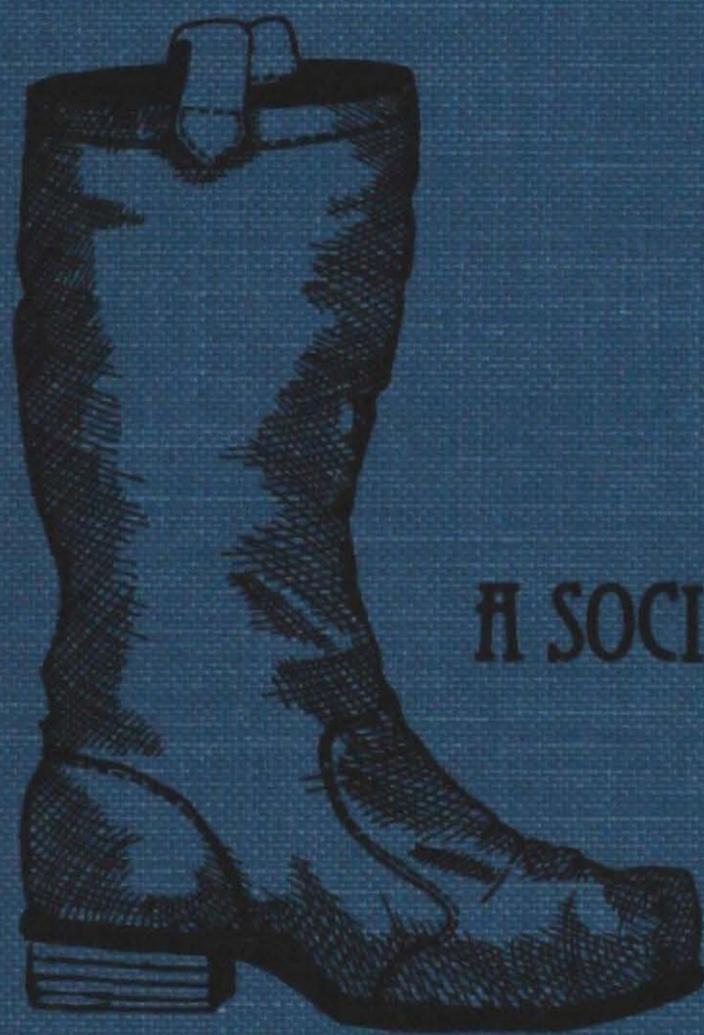


COLUMBIA HEIGHTS:
BOOTSTRAP TOWN



A SOCIAL HISTORY

BY
IRENE PARSONS

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COLUMBIA HEIGHTS: BOOTSTRAP TOWN

A SOCIAL HISTORY

Bootstrap:

To pull oneself up by ones (own) bootstraps;
To help oneself without the aid of others;
Use ones own resources

(Random House Unabridged Dictionary)

By

IRENE PARSONS

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and
Columbia Heights Chamber of Commerce
Jeff Johnson, History Chairman
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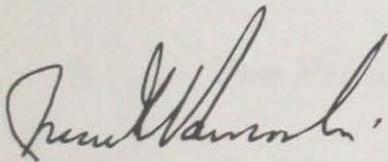
Dedication

The Columbia Heights City Council and Chamber of Commerce are pleased to have worked together to produce this history of our community.

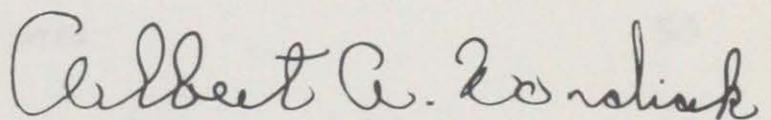
It is intended to be a collage of history, experiences, highlights, and recollections about our city.

We dedicate this work to those who have participated in the building of our community, as well as to those who will continue to build it in the future.

Many persons have contributed to assembling the material for this publication and we thank them all for their efforts. Special thanks must go to Jeff Johnson and Irene Parsons for their special commitment and efforts to make this publication a reality.



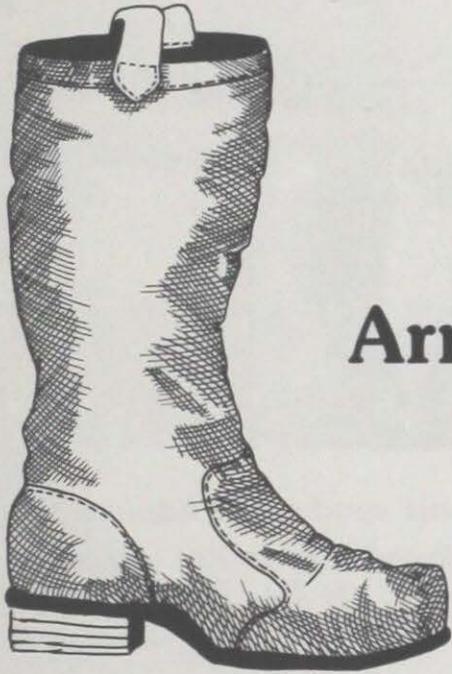
Bruce G. Nawrocki, Mayor
City of Columbia Heights



Albert A. Kordiak, Executive Secretary
Chamber of Commerce

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CHAPTER 1

Arrivals - Bootstrapping

Towns and cities don't just happen. They grow through the dreams, plans and hard work of many people. They have their ups and downs as they develop.

Columbia Heights had its ups and downs before it even started as a town. Its grassy hills and small groves of maple and oak were its high spots, its 'ups.' The surrounding low watery marshes filled with cattails and willows were its 'downs.' And, contrary to claims later made by developers, it was land not conducive to streets and gardens and dry basements.

The area northeast of Minneapolis which became Columbia Heights had no river frontage to encourage early trade. It was located between two strong flourishing towns, St. Anthony Falls and Anoka, which drew people and commerce back and forth through the area. It had no particular attributes to precipitate permanent settlement.

Indians no doubt hunted small game over its hills and caught fish in its marshes. Fur-traders and explorers probably passed through the area. But quite simply, in the oldest of olden days, Columbia Heights was a nice place to visit, but nobody lived there.

When the growth of Minneapolis finally pushed northeast, and the area to be later known as Columbia Heights began to draw permanent residents, the ups and downs of the land became the stuff of 'hands-on' experience. Basements for houses were hewn out of the hills with pick-axes and shovels. The clay and sand were hauled away in wheelbarrows to fill the low spots.



Basements were hewn out of the hills. The clay and sand were hauled away in wheelbarrows. Nellie and Andrew Reinholdson relaxed a moment while digging their basement at 4438 VanBuren, 1925.

The people who came were mainly from the working class. They labored on the farms, in the mills and foundries, for the railroad. Their ambition was to create homes and keep them. They built Columbia Heights with their sweat and callouses, gaining equity with their labor. They had grit and optimism and little else. Over the years, financial aid from such sources as Works Projects Administration (WPA) and other federal funding for special projects helped. But Columbia Heights began and grew mainly through the self-reliance and work of its people. Their efforts built the foundations of a stable decent city.

They built a feisty town and pulled it into being by its bootstraps.

After the 1862 Sioux uprising in western Minnesota the Indians were driven further west, and white settlement along the Mississippi River began in earnest.

