

Identification of Historic Properties for Local Landmark Designation

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ABSTRACT: This research project for the McNair Scholars Program consists of researching and identifying structures of cultural and/or historic significance in the city of Duluth in order to nominate them for local landmark designation status. Several local structures that collectively portray and reflect Duluth's heritage as a whole were researched. The project covers an introduction to Duluth and historic preservation as well as a brief look at the character of Duluth through three distinct property types and their historical contexts that illustrates their significance as local landmarks. The three property types researched in this paper include: multifamily dwellings, the Work People's College, the fire houses and fire halls, and lastly, the pump houses with associated water reservoirs (cisterns).

1. Introduction

Upon acceptance into the McNair Scholars Program, I pursued a topic that would allow me to delve into the heritage and history of the town I grew up in and love. The project involved researching various properties to determine their historical context and importance to nominate them for local landmark status. My love of history and architecture began and flourished in Duluth; the manageable size of this historic city allowed for my discovery, curiosity and creativity to grow. As I found myself immersed in the pages of history books about Duluth, I discovered how Duluth's past is really multi-faceted and exciting.

This research was a project in architectural history. The necessity of this study includes the potential destruction of remaining structures of historic and/or cultural heritage value within the city of Duluth, Minnesota. The importance of and reason for preserving said structures



Figure 1. Downtown in Duluth 1905 with Central High School clock tower prominently seen in skyline view.

is to preserve the character of the city as a whole. A single shop in the west end business district itself may not be grandiose or distinct, but when many of these buildings of character come together, they create a district of historical significance and character that tells the story of Duluth and gives a voice to its distinctive past. Although many significantly historic buildings have been regrettably destroyed, there are still examples that can be seen today; it is important to retain and preserve this early character as it represents the roots and evolution that shaped modern Duluth, a city recently named by Outside Magazine's Best Places to Live: Best Towns 2014.

The structures of Duluth provide a physical link to the past that takes history out of the textbooks and places it in the present. Important people, events and actions have left their historic essence in these structures that helped to shape our regional identity and cultural heritage. Although Duluth may not be the oldest city in the Midwest or as well-known as Chicago, it certainly does have a unique character representative of its landscape, early industry,

social class structure and overall city growth and expansion. It is important to preserve the historic fabric of Duluth's cultural and architectural resources so that they will be available for future generations to learn from, study and enjoy. It is the retention of these resources that allow Duluthians to create an understanding and a strong sense of identity and awareness in knowing how definitive Duluth has been in shaping the Midwest region and the nation.

The historic resources relevant to this study included The Work People's College, a home to radical Finnish labor organizers who opposed the labor injustices imposed on the working class by the Industrialist Tycoons; the municipal services of the fire and water departments whose structures were crucial to the safety and sanitary conditions in the city; and lastly, the multi-family dwellings where the various ethnic groups and classes separated into their prospective enclaves.

2. Historic Preservation

Historic preservation, or heritage preservation, was defined as the curatorial management of the built environment in the past. This is an old definition and has been expanded to now include many aspects of cultural heritage; such examples are natural landscapes, archaeological sites, archives, and folklore. Preservation begins at the local level with community advocacy and support from the local Heritage Preservation Commission. With the enactment of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA 1966) and the corresponding Advisory Council of Historic Preservation (ACHP), the federal government has created a system for local citizens to advocate for their community's historic resources. The NHPA is the federally mandated document that sets up the legal framework, rules and guidelines for creating a means to preserve and safeguard existing cultural resources.

3. Landscape

Duluth is a beautiful city full of rich cultural, social and architectural heritage. It has a striking unique landscape with distinctive topography that is the result of early geological processes. The last Glacial Lake, named Glacial Lake Duluth, had the edges of its prehistoric lake basin 500 feet above sea level where the current Skyline Parkway cliffs remain (Hartley 36). The remarkable hills of Duluth are Gabbro rock, the result of glacial pressure on volcanic lava coming together to form solid bedrock. Rising above I35, one such example can be seen in the large Gabbro rock formation, known as “Goat Hill” (Macdonald 11; Hartley 2). This made for difficult settlement as most of the rock had to be blown out to accommodate roads and neighborhoods. The street layout of Duluth also roughly follows the ancient beach benches that were created when Glacial lake Duluth receded; the avenues run east and west up and down the hill, but the streets run north and south because at the time north and south passages were the only means of traveling around as the hills were really rocky escarpments that few were reluctant to tackle. The landscape where the St. Louis River flows into Lake Superior, the St. Louis River estuary/water basin, located near the Fond du Lac community, not the reservation, gave the early name to Duluth as “The Head of the Lakes.” The breathtaking cliffs of the North Shore, the sandy beach bar of Minnesota Point, which is the longest natural freshwater sand bar in the world, and the natural harbor where Minnesota and Wisconsin Points create a

