsonages and rectories

- Fraternal and Social Groups
  - Auditoriums
  - Fraternal and social halls
- The Arts
  - Art and music schools
  - Performance halls
  - Studios and galleries
  - Works of local artists
  - Works of outside artists
- Communications and the Press
  - Newspaper offices
  - Radio and TV stations
  - Telephone company offices
- Museums
- Homes of individuals significant to the context

## PRESERVATION ISSUES

### LITTLE FALLS HERITAGE PRESERVATION SITES

No current listings

### NATIONAL REGISTER SITES

Church of our Savior  
Little Falls Commercial Historic District

113 4<sup>th</sup> Street Northeast  
Downtown Little Falls

### HPC PRESERVATION GOALS AND STRATEGIES

In 1994 the HPC will begin to conduct a comprehensive standing structures survey of Little Falls in order to identify properties which are significant to the context.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Context bibliography appears later in this report.

# RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT 1848 – 1945

## HISTORIC SKETCH

This historic context addresses the development of residential neighborhoods in Little Falls and includes the events, themes, and patterns which shaped this development. These factors include transportation routes, location of employment opportunities, location of institutions, natural settling, planned development, real estate speculation, and the settlement preferences and patterns of persons of various income levels and ethnicity. Because most standing structures in Little Falls were built for residential purposes, this context encompasses most of the structures in the city. The time span for the context begins when Euro-Americans first permanently settled at Little Falls in 1848, and ends in 1945, the ending date for this study.

## ORIGINAL PLAT AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT

The first house to be built during the permanent settlement of Little Falls was probably the home of James Green, half-owner of the Little Falls Mill and Land Company which built the first wing dam and boom at the site in 1849. In 1854 when William Sturgis, James Fergus, and Calvin Tuttle founded the Little Falls Company to take over Green's mill and establish the townsite, only two houses existed at Little Falls (Peavy and Smith 1990, 18).

In the spring of 1855 the Little Falls Company (later known as the Little Falls Manufacturing Company) laid out the townsite on part of the 2,000 acres of land which they had been granted by the federal government. Lots went on sale beginning in 1855, selling briskly. The plate was officially filed in May of 1856.

Historians Peavy and Smith provide a colorful description of early Little Falls.

Shortly after the formation of the Little Falls Company [in 1855], Samuel M. Putnam arrived to survey the townsite, and the carpenters who followed in his wake began work on the Fergus home. Over the next few months, sixty men, nineteen oxen, and eight horses worked long hours to lay out streets and erect buildings for the company. . . . [By the spring of 1855], along the muddy streets was a scatter of houses in various stages of completion. The Fergus home, an eleven-room, two-story structure, was already occupied by a goodly number of company employees—a pattern that would persist over the next few years as Pamela [Fergus] shared quarters with carpenters, masons, farmers, blacksmiths, merchants, land agents, and others . . .” (Peavy and Smith 1990, 19-20).

By the end of 1856 Little Falls had been named the seat of Morrison County, a courthouse was planned, and the city boasted eight stores, three hotels, several boarding houses, a school, and a newspaper. By 1857 there were at least 21 families in Little Falls, and life was centered around the activities of the mill and riverfront (Peavy and Smith 1990, 19-21).



The original townsite of Little Falls encompassed approximately 100 square blocks of land on the eastern bank of the Mississippi. The plat's gridwork of streets was aligned parallel with the Mississippi River. Most blocks had ten building lots and a north-south alley.

The original townsite's east-west streets were named for trees (e.g., Walnut, Chestnut, Elm, and Oak) and the north-south streets were numbered. The street names were changed in 1892 when the current system of numbered streets and avenues was adopted. House numbers in the city have also changed several times, although not systematically throughout the town, so that house numbers will vary historically building by building.

## LOCATION

The first houses in the community were located on the eastern bank of the river, many along present-day First Street, the route of the Woods Trail, an early Red River oxcart and wagon trail. Many of the city's first homes were also constructed along other major transportation routes such as roads leading into and out of the city. Residential development generally spread outward from the riverfront and the downtown area (which was first located on the eastern bank of the Mississippi). As in most communities, houses were interspersed with commercial buildings and industrial sites during the city's early years, and commercial, industrial, and residential areas became increasingly differentiated through time.

The location of housing throughout the community was influenced by several topographical features including the Mississippi's river banks, channels, and canal, various swamps, gentle hills, and a ravine which ran from northeast to southwest through present-day downtown Little Falls. Railroad tracks also became a permanent, dominant feature in the city's landscape. On the east side, tracks were laid north and south through the city between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> streets in 1877 and east and west north of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue N.E. in 1880. On the west side, east-west tracks were laid north of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue N.W. in 1880, north-south tracks were laid east of First Street W. and a number of railroad spurs were laid in 1887-1889.

Portions of the west side were first platted as Thayer's Addition following or anticipating the completion of the dam in 1888. The streets on the west side were aligned with the cardinal points of the compass. The north-south streets first bore the letters A, B, C, and D, while the east-west streets were numbered.