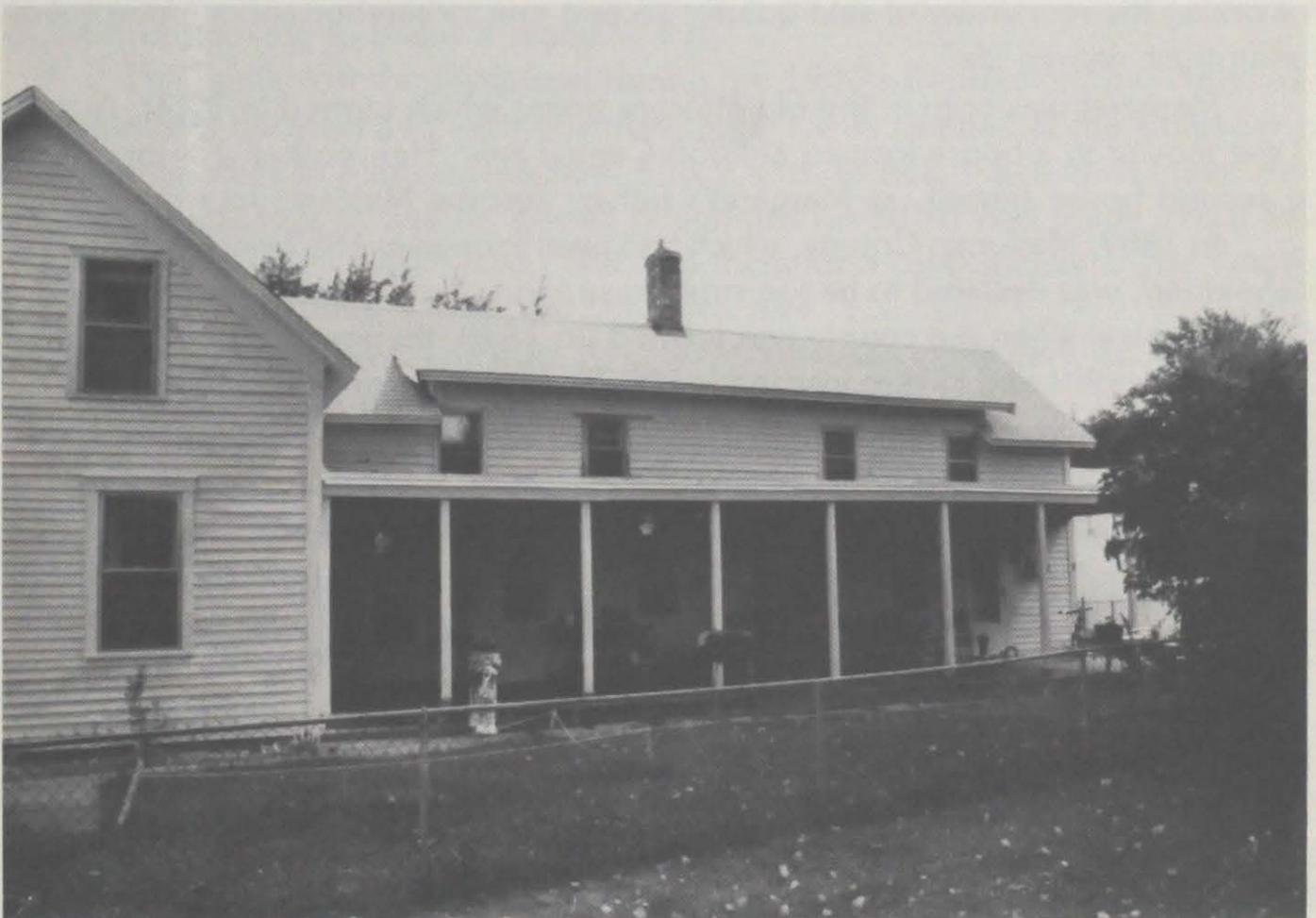
The earliest of those pioneering "bootstrappers" in Columbia Heights were the farmers who began acquiring and working land in the area almost as soon as Minnesota was declared a state in 1858.

John and Margaret Sullivan homesteaded the land west of Central Ave. to University Ave., north of 49th Ave. in 1863, according to their granddaughter, Abbie Kinnan. John and Margaret had six children: Edward, Will, John, Johanna, Margaret and Mary. Abbie was William's daughter, and was born in 1905 in the original farmhouse, which still stands at 5037 Madison St., NE. She recalled, "It was the closest of the homes to the lake (Sullivan Lake) and neighbors' children always ran through the yard calling "C'mon, let's go swimming!" Mother always said the swim suits were never dry."

She recalled that Central Ave. was a two-lane gravel road and they walked over a mile to school. When she was eight or nine years old, a road crew camped at the front of their lot to work on improving Central Ave. In 1938, Abbie's father divided his share of the homesteaded land, one and a half acres to each of his six children.

Anna, daughter of Edward Sullivan, recalled how the work was done. The family raised corn, hay, wheat, Holstein cattle and horses. "Grandfather never had a tractor."

William and Ed had a milk route. The Ed Sullivan barn, built before 1906 with square nails and full lumber dimensions, was taken down in 1939. By the mid 1940's, large scale farming was about over in the area. Many of the commercial properties on Central Ave. were built on land once owned by the Sullivans.



The original farmhouse of John and Margaret Sullivan still stands at 5037 Madison St. NE.

Over the years, Sullivan's Lake was the site of many kinds of entertainment. Dan Sullivan, son of John, said the family had horseraces in the 1930's. "Anybody who had what he thought was a fast horse--could be a plowhorse--raced around the perimeter of the dry lakebed. Some had saddles, some rode bare-back. And there were big family picnics, up to 100 people." There was also a dance pavillion which could be rented by other groups.

Another pioneering farm family in Columbia Heights was the Mulcares. Margaret Mulcare recalled her grandparents, Thomas and Bridget Mulcare, settled in the 1860's on the East side of Central Ave., north from 49th to 53rd Avenues.

"It was surprising how many former owners are on the abstract before 1869," she noted.

The abstract, beginning October 22, 1852, with an original "certificate of entry," transferred the quarter-section from the United States to William P. Murray. After that date, there are indeed many names listed on the abstract, but they are mostly the same ones. The property was transferred back and forth between Charles Peltier and Thomas William Coleman several times with values of the property listed between \$200 and \$500.

In 1864, the land was transferred to Orlando Merriman through a tax deed for \$59. In 1869, Thomas Mulcare acquired the land through a Quit Claim Deed for \$1750. In 1886, Thomas began splitting up the quarter-section, deeding part of it to James Mulcare and part to Jerome Mulcare for considerations of \$100 and agreement "to assist the said parties of the first part (Thomas and Catherine Mulcare) in working the remainder of said quarter section and to care for and support them during their natural life."

Margaret was born in the old Mulcare home which burned in 1950. At age 10 she moved to a house located at 5055 Central Ave. Her mother, Hanora, built the second house herself, as Margaret's father, Jerome Mulcare, had died.

In 1869, Manomin County, which had been formed in 1857 with A.F. Fridley as chairman, was declared to be too small to support itself because of the omission of Moundsvew when the county was formed. In 1870, the area including Fridley, Columbia Heights and Hilltop was made into Manomin Township, a part of Anoka County. John Sullivan, G.W. Thurber, Thomas Casey and G. R. Weeks were named to the first township board.

Although one census figure puts Columbia Heights population at just 103 in 1870, there were apparently enough children to require a school. Early records indicate that dairy farmers built a brick one-room school overlooking the Mississippi River in 1873, but no further mention of this school can be found.

In 1879, the name of Manomin Township was officially changed to Fridley Township. Maybe the name was changed because there is no record of wild rice, which is the meaning of 'Manomin,' growing in Columbia Heights' lowland marshes. A.M. Fridley, for whom the new county was named, was at that time a member of the state legislature.

By 1880, the population of the area had grown to 257, and industry was beginning to come to Columbia Heights, C.J. Swanson started making brick at Camden Place, just north of Minneapolis, in 1875. Four years later he built a brick and tile factory on the east side of the river. There was also a stone quarry about 1880 in the southwest corner of Columbia Heights owned by Harry Confew.

Farmers were still settling in the northern part of the area. Albert and Imma Dooies came to 45th and Central Ave. in 1884, raised cows on about 40 acres, and started a milk route. The Dooies' barn became the stable for the horses of Hilltop Stables in the mid-1930's.

George Joseph Ballenger (or Bailergeon--the spelling was changed several times over the years) was born in Columbia Heights in 1885 and was fire chief in Columbia Heights from 1921-26. He was the grandson of the Joseph Balenger who built the first white settler's home near the Rum River in Anoka County in 1844.

George Ballenger's son, Kenneth George, was born in Columbia Heights in 1918, lived at 39th and Quincy St., and often launched his boat in the swamp across the street.

By 1890, the population of Fridley Township was slowly increasing. One source indicates a census of 476, while another puts it at 384.

In 1890, John Teseth came to Columbia Heights and established the first restaurant in a two-room building at 40th Ave. and 5th St. His son, Paul Teseth, has done considerable research into his father's affairs, and noted the restaurant served meals to 15 persons--teachers and Soo Line railroad workers. John Teseth got up at 3:30 a.m. to fix breakfast and lunch. After cleaning up the restaurant, he worked on digging wells and "outdoor plumbing." At 2 p.m. he went back to the restaurant, made supper, cleaned up the restaurant, and "fell into bed." Saturdays or Sundays, a farmer took John in his wagon to the Market on 7th Ave. No. to get supplies of salt pork, dried beef and ham "so well preserved it took a couple of days of cooking to make it ready to eat."