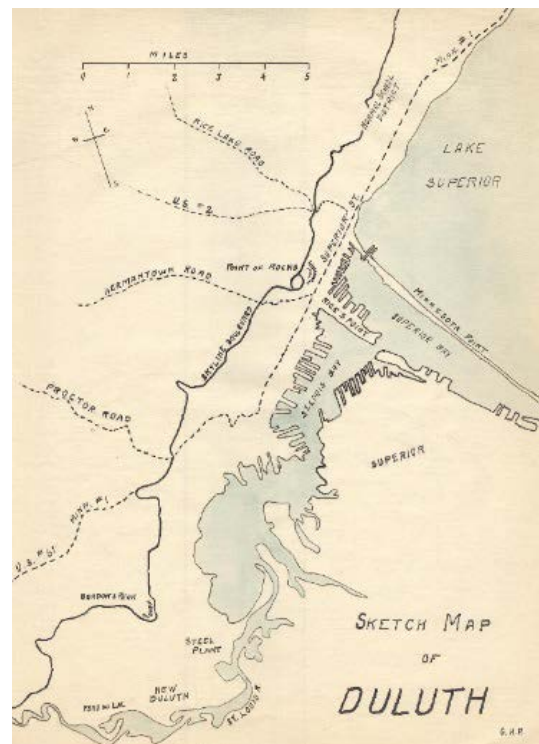


Figure 2. Hand drawn picture displaying the meeting of Lake Superior and the St. Louis River estuary. This meeting gave Duluth the name "Head of the Lakes". Source: G.H Primmer.

natural channel were formed after the Lake Superior Basin drained into the other Great Lakes after the last geological period (Hartley 37).

4. Industry

The 1854 Treaty of La Pointe was ratified in 1855 by the US government and the Ojibwe tribe. The Treaty allowed for all of northeastern Minnesota to be opened for white settlement. The city's promise was so great it was termed, "The Zenith City of the Unsalted Sea," by Dr. Thomas Foster in reference to the great fresh water lake and its unlimited potential. Development in Duluth can be attributed to its ideal geographical location and its abundance of untouched natural resources; it was a perfect setting for the beginning of creating a "Chicago of the West" for "extractive industries" (Hudelson, 51).

Established as an important outpost for the industrial frontiers and upon arriving from other northern areas such as Ohio and Michigan in the 1850's and early 1860's, the Americans began the businesses involving lumber and fishing resources. Jay Cooke and his Philadelphia connection to the east coast, where his empire was based, noted in newspapers that Duluth was "destined to be a great city of the west". It is for this reason that many eastern architects traveled west during the 1870's-1880's in order to find work building the quickly expanding Duluth into a notably architectural city. Prominent architects included the firms of Palmer, Hall & Hunt, Traphagen & (then later) Fitzpatrick, Wagenstein & Baillie, German & Lignell, and Gilliusen & Ellingsen(Lathrup 68,74,78,82,89,108,168,220). The settlement was becoming a major transportation thoroughfare by land and water and with the growing railroad and shipping industries it was decided to be the terminus for the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad (LS & MS RR) (King railroads181). During the boom time for the railroad companies Duluth had fifty trains leaving every day, which were serviced by nine rail carriers (MacDonald 141).

Along the shoreline of Lake Superior, known as Rice's Point where Garfield Avenue is currently located, was the early commercial center of industrial production for Duluth. It was a showcase of industrial buildings for primary industries such as cereal/grain, fishing, timber/logging, and shipping. There are other industries, somewhat forgotten, that also included woodworking (furniture), beer-making and banking, shipbuilding and canvas/leather business (Sommer 194, 196, 200). Originally, the people of the eleven town sites relied heavily on the fishing industry that provided the finances that sustained the city's economy and made available food provisions for the citizens. In fact, so much fish was eaten when other varieties of food were scarce that fish was the staple in their diet, while the Duluthians had the lovely nickname of belonging to the "Ancient and Honorable Order of the Fish Eaters"(Cooley 24). Another industry was shipping which, was one of the most important industries as it facilitated the exchange of goods and migratory peoples to and from all reaches of the nation and the world. In the early 1860's, ships would bring brave, adventurous pioneers who would settle in villages and small communities.

Lumber, also a primary industry for early Duluth, was important for many reasons. So great was the need for sufficient building materials in the 1860's and 1870's that the majority of the lumber was used to accommodate the influx of pioneers and immigrants who arrived and needed shelter (Ryan 165). It became one of the boom businesses that brought workers to the northland, both American and foreign born. For the lumber industry, the mills were located precisely in the harbor of Duluth where the old growth logs floated directly to the saw mills thereby disregarding the need for cross-country transportation (Minnesota canal scheme). The saw mills were a primary source of income and produced an enormous amount (416,000,000 board feet) of lumber in 1900 (Ryan 171). Unfortunately, as other industries such as mining and

cereals/grain began to develop, the logging industry could not compete. Furthermore, there were a series of devastating fires that occurred and the lumber industry came to a screeching halt, only producing 11,000,000 board feet of lumber in 1921 (Ryan 178). The last sawmill closed in 1926.