In 1892 the *Northwest Magazine* described the west side as follows: "Scores of residences are already built on this addition and visitors with modest means are continually securing lots here on account of their cheapness and excellent location. . . . These lots are especially recommended to laboring people keeping employment in the various mills and factories nearby" (Smalley 1892, 28). The west side was called the Scandinavian part of the city by the *Northwest Magazine* and was the site of the Swedish Mission church, with other Scandinavian churches planned in 1892 (Smalley 1892, 28). The "West Side" school was built by 1892.

Through time, Little Falls grew substantially larger than its original townsite. On the east side, early platted additions generally followed the street alignment of the original townsite, with streets aligned parallel to the river. Later additions on the east side were aligned with cardinal north. On the west side, most platted additions were aligned with cardinal north. There are no large areas which have curving streets within the current city limits, although some areas near the river banks and along bluffs have streets which are not grid-like.

As the city expanded, farm acreage was surveyed into blocks and city streets. Some of these farmhouses and other outbuildings may be standing within present day Little Falls where they were engulfed by growing residential neighborhoods.

During Little Falls' first several decades, most people lived within easy walking distance of their jobs. By the 1910s and 1920s, however, increasing automobile ownership made it possible for houses to be built on more picturesque lots farther from the center of the city. Additions on the edges of Little Falls represent this automobile-age residential development.

## POPULATION TRENDS

The rise and fall of residential home construction followed economic cycles in Little Falls. (See the Logging, Agriculture and Industry, and Commerce contexts for a discussion of these trends.) The success of Sturgis, Fergus, and Tuttle's Little Falls Company between 1854 and 1856 brought with it a boom in population and housing. However, the burst with which the town was founded was short-lived as a flood in the spring of 1856 brought losses to the company. This setback was followed by a grasshopper plague during the summer of 1856 which devastated the county's crops. Subsequently, the local economy crashed and Little Falls lost one-third of its population during the next three years. Land values plummeted, and, despite reorganization, the Little Falls Manufacturing Company collapsed. After this crash, some houses in Little Falls were reportedly dismantled and shipped downriver to St. Cloud where they were reused (Warner 1989, 2).

Little Falls saw its most rapid growth in industry, population, and civic development after the construction of the dam in 1887-1888 and the establishment of Pine Tree Lumber, Hennepin Paper Company, large flour mills, and other industries. The city's population soared to 2,354 by 1890 and 5,116 by 1895 with these improvements. The decades of prosperity which followed stimulated the construction of large numbers of houses. A.R. Davidson, cashier of the First National Bank in 1892, reportedly counted 437 houses in various stages of construction in April of 1892, and he reported that many more were being remodeled or rebuilt (*LFDT*, June 12, 1948).

Little Falls' population rose steadily between 1880 and 1910, when it reached a peak of 6,078. The city experienced a net loss of 1,000 people between 1910 and 1930, and then began steady, even growth until 1960, when it reached 7,551. Interestingly, between 1880 and 1900, the percentage of Morrison County's population which lived in Little Falls rose from 8.6 percent to 25.2 percent. Between the years 1900 and 1970,

between 25.2 and 28 percent of the county's population have lived within the City of Little Falls. (See Figure 9.)

## FIGURE 9

Source: Federal and State Census data.

## DEVELOPERS

Real estate speculation was rampant in Little Falls in the 1850s and again in the 1880s as investment capital flooded into the city. Developers platted new additions, sold unimproved lots, erected houses, and offered financing. It is suspected that some developers were also building contractors.

The first developer was apparently the Little Falls Company, the group formed by Sturgis, Fergus, and Tuttle which platted the townsite. The Little Falls Company began offering free building lots to prospective settlers in 1855.

Another early developer was the Little Falls Improvement Company, which owned extensive property in downtown Little Falls and along East Broadway in the 1880s.

The Little Falls Water Power Company, the company which was formed in 1887 to build the Little Falls dam, was involved in a development company which by 1905 had erected 23 houses on the Water Power Company's property (Warren 1905, 619).

An 1891 issue of *Northwest Magazine* indicates that the firm of Rothwell and Marriott controlled the largest amount of land in the city in that year, and that another agent, Henning Landahl, had managed the sale of property owned by the Little Falls Improvement Company, lots in Searle's Addition, and thousands of acres of farmland in Morrison County (Smalley 1891, 21).

In 1898 John Vertin opened a real estate office which also handled extensive railroad holdings. In the early 1900s Charles A. Lindbergh, Sr., and a partner, Carl Bolander, commissioned the construction of 35 houses and three brick commercial buildings on the west side (Larson, *Minnesota History* 1973, 170).

Several manufacturing companies and other industrial firms in Little Falls also apparently acted as real estate developers. Some companies sold unimproved or improved lots to prospective employees, while others erected modest single family houses which were either rented or sold to employees of the company. Several examples of company-built housing are known to exist in Little Falls.

## STYLES, MATERIALS, AND BUILDERS

Most residential structures in Little Falls are single family homes. Duplexes, double houses, and apartment buildings dating from the years before World War II are rare. Home ownership, rather than rental, has been typical during most periods of Little Falls' residential development.