The family lost the restaurant during the 1930's Depression, but continued the plumbing business and kept boarders. John's wife cleaned at the Chamber of Commerce office in Minneapolis from 5 to 9 a.m. to help make ends meet. Paul recalled at age four or five he loaded doughnuts his father had made into a little wagon, pulled it down 40th Ave., and sold them for 5 cents a dozen. The Teseths later built a new restaurant at 506-508 40th Ave.

Both Central Ave. and 40th Ave. were dirt roads in the early 1890's. Reservoir Blvd. at the top of the hill was a cinder track.

Fortieth Ave. was a main thoroughfare west from Central. But just east of Central, 40th Ave. bogged down in a huge meandering swamp. A long wooden footbridge allowed people to walk up to Reservoir Blvd. over the swamp. Men rode their horses or drove their teams to 40th and Central, tethered them to the willows growing in the marsh, and took the streetcar downtown to Minneapolis, establishing an early "park and ride" system.

The area was poised on the edge of a great growth spurt in 1890. Most of the Columbia Heights land was still open, either in farms or as great untouched tracts of hills and swamps. Neil McCullum had a dairy farm between 39th and Central Avenues and Reservoir Blvd. Don Christian's father, Ed Christian, came from Denmark before 1900 and started the Oak Hill Dairy Farm near Silver Lake Road with 1500 pigs and 30 cows. He delivered milk with a horse and buggy.

Huset Park was a pasture for horses and cows, and kids went swimming in a spring-fed creek which ran through it. Further north, the Sullivan, Mulcare, Clarkin and Molan farms were producing the milk, eggs, vegetables and meat which residents of the small community didn't raise themselves. Horse and buggy--and feet--were the modes of transportation.

Leona Burgoyne Schaefer recalled some pleasant childhood activities early in the new century. "Where the Catholic Church now stands, we would enter a woods, now Quincy St., and walk about a block, at the end of this block was a patch of wild raspberries and also hazel nuts. You could walk straight out Madison St. to about 44th, there you would find a big hill, we called it Violet Hill. And we skated where Millers Funeral Home is. It was formerly a swamp."



Many backyards served as pasture in early Columbia Heights. Erwin Burmeister, son of John Burmeister, with Pinky the Cow, rested in the pasture at 42nd and Monroe in 1921.

Leona was born in 1905 in an old brick house belonging to her grandparents, Mary and Joseph Burgoyne. The house was in the 41st block of Madison St. Her parents were George and Ann Burgoyne.

More industry came to Columbia Heights in the early 1890's with the building of the steel roller mill at 39th Ave. and Jackson St. by Minnesota Iron & Steel. To provide housing for the workers of the mill, and to encourage private home building, clusters of two-story wooden residences were built, several of which are still occupied in the 4100 block of Madison St.

With the laying of James J. Hill railroad track from the Iron Range, developers envisioned that Columbia Heights would become the "Pittsburg of the West." More foundries came during the 1890's. Immigrants of Polish and Bohemian descent came from Pittsburg to work in the foundries and mills, thus establishing some of the many nationalities which were to become important parts of the Columbia Heights population.

The year 1893 was a significant date in the history of Columbia Heights. It is listed as the year plats were issued to Thomas Lowry for land he owned south of 45th Ave. And 1893 was also the year the first commercial venture was established in the city by Minnesota Iron & Steel -- a saloon at 40th and Central Avenues.

By 1894, enough families with children lived in the area that a school was needed. The north end of Columbia School was built at 41st and Central in 1894 with bricks from Swanson's Brick and Tile Co.

By 1895, the word was being spread encouraging migration to the area. An ad in the Anoka Union, dated Oct. 9, 1895, asked people to come to Columbia Heights and establish a grocery store, drugstore, dry goods, shoe and meat market

before Dec. 1, 1895. "All must be first class, best four corners in the area saved for such business."

But progress brought its own restraints. An old newspaper clipping refers to an 1896 ordinance which regulated "dealing in or disposing of spirituous, venimous or malt liquor" in the area.

Columbia Heights was incorporated as a village in 1898 and operated under state law. Tax rolls show 20 homes in Columbia Heights in 1900, and its population was listed variously at 505 or 566.

By this time, families who settled in the new village were feeling the need to establish a religious foundation for their community. The first such endeavor was at 37th Ave. and Main St. In 1907, Community Methodist Church was built and dedicated at 37th and Quincy. First Lutheran was started in 1909 and Immaculate Conception Catholic was dedicated in 1925.

Even though Columbia Heights was an established village by 1904, its independence was apparently not accepted by everybody. An article in the Minneapolis Journal in 1904 made reference to Columbia Heights' possible annexation by Minneapolis, and subsequent "agitation of Anoka."

Political concerns aside, life went on in Columbia Heights. Carl Swenson built a private home in Columbia Heights in 1904 at 37th and Quincy and the back part of that house was used as Columbia Heights' first post office. And in 1904, a hold-up in the saloon at 40th and Central during a turkey raffle resulted in the accidental shooting and death of a nine-year old boy, Freddie King.

The first indication of a future police department for Columbia Heights came in 1905 when August Beurger was paid \$1 for one day of constable service.

The fire department was started May 28, 1907, in an area near 40th and 7th St.

Industries continued to come to Columbia Heights during the early 1900's. American Brake Shoe Co. started on 37th Ave. because of the nearness of the large sand-pits north and west of town. Minneapolis Electric Steel Castings was established by Sheldon Wood in 1912 in a wooden building which burned in 1917. It was rebuilt near the same site at 3901 University Ave.

By 1907, Urban Renewal was already beginning. Bruce Edgerton requested permission of the village council to have the houses on Quincy vacated so he could build a lumber yard between 37th and 40th Avenues. Request was approved. That area later became the site of Monarch Chemical, Division of H.B. Fuller Co.

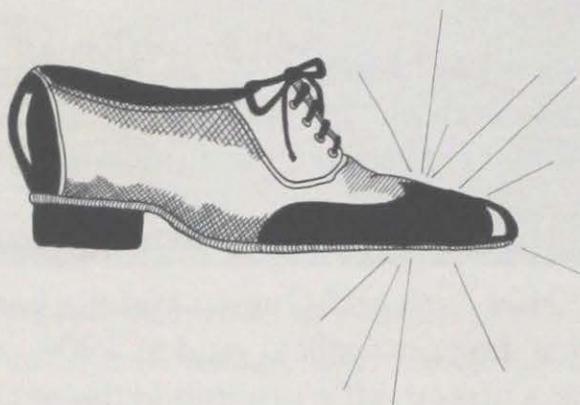
Other businesses on University Ave. in the early 1900's were Schock Parlor Frame Furniture; Standard Spring; Hoffman's motorcycle Shop; and Mitchell Safe and Lock Factory.