Beer-making, a popular and somewhat hidden industry, was popular for a time as beer was safer to drink than water due to numerous typhoid epidemics. The Fitger's Brewery complex and a small building from the People's Brewery are a few remaining structures from that past period. At one point, Duluth was the number one grain and cereal exporter in the region, and it was this industry that lifted Duluth out of the depression caused by the 1873 crash of financier Jay Cooke's empire.

Moreover, mining and the iron ore industry were the major players in all aspects of Duluth's urban development; from social, economic, and especially political. The Iron Range, consisting of four iron ranges with towns such as Tower, Soudan, Virginia, and fittingly Mt. Iron, which has the largest taconite processing plant, supplied and supplies much of the iron ore that was used around the nation; especially in creating the steel skyscrapers of the East. Clyde Iron Works, a foundry located in West Duluth, was a prolific producer of steel machines such as the steam shovels that helped to dig the Panama Canal. The Duluth Missabe and Iron Range Railroad (DM & IR RR) still operates today and, as the result of a buyout, now operates as part of the Canadian National railroad company. It carries the majority of the nation's ore and is the railroad for which Minnesota is well known (King 188). Although many of the early industrial sites and buildings have been severely altered, burned down completely or were demolished, there still remains a sense of how important these businesses and associated structures were to the beginnings of economic growth in Duluth.

5. Social

For immigrants, America was seen as a way out, a new place of “bright colors” and promising prosperity for new immigrants, but this was not always so as they experienced many hardships later (Cahn 68). The get-rich-quick American scheme had promised economic and financial returns, but as it happens quite often in history, the rich got richer and the poor stayed poor or got poorer. Subsequent to the Civil War, there was a national feeling of a new, positive direction. This time of building, expansion and solidification of nationwide industrialization required labor. The high demand for labor was the force behind the large flow of newly arriving emigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe to find a place in the foreign American culture (Cahn 98). They arrived by the thousands in search of new opportunities, escaping from the religious, political and economic oppression in Europe (Miller 209). But soon realized, instead of the American dream of freedom and privilege as rewards for personal success, they found no rewards and little freedom.

Duluth was an industry town, and for the most part it was the steamship and railroad recruiters who advertised in the Scandinavian Emigrant Agency in Chicago as well as in the foreign language newspapers of the US. Their motive was to build up Duluth’s reputation, as it was then seen to be a major distribution center for immigrants who came to work on the railroads and remained after completion to settle some land (Cahn 76, 98). This was a major factor for the flood of foreign-born peoples during the 1870’s through the early 1900’s (Hudelson 71). One such example was advertised in the foreign language newspapers in America and abroad for “three thousand laborers” to work on the railroads, in addition to “10,000 immigrants needed to settle on railroad land between Duluth and St. Paul” (Kaups 73; Duluth Minnesotian 1869).

With the completion of the Lake Superior and Mississippi Rail Road (LS&MR RR) in August 1870, an influx of “new immigrants” from eastern, central and southern Europe came to northeast Minnesota. This contrasted to the “old immigrants” from northern and western Europe (Kaups, 71; Hudelson 13). When speaking of the segregation by ethnic distinction later in this historical context, it is good to note that these newer emigrants tended to be “characterized by whites as Eastern or Slavic, not as Nordic or Scandinavian” (Waisanen 203). The Duluth canal opened and ships from Sault Saint Marie began the transfer of migratory peoples; and agents who worked for steamship companies advertised for the immigrants to come by steamship, as travel by land was more arduous and costly. As a catch, the agents extolled the efficiency and comfort of traveling through the Great Lakes by steamship and would “sell tickets to anyone who could afford them” (Kaups 72). The population boomed from 33,000 people in 1890 to 53,000 in 1900; even going so high to accommodate over 100,000 citizens in the 1920’s (Hudelson 45).

Duluth was home to many immigrants who comprised a multi-ethnic working force. The Swedes comprised the largest group at 33.5%; the Scandinavians in general were at 49.6%. The statistical information of many of the immigrants showed that they were predominantly male and of labor age. It was 4:1 males to females and most males were occupied in the building and service trades (Kaups 74). Once permanent settlement took place, architecture, class struggle and ethnic differences would take hold and cause some very interesting social dynamics. The mix of cultures and peoples along with the unique landscape and architecture of the city created at the Head of the Lakes produced a character that cannot be duplicated.

As the immigrants arrived individually, in groups and with thier families, they often stuck together, creating small neighborhoods and communities particular to their ethnicity. Once these

neighborhoods became more established and solidified, the area produced its own unique heritage and culture. This can be seen in the shape, size and location of the remaining historic structures.