Houses in the city exhibit a wide range of architectural styles which were popular nationwide including the French Second Empire, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Craftsman, and various Period Revival styles. While some pure examples of particular styles may exist, it is likely that most houses in the city were designed with a vernacular blend of several stylistic influences.

In the many parts of Minnesota, the preferences and cultures of specific ethnic groups are reflected in the residential designs seen in the community. It is not yet known to what extent ethnicity is reflected in residential design in Little Falls.

The earliest houses in Little Falls were probably constructed of logs or roughly sawn lumber produced at the Little Falls Company's mill. Most houses in the city were built of woodframe construction. Little Falls also has a number of brick houses, however, including a collection of cream-colored brick houses similar to those standing in Stearns, Todd, Sherburne Counties, and elsewhere in Morrison County.

Most lumber, millwork, brick, concrete, and foundation stone used in Little Falls housing construction before World War I was probably produced locally. Lumber and millwork companies such as the Little Falls Manufacturing Company, the Enterprise Manufacturing Company, Molde Millwork, and A.K. Hall mill, and the Morrison County Lumber Company were probable sources of lumber, sashes, doors, and molding. Additional millwork and building materials were shipped by rail from cities like St. Paul. It is suspected that lumber prices were reasonable within the city, allowing homeowners of all income ranges to use interior and exterior woodwork extensively in their new homes.

The architectural plans which guided residential construction probably came from a variety of sources. There were a few practicing architects in the city who undoubtedly designed some homes. Little Falls contractors may also have used plans and drawings for single family homes which were derived from various professional journals such as *Carpentry and Building* magazines and *Architects' and Builders' Magazine*. Contractors may also have obtained plans from lumber companies or services such as the Architects' Small House Service Bureau. Other likely sources of residential designs were the architectural plan books or "patternbooks" which were popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Examples include George F. Barber's *Cottage Souvenir* (circa 1887) and *Cottage Souvenir No. 2* (1890), William T. Comstock's *Bungalows, Camps, and Mountain Houses* (1908), and Henry Wilson's *Bungalow Book* (1910). Architectural plans were also published in popular magazines like *Scribner's* and *Ladies' Home Journal*. Pre-cut home kits were sold by companies such as Aladdin of Bay City, Michigan, W.J. Keith of Minneapolis, and the Sears, Roebuck, and Company.

The Morrison County Lumber Company, founded in Little Falls by the Pine Tree Lumber Company in 1907, also sold house plans and specifications in association with its lumber and millwork sales. The company offered a number of plan books which included floor

plans, drawings, photographs, and descriptions of houses. A circa 1920 edition of *Homes of Comfort*, for example, provides floor plans and photographs of 88 different designs for Bilt Well homes (*Homes*

*of Comfort*, no. 42, circa 1920). (See Figure 10.) It is not known how many of these designs were actually built in Little Falls.

Housing construction provided work for dozens of building contractors, carpenters, brick masons, plasterers, plumbers, electricians, and laborers. Many of the houses in Little Falls were also undoubtedly built by their owners, many of whom were employed in local logging, millwork, and related industries and probably possessed construction skills.

## OUTBUILDINGS

In addition to houses, duplexes, and apartment buildings, the residential development context includes all types of residential outbuildings. During the city's early development many Little Falls residents kept chickens, goats, cows, horses, and other livestock at their homes and therefore needed a variety of outbuildings. The transition within the city from barns, stables, and sheds to small automobile garages, and finally to large double and triple garages is an interesting component of the residential development of the city. Also included within the residential development context are residential landscape features, such as fences, retaining walls, gates, benches, and gardens.

## STATE HISTORIC CONTEXTS

Little Falls' residential development falls within four of the statewide historic contexts developed by the State Historic Preservation Office: "Early Agriculture and River settlement, 1840-1870", "Railroads and Agricultural Development, 1870-1940.", "St. Croix Triangle Lumbering, 1830s-1900s", and "Northern Minnesota Lumbering, 1870-1930s."

## HISTORIC PROPERTIES

### EXPECTED PROPERTY TYPES

- apartment buildings
- architect-designed homes
- carriage houses
- company-built housing
- driveways
- duplexes and double houses
- fences
- gardens
- garages
- hitching posts
- houses
- other outbuildings
- patternbook homes
- planned developments
- pre-cut homes
- residential landscape features
- sidewalks
- walls
- homes of individuals significant to the context

## PRESERVATION ISSUES

### LITTLE FALLS HERITAGE PRESERVATION SITES

No current listings.

### NATIONAL REGISTER SITES

Burton-Rosenmeier House  
Weyerhaeuser and Musser Houses

606 1<sup>st</sup> St. SE  
Highland Avenue

### HPC PRESERVATION GOALS AND STRATEGIES

In 1994 the HPC will begin to conduct a comprehensive standing structures survey of Little Falls in order to identify properties which are significant to this context.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Context bibliography appears later in this report.

### FIGURE 10

Source: Morrison County Lumber Company, circa 1920.

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