CHAPTER 2

Promotion -

The Big City

Steps In



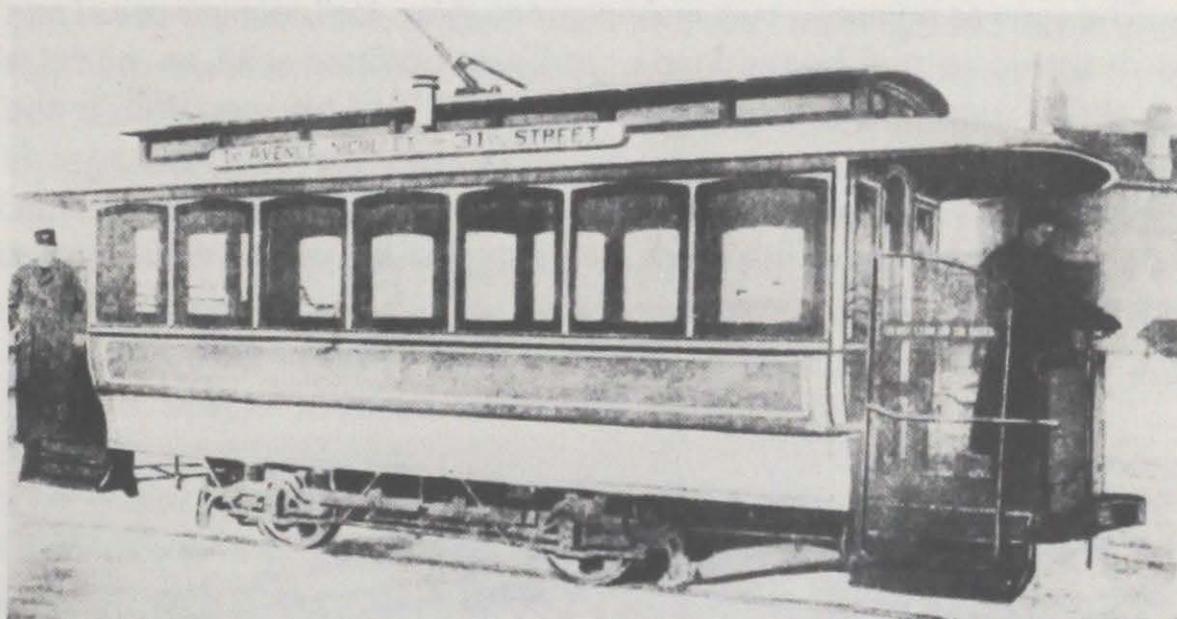
Thomas Lowry, owner of the Minneapolis Street Car Co., had acquired over 1000 acres of land in northeast Minneapolis and southern Anoka County. He was issued the first plats in what is now Columbia Heights in 1893. Ninety-five acres of that acquisition went into Columbia Park, Minneapolis. The corporation under which development of the area was accomplished was the Minneapolis Improvement Company North East.

A booklet publishing the articles of incorporation for the Minneapolis Improvement Company North East, dated May 1, 1893, named Thomas Lowry as president; John Pillsbury, vice president; E.S. Baring-Gould, treasurer; and F.G. James, secretary. The booklet noted terms of sale for the lots in Columbia Heights. One of several alternatives was $\frac{1}{3}$ cash, balance in notes secured by mortgage, payable in one, two or three years in six equal semi-annual payments or 12 equal quarterly payments, 10% discount if all cash. No interest payment for the first year, 6% thereafter.

The lots varied in price from \$300 to \$1450, most of them about \$450 with very few over \$1000. The booklet also specified six blocks as manufacturing sites, two blocks as manufacturing and residential, three as residential, one as residential and stone quarry, and three for right-of-way purposes.

The town was to be served by the Central Avenue Electric Car Line on the east side, and the Electric Street Railway would be extended when and where needed. Lowry later extended a double streetcar track on Central Ave. from 29th

to 40th Avenues, and a single track along 40th Ave. to 5th St. in 1916 (abandoned in 1954.) This public transportation established the intersection of 40th and Central and the stretch of land from Central west to 5th St. as the nucleus of the budding town, as planned by the Minneapolis Improvement Co. NE. A five cent fare was the cost of a streetcar ride. Before the 1890's, streetcars were powered by horses and mules, and the grassy slopes of Columbia Heights provided pasture for many of the animals which pulled streetcars in Minneapolis.



*Electric street-car of type first run in Columbia Heights, in 1890's.
(Photo from Mpls. Public Library, Thos. Lowry File)*

The articles of incorporation for the Minneapolis Improvement Co. NE specified that all buildings (assume commercial buildings) be iron, brick or stone, two stories or more, and at least 22 x 60 feet in size. No saloons were to be permitted in town until May 1, 1898, when all restrictive covenants would expire on the assumption that "the population should be large enough to decide and protect itself on all municipal questions."

A clause was included in the booklet that employers give preference to persons living on land owned or controlled by the Minneapolis Improvement Co. NE. The company promised its quarry in Columbia Heights would donate the house foundation stone to all persons who bought a lot in 1893.

At this time, Thomas Lowry joined forces with Edmund G. Walton to start the Arcade Investment Co. in order to develop the newly platted land. Offices were set up at 37th and Central Avenues between Central and Reservoir Blvd. The area included a park and clubhouse where dances were held.

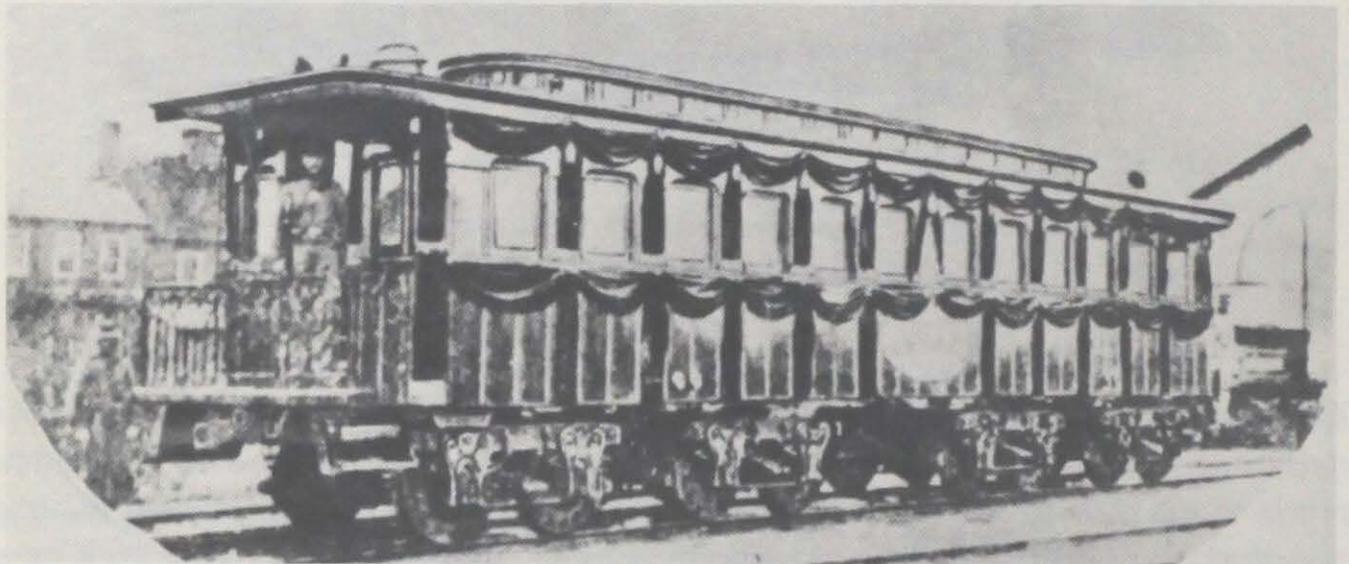
Lowry promoted his broad investments in Columbia Heights in a variety of innovative ways. He gave free streetcar rides to an amusement park between 7th and Washington Streets on 40th Ave. called Forest Park. He promised when enough people lived along 40th Ave., he would lay a double streetcar track to 5th St. However, this promise was never carried out. Lowry and Walton were offering five-room homes for \$2500, \$25 down, \$25 a month. An ordinance was passed in 1905 allowing the Arcade Investment Co. to lay gas pipes in Columbia Heights and allowing Minneapolis General Electric to erect poles and string wires on and across streets,

public grounds and alleys. Arcade Investment Co. laid watermains in Columbia Heights during the early 1900's and later deeded them to the city. In 1906, water rates were 15 cents for 1000 gallons of water.

One of Lowry's promotions for bringing people to Columbia Heights was his acquisition of the Abraham Lincoln funeral car in 1905. He brought it to Columbia Heights where he used it for a time as a sales office and curiosity. He planned to preserve it as an historical artifact.

The car has been extensively researched by Columbia Heights resident, John Hemak. The car was originally built in Alexandria, Va., for Lincoln's use. The pullman car was designed to pull heavy loads, and was outfitted with an office, sleeping quarters, sitting room and parlor. It carried Lincoln and his son, Will, to their interment in Springfield, Ill.

A snow-fence was erected around the car at its site on 37th Ave. at Quincy St. but people climbed over the fence and stripped the car of wood and anything else they could get off for souvenirs.



The Lincoln Funeral Car was destroyed by fire in 1911 while located at 37th and Quincy. The car was a promotional idea of Thomas Lowry. (Photo from S.S. Johnston)

After Lowry died in 1909, heirs to his estate donated the car to the Minnesota Federation of Women's Clubs, which planned to preserve it at the Sibley House museum. Unfortunately, the funeral car burned in a grass fire which charred over 10 blocks in 1911. Charles Amidon, chief of the fire department at that time, organized a fire brigade which used brooms and coats dipped in water to douse the fire.