6. Multi-Family Dwellings

In 1856 when Duluth was first platted, pioneer log cabins and wigwams were built side by side. As more American pioneers arrived, eleven original settlements were created initially with the individuals residing in villages and small communities. The largest and most defined was that of Oneota; Portland, Endion, Rice's Point, Cowell's Addition and Fremont which, unfortunately, was built on a Lake Superior marsh bed and was swept away during the night

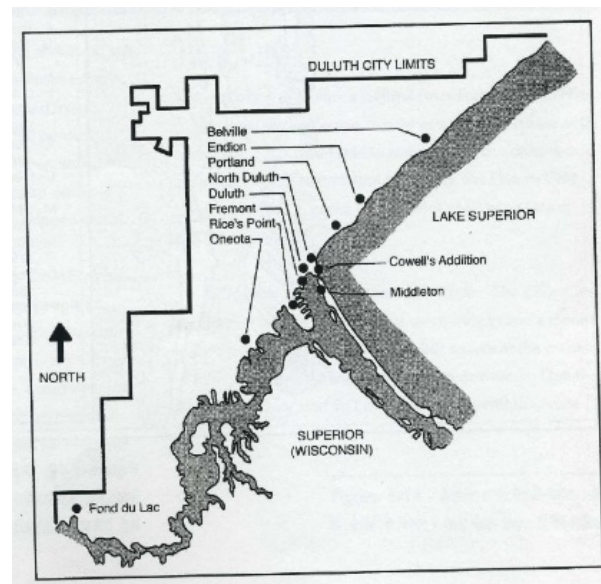


Figure 3. Map of the eleven original town sites.
Source: Hudelson "Vernacular Architecture".

in a horrible lake storm (Dierckins and Norton 6). There were also Minnesota Point, Belville and Lakewood. At the time, the town was fairly walk-able, albeit a marsh full of mud and mosquitoes. The buildings were built densely together, and all social classes and ethnic groups lived in a random arrangement. As the settlements solidified and began to develop, the division of classes by financial and ethnic standing became apparent. The various ethnic groups kept to one another, as it was important that each group had its own ethnic enclave in which to return to at the end of the day.

The area of Oneota, which is now Lincoln Park and West Duluth, were the highly industrial areas of Duluth with sawmills, boat slips, coal and ore docks where many industrial workers were housed in modestly constructed homes. In the downtown area were the commercial and business districts. Moving north up the shore in what is now called the East End are exquisite period mansions from the 1890's to 1920's that exemplify the opposite side of the spectrum. The huge, grandiose mansion homes of beautiful detail and character in the East End are quite a contrast to the humble multi-family dwellings seen in the West End. One can sympathize with the workers who fought for a living wage and joined together to form unions to fight against \$1.50-\$2 a day wage for immigrants and \$3-\$4 a day wage for Americans.

For the capitalist tycoons such as Congdon, Olcott, Hartley, Tower and others who wanted to protect their profits and assets, unions were a nuisance and not



Figure 4. Eustone Apartments, formerly Salter Terrace, was built in 1887 and designed by Oliver Traphagen for Rev. CC Salter and his family. Source: Rachel Phelps.

tolerated lightly. One can see the injustice being fought solely from that architectural perspective. The middle class, who could afford to “get away from the hustle and bustle of downtown and who were fortunate enough to obtain some land, settled in Hunter’s Park and what is now Woodland (Scott 26).

Funds in early days of Duluth were hard to come by during the depression years after the 1873 crash and these edifices were constructed predominantly during the 1880's-1920's. For the

smaller modest residences “there was an immediate use to practicality” that outweighed aesthetics (Blegen 495). Modest multi-family dwellings were affordable when land was expensive, geography limited and the topography difficult to build upon. For those who were financially stretched, the appeal of building long, multi-family row houses, two family duplexes, detached homes, single family and mixed use with the store or business on the bottom and the residence up above was more suitable economically. This style of home is prolific throughout Duluth. Each row house has essentially the same rectangular structure but with ornamentation and decoration abundantly different on each structure, from generous craftsmanship details in the wealthier row houses, to moderate and very plain.

7. Residential Architecture

Duluth’s architectural heritage is important because the buildings are distinct in vision and are the enduring structures of emerging modern Duluth. They are the last representatives of the dynamic social growth and change that occurred during the boom years of economic prosperity and the ensuing crashes. More importantly they are useful in identifying certain time periods in which buildings of that type were constructed.

The various architectural styles can be seen in the remaining structures around town from the public buildings to private dwellings. The variations in the architecture include the commercial structures of downtown Duluth, the more vernacular working-class multi-family dwellings, and the middle and upper class structures that become progressively grander in detail, scope and size when travelling from west to east Duluth. The placement of the row houses in Duluth had much to do with the geographic constraints of settler life on untouched earth. As Duluth is built upon a large Gabbro rock shelf, the settlers had to blast rock out of the hills in order to make it level enough to sustain a well-made structure. Initially, before the blast

technology was used, the houses and shanties were built right upon the rock; this was seen in the section of town called “the Glen”, what is now known as “Goat Hill”, where the southern Italians built their shanties as all the other more suitable flat ground was occupied.



Figure 5. Picture of the "the Glen" in the 1880's; the southern Italian neighborhood in which houses were built directly upon the Gabbro Rock. Source: Zenith City.