But the car was a charred ruin. A few pieces of the car found a home at the Hennepin County Historical Society.

Lowry and Walton also promoted their Columbia Heights interests through the newspapers. An ad taken out by Edmund Walton in the Minneapolis Journal in 1911 is an example of the way the new town was being promoted as a utopia of homes:

"Columbia Heights and Reservoir Hills are destined to have the most marvelous growth of any residential section ever placed before the public . . . This is a bright, helpful, hopeful community. Each man is continually helping the other man with the result that we never have any trouble with men out of work and sickness is practically unknown.

"These hills of mine have a natural drainage that is perfect. Water in the cellar is a thing unknown. The gravel subsoil makes it the healthiest possible spot to live on. Added to its natural values is the added value of its eight-minute street car service, miles of city water pipes, stone walks, macadamized roads, good stores, churches and school, both telephones and electric light. Within its boundaries the American Brake Shoe Company, the Mitchell Safe Company and a number of large firms are employing labor . . . This is where you want to live--the very best place for you to buy. Don't let others get ahead of you. Go out to Columbia Heights today and decide what you are going to do to earn a share in the great future in store for this great residence section."

Lowry and Walton knew how to appeal to women too. In a full page ad they offered this Special Inducement in a Minneapolis Journal ad:

"A Word of Advice to Young Ladies: I desire especially to talk to the young woman who is making her own living and capable of saving a small amount each month. Her value as a wife is doubly increased in the eyes of most men by being the owner of a piece of property. It shows the man that before marriage his wife was a careful girl with home ideas instead of a scatterbrain. A woman enters matrimony very much prouder bringing with her a dowry, especially that of her own making, than coming to the man empty handed and possibly in debt. A girl with an acre of Columbia Heights land which, if properly planted, will pay her \$100 each year, can hold her head much higher and be much less dependent than the girl who is the sole possessor of last summer's old hat and a worn-out pair of white pumps. In order to encourage this young woman, every time she pays in \$9, I will add a dollar to it. If the girl is serious-minded and the monthly payments too heavy, I will make them small enough to suit her pocketbook. In case of misfortune, loss of work or sickness, we agree to carry the payments six months."

Another ad praised the gardening possibilities in Columbia Heights. "the soil . . . is exceedingly rich, will grow a superabundance of vegetables and fruit and prove the nucleus of a future fortune . . . Far better playing with the dog on the lawn than sitting on a hot seat at a picture show . . . How glorious the vegetables fresh plucked before breakfast! How much better for you the fresh egg than the icehouse variety!"

By 1910, community leaders in Columbia Heights decided to initiate some control over their town. According to a 1910 Minneapolis Journal article, "First steps were taken last night for the aggressive advancement of the Columbia Heights district by the formation of the Columbia Heights Commercial Club. The citizens met at the home of George W. Morey and perfected the organization which includes the men of the village as well as the Columbia Heights section of Minneapolis with a possible membership of 40.

"The organization will work to get lights for Columbia Heights, which now depends upon the moon for street lighting except on 36th and Central Ave. Another move will be to annex the village of Columbia Heights by extension of the limits of Minneapolis." Officers elected were George W. Morey, president; Herbert Hughes,

vice president; James Corr, treasurer.

By 1911, the founders of the Columbia Heights Commercial Club had lobbied enough for Columbia Heights' annexation to Minneapolis to win approval of the club members 50-4. It was proposed that the part of Columbia Heights which lay from 37th Ave to 50th St. NE should become part of Minneapolis if enough support was obtained. Champlin, in Hennepin County, would be traded for the amount sliced out of Anoka County for this annexation.

Object of the annexation was to secure metropolitan facilities including more light, free mail delivery, water, sewers, "and a lot of other things are wanted."

In 1913, still another group was formed to further services from Minneapolis: the Columbia Heights Improvement Association. This group wanted free delivery mail service from Minneapolis and abandonment of the branch post office at 40th and Central.

During the time William Foster was mayor in 1927-31, attempts were again made to join Columbia Heights with Minneapolis. The voters, state legislature and Minneapolis City Council approved, but Anoka County Board voted against it.

Columbia Heights worked to draw visitors and businesses in many ways. Because farms were an important part of the town, and most people had chickens on their big lots, poultry was of interest to many.

Oakwood School Gymnasium was the site of the second Columbia Heights Poultry Show Dec. 9-10, 1922. It was sponsored by the Columbia Heights Poultry Breeders Assn., with H.E. Soderholm as president. Prizes at the show ranged from 50 cents to \$3 for entries in four classifications of poultry: cock, coceral, hen and pullet. Five dollars in gold was offered for each of the best male and female birds. Judge was George W. Hackett. Entertainment included a children's program dealing with poultry and seminars on the poultry industry for adults. Admission was 15 cents. Chicken feed, water and watchman were furnished free to exhibitors. A Boys and Girls Poultry Club was organized under leadership of Val Kuechenmeister.

In the early 1920's, the Columbia Heights Commercial Club from its address at 3701 Central Ave. published "A Story with A Meaning For the Man Who Wants A Home!" It was a booklet called "John Henry Finds A Home," describing one man's journey by streetcar looking for a home, how he by mistake got to Columbia Heights instead of to northeast Minneapolis, and how he was impressed by the pure air, the view from the heights, the "fine clean hotel," the schools, churches, gardens and friendly people. He, of course, decided to buy one of the lots for \$600 and build his home. His decision was clinched when, from the open window of the school, children's voices wafted on the breeze singing, "Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home."

The Commercial Club took an active interest in all aspects of Columbia Heights affairs. From notes in an old notebook kept by H.E. Soderholm, this excerpt jotted on the back of Commercial Club stationery was probably the draft of an item for the newspaper: "This is to remind you that you have a most urgent duty to perform on Tuesday evening, Jan. 8, 1925 . . . to journey forth to 3946 Central Ave., the office of Mr. Stephenson, there to discuss the 18th Amendment (Prohibition) and how best to enforce it."

President of the Commercial Club that date was E.A. Carlson; E.N. Baker, vice president; H.E. Soderholm, secretary; Alvin Stewart, financial secretary; and

R.A. Anderson, treasurer, Trustees were L.W. Isherwood, William Spain and H.C. McDonald. Membership requirements of the club were: age 21, resident of Columbia Heights, limited to 50 members. Fees were \$5 initiation. Aim was to "build a clubhouse and create good fellowship and work for the betterment of Columbia Heights." A tentative budget or record of expenses was jotted down: \$.25, cards; \$2.50, cigars; \$6, Severa (Emil Severa, member); \$4 cigars; \$7.50, cigars.

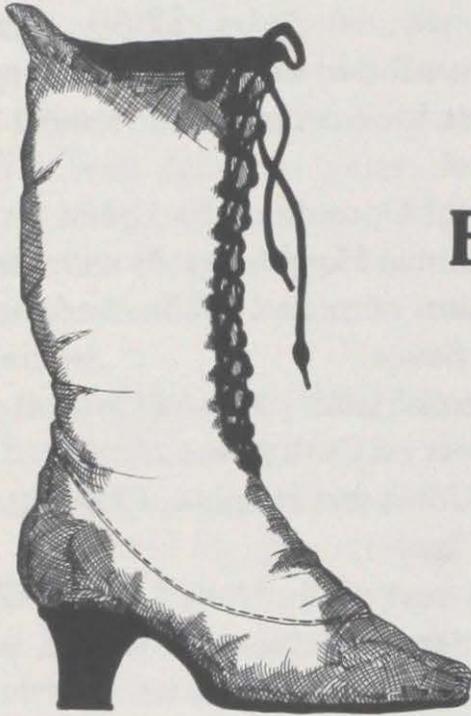
By 1938, the Commercial Club must have faded because a newspaper column by O.H. Prestemon declared "a crying need for a proposed Columbia Heights Community Development Association."

The Columbia Heights Junior Chamber of Commerce had been formed by 1943, and in that year considered stocking Columbia Heights ponds with carp. Columnist O.H. Prestemon commented: "Feed them corn and alfalfa, and they grow to enormous size, firm of flesh with excellent flavor."

In 1951, the Columbia Heights Commercial Club planned Christmas street lighting for the town. And in 1953, the Chamber of Commerce requested Anoka to build the new Anoka County courthouse in Columbia Heights. This request was made often over the years but was never fulfilled.