The widespread use of sandstone is a hallmark of such buildings as First Presbyterian Church, Fire Hall #1, the 1888 city jail, the Board of Trade building, the Pastoret block and the imposing and well-known Central High School. The sandstone was popular during its day as it symbolized what the rebuilding of America would be after the horrific Civil War. It meant solidarity, security, permanence, success; everything that the American Dream stood for. It was easily extracted in blocks and shipped by water (Eckert 1, 2). Tony Dierckins of Zenith City Press says, “The famous sandstone blocks were quarried out of Fond du Lac and northern Wisconsin and came in a range of colors from yellows to deep red and burgundy. The sandstone was important for “building up cities from New York to Omaha, but it was primarily used in Chicago” (Zenith City Online). This famous building material was used in Duluth for a short



Figure 6. Central High School designed by the firm of Palmer, Hall and Hunt. Built in 1892 in the Richardsonian style. Source: NightSkyMn.

period of time from the 1880's to the 1920's.

Richardsonian and Gothic Revival styles of architecture utilized this stone to create imposing monumental structures. The impetus for the material was that after a devastating fire in 1883 building codes required buildings to be erected

with a more fire resistant material, as most buildings were made of flammable wood (Eckert 24, 25). It was used only for a short period as the Chicago World's fair, in 1893, created a new en vogue style of architecture utilizing the smooth white stone that became prominent in the City Beautiful movement; the Duluth Civic Center is a great example of this movement.

8. Water Department

As the influx of immigrants into Duluth increased the population, the need for fresh drinking water became a serious issue after the continual typhoid epidemics swept the city. The insufficient sewage systems kept sanitation at a minimum and the residents were essentially drinking their own



Figure 7. The Lakewood Pump Station built in 1897 as a direct result of the contaminated water system in Duluth. It is still in operation today and supplies the freshwater needed daily.

contamination and run-off from slaughterhouses (The Evening Herald, "For purer water). The citizens sought to move the intake pipe further up the shore and farther out into the lake to avoid the contaminated water. The intake pipe was situated only 400 feet from the downtown establishment in the 1870's. The lack of a suitable sewage system created some of the worst viral epidemics in Duluth's history. St. Luke's and St. Mary's hospitals had their beginnings in these times to accommodate the growing numbers of patients as Duluth's population swelled and receded. Concurrently, the cisterns and pump houses that brought fresh water to the surrounding towns also were being constructed. Henry Truelson, nicknamed "Typhoid Truelson," is the pioneering municipal authority that fought oppositional political figures in order to bring clean,

fresh drinking water to Duluth. He was considered “a servant of the people” and very active in the political and business arenas of Duluth. Truelson served as mayor, public works commissioner and alderman (Huch 198). He also owned a few businesses and was known as an honest and dependable man with a distinct German, broken English-accented way of speaking; an accent that was ridiculed by his persistent, irritating adversary, the Duluth News-Tribune.



Figure 8. Henry "Typhoid" Truelson, circa 1900. Source: Hudelson "By the Ore Docks".

Henry Truelson wanted “a fair deal”, he fought and won for the rights to de-privatize the water company and immediately set out to build a brand new pumping station far enough away from the city proper to ensure no contamination and the cleanest, purest water possible.

This building finished in 1897 located on the scenic highway 61 is called the Lakewood Pump Station and is a superior example of a red sandstone, semi-chateau-style building. Flowing from a five-foot intake pipe about 1,500 feet out and around 80 feet down into Lake Superior the pump station is equipped with four massive pumps;

enough power to supply 43 million gallons a day of fresh water if needed (Duluth Water Supply). The engineers understood the unique topography and devised an engineering plan that incorporated some of the longest pump lines for a city of its size at the time. They designed and placed reservoirs and cisterns strategically as Duluth incorporated the eleven original town sites that spread out from the main downtown areas. From the main pump house at Lakewood through hundreds of miles of pipes water is channeled through pipes running parallel to the lake which then go up the inclines at ninety degree angles to the booster stations and cisterns to push the

flow of water uphill to the outlying areas above Fourth Street into Piedmont, Woodland and Observation Hill. The water is supplied through the mains to four zones: Lower zone (near the Lakewood Station), Middle, Woodland, and Orphanage; and later the Gary, New Duluth Station while Fon du Lac is supplied by the springs (Duluth water supply)

9. Fire Department

Remarkable topography has created an unusual water system, which in turn, was also used to help supply the Fire Department with a much-needed resource. Conjointly, upon the hills of Duluth, the fresh water held in cisterns also assisted by being convenient to supply easily accessible water for drinking and firefighting; there was a dual purpose; drinking water and fire suppression. As homes were all built, initially of wood, there was a demonstrated need for accessible water in order to reach the fires of the expanding city. Furthermore, building homes upon the rock shelf was tedious enough; the hills did nothing at all to assist in fire fighting. At first, no houses were built above Fourth Street as the water pressure failed to adequately flow uphill.

The Fire Department of Duluth began in 1869, but had its official beginning in 1871, with Edgar Warren who went around the city inspecting stoves and stove pipes, chimneys, and other fire hazards (Vigliaturo and Keppers 9). The Fire



Figure 9 Fire Engine House Number 1. Designed by Traphagen and built in 1892. Source: Zenith City.



Figure 10 Fire Engine Number 1 with the bell tower removed. Source: Rachel Phelps.

Department like the city itself came from very modest beginnings, and being a firefighter in the early days of Duluth was a dangerous and busy job with a volunteer fire department on call 24 hours a day 7 days a week. Initially, one had to pay to become a volunteer fire fighter and purchase his own uniform. In the beginning, these volunteer firefighters felt they had a duty to protect their nascent city when massive fires caused great devastation. Initially, the Hook and Ladder Company had a bucket brigade that would draw water from Lake Superior by hand to fight fires. A funny occurrence happened when the water buckets slowly disappeared and the city sent out an ad in the Duluth News-Tribune for the return of the fire buckets. Fires were a constant hazard; in fact, when Duluth was able to obtain a brand new fire engine for its first firehouse, an unfortunate occurrence happened when a coal from the stove above fell on the dry hay below and set the firehouse ablaze. It burned down along with the newly acquired engine, a loss that the city felt markedly as it left them relatively helpless at the onset of fires (Vigliaturo and Keppers 12). The fire halls, which were larger and held more equipment than the smaller fire houses, were distributed as effectively as possible in order to contain all fires across the ever widening city of Duluth.

10. Labor

Turning to the history of labor in the city, an important factor to remember is the fact that Duluth was a “steel trust town”. The conglomerate United States Steel Corporation (U. S Steel) was created in 1901 and combined the companies of J. D Rockefeller, J.P Morgan, after whom Morgan Park, Duluth is named, Andrew Carnegie, Charlemagne Tower, and Henry Oliver, of Oliver Mining Co, who owned most of the mines in northeastern Minnesota. In addition to owning the mines, the corporation also owned the ore docks, ore boats and ore boat manufacturing facilities. They were known to be “militantly anti-union” they sought to break up

any unorthodox activity and were not opposed to using scabs, gunmen, and Pinkerton agents on some occasions (Hudelson and Peterson). Long hours, low wages and a general feeling of disenchantment brewed discontent and unsettled many of the people employed by them. The immigrants who came over in the hopes of a better life were met with low pay and scant social support or benefits to help them in times of strife. This large immigrant population, while working in the same craft, earned lower wages than their American counterparts; in addition,

there was a great deal of competition to secure a decent-paying job. Many of these immigrants were of Finnish heritage.

The Finns, who were a large part of the immigrant population, have a long and interesting immigration history.

Immigration was greatly influenced by the media literature such as newspapers, weeklies, advertisements, letters to home and connections to relatives who returned to Finland. Such literature extolled the vast beautiful American landscape, open to freedom and prosperity, rich in land and various plentiful foods. Consequently, this

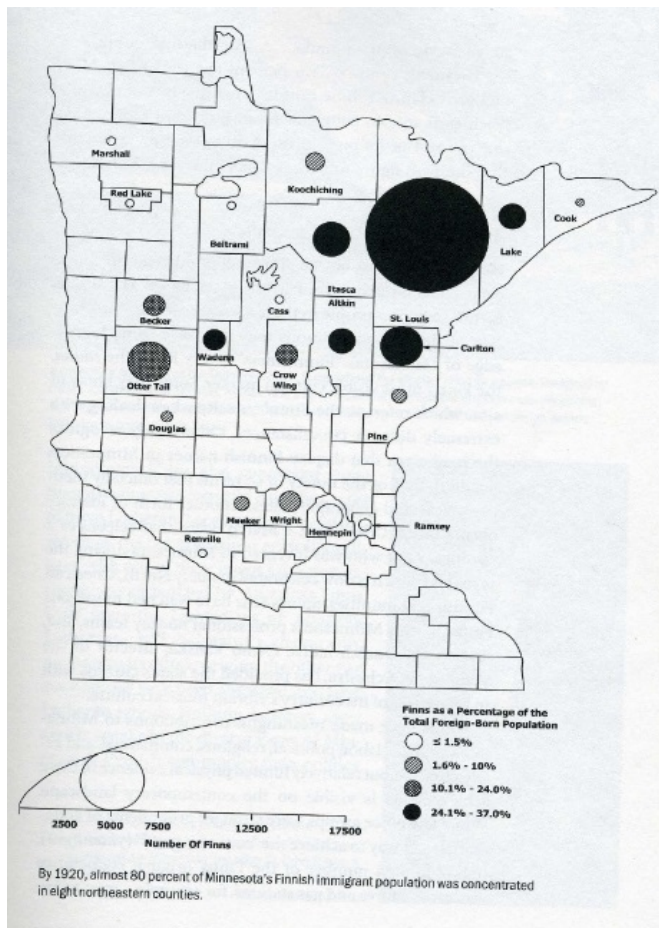


Figure 11. Distribution of Finns in Minnesota. Source: Alanen, "Finns in Minnesota".