A brand new Chamber of Commerce, a part of the United States Chamber of Commerce and not related to former commercial clubs, was formed in 1964. Stu Kvalheim was named its first president. Warren Armstrong, Al Kordiak and about 20 other businessmen met and with the help of people from Minneapolis, organized the chapter. Its aim was to improve the community and bring the people together through regular meetings and discussion. Additional aims were to share information, sponsor service-business-social events, and assist other civic and governmental agencies with projects beneficial to the area.

Yet another citizen group was formed in 1974 to promote business in Columbia Heights. It was the Columbia Heights Downtown Council. Its aim, under its first chairman, Robert Guzy, was to revitalize the business center of 40th and Central Avenues which had faded in the previous 20 years. This group, working with the Housing/Redevelopment Administration (HRA) and with the help of federal funding, saw the redevelopment of the original business center of the city. A six-story office building, a shopping mall and three large condominium complexes were built in the 40th and Central area in the early 1980's.



CHAPTER 3

Entertainment - Stepping Out

About the time people were first being urged to move to Columbia Heights, plans were being made for their entertainment. It was in the mid-1890's that Mr. and Mrs. S.H. Kahm came to Columbia Heights from Chicago and built Forest Park between 7th and Washington Streets north from 40th nearly to 41st Ave. The location of this amusement center near the end of the 40th Ave. streetcar line worked in very well with Thomas Lowry's promotion of Columbia Heights.

The park received its name from a clump of trees on the site. It operated the three summer months, survived until the late 1920's, and is remembered by many Columbia Heights residents. It had concessions, refreshments, prize-fights (a man named Tuttle, "King Tut," was a favorite boxer), a board-walk leading north to the dance pavillion and vaudeville stage. The Heights' first movie theater was in Forest Park, and a fountain with colored lights sparkled at night. The entrance was through a high arch, and the entire area was enclosed by a tall board fence.

Children were admitted free on Saturdays. Opinion was divided as to the value of this center of activity to the community. Many families liked it as a place to go and be entertained. Other citizens looked down on the park as less than dignified and, in some cases, as downright iniquitous.

An indication of the mixed feelings about Forest Park were indicated in a 1912 election. According to a Minneapolis Journal item, "Columbia Heights voters yesterday completely swamped the license question, casting 128 votes against license and 24 for it, but turned down the no-license candidates for the village offices. The



Columbia Heights in 1921 facing east from the corner of 5th St. and 40th Ave. Columbia Heights Hotel is at lower central. Forest Park is at left, midway on the picture. Huset Park is at center, right. (Photo, Minnesota Historical Society)

election is said to mean that the Columbia Heights amusement park will probably get a license to open, but that liquor cannot be sold legally in the village." In 1913, voters denied a license to Forest Park by a vote of 91 to 40. Apparently that vote was reversed because 14 years later residents were still trying to close the park.

Because it was the last stop on the streetcar line, many groups came out from Minneapolis to celebrate away from their own neighborhoods. Dennis DeMars and Lawrence Fransen, members of an Old-Timers Club which began meeting regularly in 1980 to recall the "old days," had vivid memories of Forest Park. They recalled that Judge John Betts married Hazel Gager and Sylvester Payne on the vaudeville stage of the park. The newlyweds received a free bedroom set for their public wedding. Leona Burgoyne Schaefer recalled Agnes Lucier and Harold DeLaria were the first couple married in the Catholic parish--in the Forest Park dance hall. The old-timers recalled hearing Harry Woods promote his wheel-and-paddle concession:

“Get a free one-pound box of Lowney’s chocolates if the wheel stops on your number!”



A wedding at Forest Park about 1918.

The operators of the movie projector in Forest Park had to climb a ladder to get up to the shack where the projector was installed. The movie screen and the audience were under a roof, but the space between was open to the sky, and when it rained, the rain streaks appeared on the screen.

DeMars and Fransen also recalled that when gangs came to the park that the Heights locals didn't like, they challenged them to a one-man fight. DeMars noted, "Heights had a big blacksmith who usually won. Then the outsiders were grabbed, put on the streetcar, and the driver was told, 'Don't stop until you get to Washington and 3rd Ave. South!'" He said the streetcar motormen sometimes left early so they would miss the midnight closing of the amusement park.

Jessie Morton's mother thought the Forest Park area was so rowdy, Jessie wasn't allowed to even walk past it. Jennie Porter, on the other hand, recalled a spiritual side of Forest Park. She remembered that the priest from Immaculate Conception parish brought materials from the church and said Mass at Forest Park. "It helped the image of the park."

Another Columbia Heights resident who has pleasant memories of Forest Park is Eleanor Tell Stahlberg. She was born in 1914 at 4030 6th St. Her parents were Emil and Ida Tell. She said her mother became well-acquainted with the Kahms,

and they spent a lot of time at the amusement park. They saw the movies and sang along with the "bouncing ball." The vaudeville actors sometimes helped local children put on plays, and Eleanor was chosen to be Cinderella one time, and wore a costume of white netting. "Forest Park didn't seem rowdy to me!"

Sophie Kook Schuelein was born in 1909, right after her parents, Henry and Clara Kook, moved to 40th Ave. between 4th and 5th Streets. She married Oscar Schuelein and has lived in Columbia Heights all her life. Forest Park was just down the block from her home, and Sophie recalled going to the movies, stage shows, later to dances, and to the Swedish Picnics held every year at Forest Park. "You didn't have to be Swedish--everybody went! Forest Park was quite the place. It had everything!"

Marge Johnson, whose family ran the Columbia Heights Hotel at 3980 5th St., remembers that one lady read sub-titles aloud to the children at the silent movies at Forest Park and annoyed the adults who could read for themselves. She said that later Forest Park Dance Hall went downhill, eventually changing to a roller rink.

A saloon was situated just across from the entrance to Forest Park on 40th Ave. Objections to the noise and sometimes ill-mannered crowds made the licensing of Forest Park an issue in every election campaign during the 1920's. An anti-Forest Park organization was formed to take legal action to close the park in the early 1920's. William Blanchard prosecuted the case before Judge Giddings, and plaintiffs included Mrs. Homer Ostrander.

Apparently this agitation, along with a request for a license by another would-be theater operator, persuaded the city not to renew the Forest Park movie license. This refusal resulted in a court order to Columbia Heights to issue the license to Kahm. But Forest Park finally closed in the late 1920's and the lots were sold, one of the first to Dr. J.S. Blumenthal.

In addition to the Forest Park revelries, Columbia Heights residents had many basic boot-strap ways to amuse themselves at the turn of the century, such as skating, hiking, weeding their gardens, and feeding the chickens. But the Big City stepped in again in 1907 to add a touch of sophistication.

That was the year one of Columbia Heights' most spectacular hospitality-entertainment businesses was established. It was the Columbia Hotel, built at 3980 5th St. by a group of men including Edmund Walton and Thomas Lowry as a gentlemen's clubhouse. Part of the front of the building was a real estate office belonging to Walton and managed part of the time by Col. William Spain, who had many business interests in town.

The club was a private get-away free from harrassment in Minneapolis, which was at the time undergoing a "clean-up" by law enforcement agencies.

By the 1920's, the building was being run as a regular hotel, but was in financial straits. That was when J.W. Schultz and Harvey Wolfe bought it and named it the Columbia Heights Hotel. It catered to employees of the foundry and smelting plants. Marge (Mrs. Art) Johnson, Wolfe's daughter and Schultz's granddaughter, recalled that the men stayed two to a room, so they had 30 to 34 guests in the 17 rooms of the building.

"We served meals, sometimes up to 200 a day," Marge recalled. "I began at age 10 to wash dishes there. Mother (Deanne) used to bake all the bread for the restaurant. Father was a good cook too. We all worked very hard at it, it was

a family business.”

During the Depression, Mrs. Wolfe took care of residents' children--sometimes men came there to live with their children but no wife--in addition to her own two daughters.

During the 1940's, room and board were increased to \$9 a week. The Johnsons continued to run the hotel, serving meals until 1950 to 20 to 30 residents, even to passersby whom Marge would invite in from the street. She was reluctant to give up serving meals, wondering, "Who will feed my boys?"--the teachers, factory workers and delivery men who would stop there on their rounds.