trend, commonly referred to as “American Fever”, was at its peak during the years 1870-1920 (Aalito 65). Between the years 1883-1920, over three hundred thousand emigrants arrived in the United States to begin new lives and settled in a climate and landscape similar to their own

(Aalito 63). The majority of the Finns that came to the new world departed from the area known as the Bothnias and settled in mostly northern areas that stretched from Ohio and Michigan to the west coast in California (Kero 55). They wanted a place similar to their own homeland and created the largest Finn community in the mining town of Hancock, Michigan (Aalito 66). Some factors that lead to their immigration included: increase in population resulting in division of arable farm land, political relations with Russia were detrimental to the stability of the economy and social sphere, and oppression of culture (Kero 58). As a result of their immigration they brought much culture and heritage reminiscent of homeland life. One infamous group of Finns became involved with Industrial Workers of the World, or IWW. These Finns began their political involvement when the idea of a seminary school became less appealing and more irrelevant as the social movements in Duluth began to take precedence. The Work People's College, Työväen Opisto, was once home to many of the radical Marxist theoreticians who taught political theory and felt the injustices of social and economic inequality. They wanted to create change and make a difference in the lives of their fellow Finns and union members. They address these social, political and economic issues through teaching political theory and advocacy along with other general academic studies

11. The Work People's College

The Finnish immigrated to the U.S. seeking new opportunities, as many Europeans did, to escape the political, social and economic oppression of Europe and their homeland. They found employment as workers in the industries

Figure 12. The Work People's College, Työväen Opisto, in operation from 1904-1960.

of the day such as logging, fishing, mining, production, sawing and dock-working. Finns were the most numerous ethnic group behind the Swedes and Germans, and were seen as one of the lower ethnic groups next to African Americans. They were given the most laborious tasks such as clearing land for logging and the most menial of tasks such as cleaning horse manure. They created a strong Finnish community that stretched from Ohio along Lake Superior to the northern mining towns of Michigan and over to Minnesota. They sought a place where they could work hard and own some land, a place for their freedom. They traveled with the growth of the railroads and knew little or no English, but were very literate in their native tongue, with 98% literacy as compared to some of the other ethnic groups. These sturdy Finns came from Finland,



Figure 13. The former Work People's College, now called Riverview Apartments. Source: Rachel Phelps

a cold, harsh northland next to Russia, a land similar to Duluth. They created a strong Finnish community through “Hall socialism”, a term derived from the Finnish (Finnish English) for hall, *haali*, a place of meeting where social activities such as dramatic clubs, agitation committees, women's associations, glee clubs, bands, sewing circles and dancing engaged

members of the community. It developed out of their temperance societies; a means to organize social activities as a way to abstain from alcohol use as alcoholism was prevalent in the community (Hudelson 56; Kostianien). They created newspapers and were a very literate group who subscribed highly to Finnish newspapers, weeklies, magazines and other forms of literature. The newspapers in which their ideas and languages could be expressed were a means of

transferring information on political and ideological issues that were relevant and important to the community as a whole.

The Finn College, which began as a theological Seminary transplant of the Finnish National Church of America in St. Paul, *Suomalainen Kansanopisto ja Teologinen Seminaari* or the Finnish People's College and Theological Seminary, began to teach practical training in academic studies with ideological and religious instruction (Kostianien). The seminary was built on the site of the 1888 Spirit Lake Hotel, which burned down a few years later. Spirit Lake, is located in Smithville next to Spirit Island, an island so-named because of its sacred ties to the Ojibwe people. As part of their creation story, they traveled from the east coast following a spiritual Miigis shell that would lead them to the place where “food grows on water”. It was prophesized that they would arrive at a turtle-shaped island. This island also happened to be located in the St. Louis River estuary and was the last place at the end of the Ojibwe migration. In 1904, the leaders from the Finn Church purchased the property and built a two-story wooden structure of dorms and classrooms. It was the main operating center for the Finnish Socialist Federation and lasted from 1904 to 1940; after 1940 it remained the publication office for the magazine “Industrialisti.” It closed in 1960 and is now rental apartments. There was a secondary structure, a four story brick building that burned down in 1917.

The purpose of the school was to “Americanize Finnish immigrants” and “to advocate for economic and social reform” but the curriculum soon turned to Marxist socialist theory (Sandvik 54). There are many reasons as to why the educational reform became socialist centered, many of them involving the characteristics of the Finns to adhere to radical forms of governance. They were familiar with ideologies of communism, Marxism and socialism. Their homeland has a long history of domination and oppression by various monarchies and governments; notably

Russia and Sweden. During the Russian uprising of the early 20th century, Finland was also centered on becoming an independent country. An escaping Finnish revolutionary named Leonard Leopold Lindquist, or Leo Laukki (1880-1938), continued his revolutionary, charismatic speeches and teaching when he became director of Työväen Opisto in 1910 and turned the seminary into a radical labor union organizing machine. His passionate political career began in Finland in 1905 as he was arrested for conspiring with the Bolsheviks against the Russian authority in the Russian Revolution of 1905. He arrived in 1907 in Duluth by way of Michigan and came to the college in 1910. The students came from all over the United States learned from notable faculty on topics such as socialism, Marxism. Several years later, he caught the attention of Mitchell A. Palmer a member of J. Edgar Hoover's FBI team, who is responsible for the "Palmer Raids" or "Red Raids" of 1917. It was the "un-American" activities of socialism and communism, labor unions, striking and opposition to World War I that was the cause for the "Case of the 166" when the radicals were arrested and tried for "un-American" activities in the city of Chicago. Leo was charged with colluding with the IWW and cooperating with, if not leading, the 1907 Mesabi Iron Range strike at the Oliver Mining Co. He conspired with Frank Little and James P. Cannon, members of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), to organize the ore strikes in Duluth and Two Harbors.

The "Case of the 166" in Chicago was seen in the local Duluth newspapers and many of the student body and staff of the Work People's College were arrested. In addition to their building being ransacked, files and printing presses were confiscated. The college was targeted because it was the headquarters for the newspaper *Socialisti* later re-named *Industrialisti*. Leo Laukki and one other escaped back to Soviet Russia with funds saved up by the Work People's College. He went on to have an interesting political career in Karelia and Russia. These labor

organizations and strikes were formed by the laborers who toiled yet never experienced the benefits of their hard work; they sought social and financial equality. One of the more publicized events occurred at the site of the current M&H gas station near Superior St and Mesaba Ave., as a rowdy demonstration turned violent where protestors and Pinkerton agents exchanged gunfire

During the nineteen teens as Lei Laukki and the Work People's College became politically active the connection between the directors and students became one connected to the Industrial Workers of the World, IWW or Wobblies. It was fitting as the Finns fought for fairness in society, appropriate wages and welfare they soon saw that the Finish Socialist Federation and the IWW had much in common. It was because of this linking that Leo Laukki came to know Frank Little, Bill Haywood and James P Cannon, prominent members of the labor movement who were outspoken against the American capitalist system.

"An injury of one is the concern of all," was the slogan for the American Federation of Labor and was used in all of their campaigns, as it illustrates their ideological platform about how the workers need to come together as one, so that there must be justice for all (Cahn 92). After the split between the AFL and the IWW, who wanted more militant action, the Wobblies aimed to organize the industrial class that was mainly composed of unskilled labor workers such as the Finns (Hudelson 63). They sought to create one large union to control all other unions as a system based on human labor not of machines producing output of unrealistic proportions. In this case everything would be able to be regulated and equality would be easier to achieve and maintain. "Unions were frequently labeled conspiracies and banned by law" (LeBlanc 31). The unions considered "un-American" by the government as well as the social and political powers-that-be fought for industrial worker welfare and appropriate wages, social justice and were usually composed of foreigners who felt that the industrial revolution meant nothing more than

the profiteering of a small few. The workers wanted just compensation for the sacrifices of life and toil they made, slaving away in the factories. They wanted their fair share of the wealth and thus made their voices and thoughts heard in a very clear way with strikes and walkouts. They fought against the domination of the trusts (Hudelson and Peterson).

As per the personal statement of the IWW they, “sought to create a revolutionary union that would fight for the immediate gains as steps designed to lead a general strike by the entire working class that would bring the entire capitalist economy and government to an absolute halt” (LeBlanc 31). The doors to the IWW were open to a diverse population; men, women, African Americans, and minorities were welcome to join. It was their duty to emancipate the working class from the modern slavery of capitalism (LeBlanc 31).

13. Conclusion

In summary, these distinct property types demonstrate strong cultural and architectural character and must be considered for local landmark status and preservation. They encompass important and significant details of the history associated with Duluth’s founding as an important city for the unity of national historic scope. Multi-family dwellings are historic remnants of the vernacular architecture type that have a strong link as being a worker focused housing type that accommodated many of the ethnic groups. As the structures demonstrated the prosperity of the groups building them, with high ornamentation to little or no ornamentation, they relate the story of immigrant integration into various neighborhoods; and as such, this architectural style is not used any longer in Duluth. The row houses are the last original pieces of authentic construction of sandstone and are unique as they are the most widely observed type of home dwelling in Duluth. The Work People’s college is a remnant of the turbulent labor movement which often was spearheaded by recent immigrants and involved passionate battles between corporations and

its workers. Not only was it the headquarters for a radical political tutelage it also served the needs of the Finnish community as it was only one of two schools of higher learning in the United States, it was a center of operations for an important Finnish newspaper, and facilitated in creating some of Duluth's most interesting history. Lastly, the buildings tied most directly to the growth of the city and being highly significant are the fire houses and Lakewood Pump house that provided clean drinking water and fire suppression for Duluth. If not for these services Duluth could not have accommodated as large a population and become any more than a series of villages and town sites. The incorporation of the fire houses and the supply of cistern-held water in various parts of the city allowed for preservation of what is left of the original historic structures as blazing fires destroyed much of the earlier buildings in addition to solving the problematic fresh water dispute.

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