Marge recalled one time two men shared a room for two weeks, posing as a boxer and his manager. They rarely went out except to run for "training." The day after they checked out, the FBI showed up looking for them. They had robbed the Elk River Bank.

One of the amenities offered by the Columbia Heights Hotel was a 24-hour a day comfort station for streetcar drivers at the end of the line at 5th St. They paid a nominal fee for use of the large bathroom on the first floor of the hotel. But when the Johnsons tried to raise the fee to cover the cost of the roller towels they used, the streetcar company refused to pay, and the bathroom privileges were withheld from the drivers.

Harvey Wolfe served on the school board in Columbia Heights, the Draft Board, ran for mayor and was chef at the hotel. When Art Johnson, died in 1981, Marge continued to run the hotel herself.



Columbia Heights Hotel, built in 1907, was still serving the community as a hotel in 1986.

Another large entertainment center in the earliest days of Columbia Heights was a big wooden theater east of Central and just north of 40th Ave. It had a hitching post, was heated with a wood stove, but lacked certain other amenities. Vivian Bredemus recalled the time about 1919 when she was four years old, she saw a Fatty Arbuckle film in that theater, "but it didn't have bathroom and I had to run all the way home to 5th St.!" That theater burned about 1920.

Another short-lived entertainment center was a theater at 37th and Central Avenues which operated the summer and fall of 1918. Connie Benson, whose parents, Frank and Tillie Maxson, moved to 39th and Reservoir Blvd. in 1916, recalled the theater as one of Col. Spain's commercial endeavors. When Spain left his real estate office at 37th Ave. at the end of the day, the large room was turned into a movie theater which cost a nickel admission.

That theater was the scene of a vigilante action one night when the operator was tipped off that there was going to be a hold-up at the box-office. Frank Maxson and neighbors with guns hid in the lilacs and clover around the theater. At closing time, men with bandanas over their chins and guns at the ready drove an open Ford around the circle in front of the theater and drove away. End of excitement.

In 1926, the Heights Theater was built east of Central at Gould Ave. by Arthur Glueck. It was built on part of the swamp which stretched from 39th to 43rd Avenues along the east side of Central Ave. The building was condemned before it was even finished because the foundation walls cracked and had to be shored up. Eleanor Bredemus was the first cashier at the theater. She recalled the theater sported a live orchestra and an organist for the silent movies.

Offices in the upper level of the Heights Theater housed many of Columbia Heights' official and unofficial organizations during the late 1920's. City manager's offices and the police department and court moved there soon after it was constructed. The Columbia Heights library was lodged in the Heights Theater for several years.

One of the more exciting moments in the Heights Theater was when a bomb was tossed from a car in March, 1933, ripping the walls of the theater. The bomb damaged a candy store owned by Mrs. Kay Kallgren and also the Heights Library. Other spaces damaged by the blast were those of dentist and doctors' offices and the insurance company of Leonard Keyes, all of which were located upstairs.

The theater manager, A.J. Withness, slept in the theater. He said he heard the bomb drop and the car pass by, then heard the car stop down the street waiting for the explosion. The blast was connected with other theater bombings in Minneapolis about that time and to labor discussions in the movie projectors' union.

The movie being shown that week at the Heights Theater was "Obey the Law."

The Heights Theater was remodeled in 1950. That year there seemed to be a great concern about movie licenses to be granted in Columbia Heights. Bill Levy wanted to build a new theater and bowling alley at 43rd and Central. There were many license applications submitted to the council. The sentiment expressed by the council against granting too many movie licenses was that "sensational and sexy movies or horror movies are a result of too excess theater seats."

CHAPTER 4

Schools - Buckling Down



By 1890, with the population of Columbia Heights about 400, the mythical one-room school house built in 1873 was apparently not serving the needs of the children. In 1894, the north end of Columbia School, at 41st and Central Ave., was built. Brick from Swanson Brick and Tile was used for the building. The school was also the site of a community well where many families came to get their water. Myrtle Spain, daughter of Col. Spain, was the first teacher in Columbia School.

Population in the city had grown to 566 in 1900, and Columbia School was 16 years old when the system was considered inadequate. According to a Minneapolis Journal article in 1910, there was a certain amount of discontent at the way the district (then Dist. 65) was being run. "After a brief but spirited campaign, the Independent party of the village of Columbia Heights Saturday elected three members on the school board in Dist. 65. Of the three, two are women.

"The fight against the old board has been on for two years, but it never was successful until Saturday. Last Friday, the Independents, after canvassing available material, decided to put forth Mrs. C.H. Covyew and Mrs. Joseph Kinnan for three-year terms, and Herman C. Dierling for the two year term, caused by a resignation.

"By hustling for 24 hours, the entire ticket went through with safe pluralities . . . Mrs. Covyew was formerly a member of the board and those who are behind the Independent movement promise some radical changes in the school management as soon as she and her fellow members take their seats on the board."

The following year, 1911, the south portion of Columbia School was built.



Columbia School. The north end was built in 1894, the south portion was added in 1911. Razed in 1967.

By 1914, the school district was educating 335 students, grades one through eight. It was in 1914 that Independent School Dist. 65 was organized as an elementary school district. George Missel was named superintendent. Blueprints for another school were requested on Nov. 2, 1914. H.G. Pratt was named the architect. The first bond election in the district was held Feb. 16, 1915, to build Oakwood School, for the amount of \$17,000. The vote was 63 for, 47 against. Lars Pearson was low bidder to build the school for \$13,103.

A mass meeting that year was held June 28 to make further decisions about the district: whether to build a high school, whether to hire a music teacher, and whether to finish the basement in Oakwood School. All proposals were defeated handily, 83-10.

Oakwood School, at 4140 4th St., was dedicated in October, 1915. Fifteen dollars was spent on entertainment at the dedication. A Mothers' Club was inaugurated at both Columbia and Oakwood Schools in the 1915-16 school year. Total enrollment in the district was then 401 students. The Mothers' Club initiated an annual "indoor picnic" which continued for many years and which featured food and elaborate local entertainment.

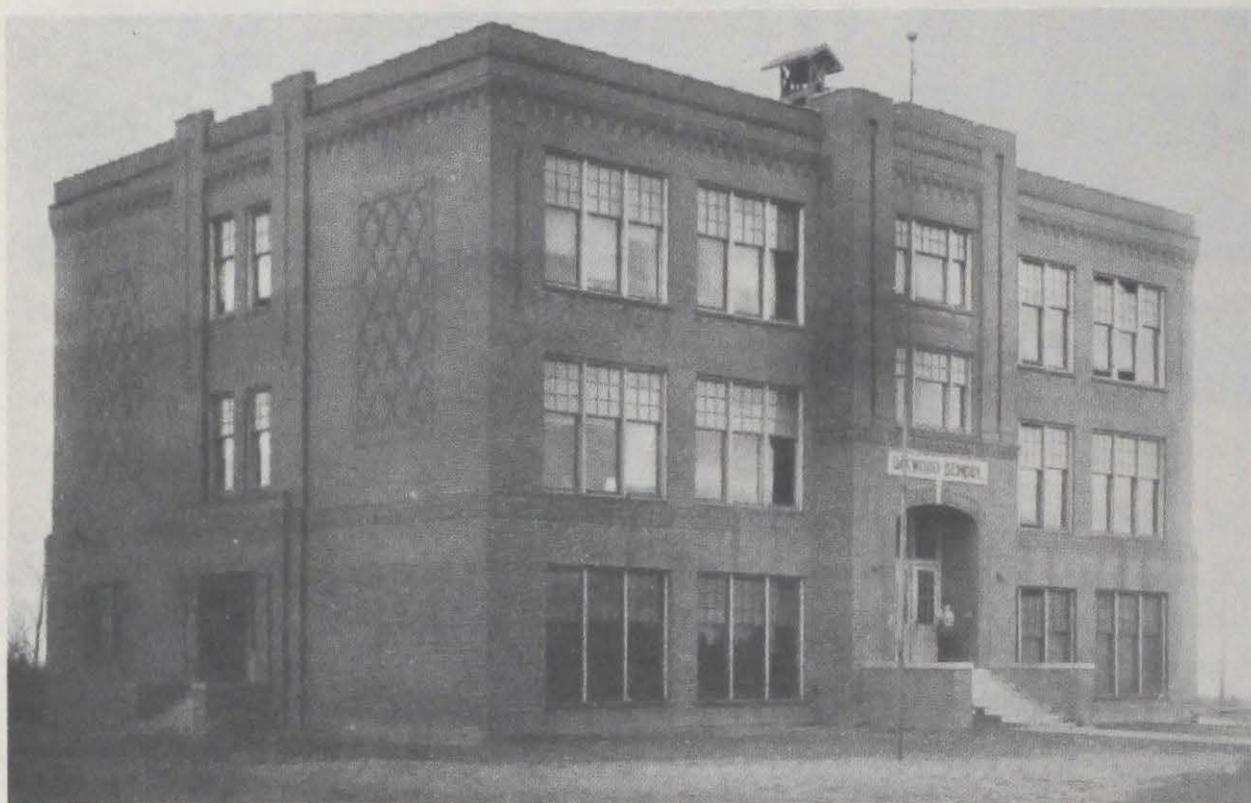
The school year of 1916-17 saw the PTA established, with meetings bi-weekly. Total enrollment had grown to 468 in one year. Oakwood School was already feeling the pinch of more students than it could hold, and an addition to the school was built in 1917-18. A new superintendent, C.J. Salter, was appointed, and Rose Blumenson, principal at Oakwood, was replaced by Opal Gilbert.

The schools served the community in more ways than educating children. The Columbia Heights council used Oakwood School manual training room in the

basement for meeting space in 1916. One of the rules which prevailed at the meetings was that there would be no spitting on the floor. Columbia and Oakwood Schools were the two polling places in the 1918 village elections.

In March, 1918, Salter was removed from the superintendency, and L.W. Isherwood was appointed by the board. Possibly as a result of the rapid turn-over of superintendents, the State Board of Education requested a report on that position in Columbia Heights schools in 1918.

That same year a bond election for \$12,000 for completing and equipping Oakwood School was passed and a four-room addition was completed in 1919. Physical education classes and military drill for boys were also begun in 1918-19. Smoking by citizens was prohibited in the schools in 1920.



Oakwood School, built in 1915, closed in 1974, sold to Oak Hill Baptist Church.

Silver Lake Elementary School was built in 1922 at 41st and Hayes St. T. Lester Clark, local artist, painted the scene on the stage curtain for the school. T. Edgar Henderson became superintendent in 1923.

By 1924, educational and technical progress was evident in Columbia Heights schools. Application was made to the State Dept. of Education for Columbia Heights to be classed as having a Junior High School Department, with classes to be held in Oakwood School. That same year, phones were installed at Oakwood.

Another addition to Oakwood was built in 1924. In 1925, application was made for Columbia Heights to be made into a high school district, with classes still to be held in Oakwood while a high school was under construction.

Columbia Heights Senior High School (later Columbia Junior High) was completed on 41st Ave. between Jackson and VanBuren Streets and dedicated in December, 1926. VanBuren St. was vacated by the city to allow the building. Columbia High School was the first high school in Anoka County. It cost \$75,000.



Silver Lake School, built in 1922, closed in 1981, sold to First Lutheran Church.

The new high school was presented to the community as a “workshop for better citizenship as well as a place of inspiration and advancement for all that is best and highest in life.” It included 29 rooms and was designed for 500 to 600 students. The Columbia Heights Board of Education at that time included F.C. Spencer, president; G.R. Warren, secretary; C.A. Johnson, treasurer; Daniel Howe, C.M. Cook and Fred Bissett. To wrap up the two-day dedication celebration, a dance was held in the new school gymnasium with music provided by French’s Heights Theater Orchestra, which also performed during the silent movies at Heights Theater.

Along with the classrooms, science laboratories, lunchrooms and auditorium, the new high school offered an athletic program. Peter J. Deanovic joined the new high school staff as coach in 1929. It was his first job. He served as head football, basketball and track coach. “And at the end of the year, they added golf. I didn’t get much vacation,” he recalled. One of the most memorable events of his coaching career was the basketball season in 1930 when he took the Columbia Heights team to the state tournament. Walter “Red” Sochacki was the star of the team--“3/5 of the team,” Deanovic said. But “Red” turned 21 the night before the big game and was not allowed to play. “We juggled the team but lost the game,” Deanovic noted. He said over a period of 15 years, Columbia Heights won 85% of its basketball games.

Etta GoemanPott came to Columbia Heights in 1928 from Renville, Minn., to teach home economics. She lived with her mother on Monroe St. where the city was putting in gas lines. It was so muddy she wore her overshoes to get across the street, then threw them back to her mother across the street, so she wouldn’t have to carry the mud to school. When they both went out, they spread newspapers over the muddy street and walked on them to keep their shoes clean.

Miss GoemanPott taught for 33 years in Columbia Heights. In the 1950's, she had a class of senior boys in Home Economics who needed the credit to graduate, "but the only interest they had in cooking was so they could eat," she noted with disapproval. She required that they make their own aprons and insisted they learn the parts of the sewing machines "so they would know how to repair them for their wives."

In 1930, H.C. Nelson became superintendent and served until 1945. Wendall Larson served that office in 1946-47. Raymond Dahlgren took over for one year, then Nelson returned in 1948 to serve as superintendent until 1955.

In 1931, 30 students received high school diplomas from Columbia Heights High School. Class colors that year were orchid and yellow. The school colors were orange and green. Luther Youngdahl, at the time a Municipal Judge in Minneapolis, later governor of Minnesota, spoke at the commencement services. The class motto was "Life is a picture, so paint it well."

By 1933, 1903 students were attending Columbia Heights public schools. The Westerbergs, Rex and Ruth, came to Columbia Heights in the mid-1930's and joined the educational system. Rex was a history teacher in Columbia High School and later was principal at Silver Lake School. Ruth did substitute teaching, for \$2 a day, sometimes walking a mile in -12 degree temperatures. She recalled when repairs were made to the water mains on VanBuren, a man came to their apartment door and said the water would be turned off "'for a short time.' It was off for a month except for 10 minutes in the morning when we filled the bathtub and all the jars and kettles. We showered at the high school."

Marie Eng came to Columbia Heights in 1930, taught seven years at Oakwood, met and married Oscar Eng, a junior high teacher in 1937 during the Depression. They lived in an apartment at 40th and Central, "one room down, two up and share the bath—but we were young and in love and didn't notice the bad things," she said. When teaching, Marie rode the streetcar to 40th and 5th St., put on her overshoes which she had left overnight at Buffum's Drug Store, to walk to school. "We wallowed in the mud of the streets, there were no sidewalks. After school we left our overshoes on an old rug at Buffum's and took the streetcar home. Mr. Buffum was bald and sweet, and didn't mind us leaving our muddy overshoes there on an old rug. I had 40 to 50 students, played with them at recess, and ate lunch with them."

Enrollment slipped during the decade after 1933, with 1944 school enrollment listed as 1850, including 600 in the high school. Quality of education was indicated by a 1945 award given to the Pocket Gopher, the high school newspaper. It was an International Honor Award given by Quill and Scroll, a society for high school journalists.

Students were encouraged to reach beyond Heights' borders. In 1950, Bud Grant was interviewed by three eighth-grade girl basketball fans from Oakwood School. Their report: "Grant played basketball, baseball and football, and he likes baseball better than any other sport."

After building the first high school in 1926, Columbia Heights residents had 25 years of recess from building schools. But the early 1950's saw the beginning of a spurt of growth in education of children which often taxed the citizens' resources.

A scoreboard and stopwatch were almost necessary to keep track of the additional new buildings and burgeoning enrollment numbers.

1951: Addition to Silver Lake School.

1953: 1575 elementary students, and 1270 high school students.

1953: Joint Recreation Commission set up between city and school district.

1954: Nelson Elementary built at 5100 - 5th St.

1955: Howard Jensen becomes superintendent.

1957: Independent School Dist. 13 formed. It contained six square miles, 3800 acres, served 3552 students from Columbia Heights, Hilltop and part of Fridley.

1958: New high school bond passed by narrow margin.

1960: Valley View Elementary built at 800 - 49th Ave.

1961: New High School built at 1400 - 49th Ave.

1961: Columbia High School changed to Columbia Junior High.

1961: Highland Elementary built at 1500 - 49th Ave.

1965: Central Junior High built at 900 - 49th Ave.

1965: St. Patrick Day blizzard closed Columbia Heights schools, first time in 25 years.

1966: North Park Elementary built at 5575 Fillmore St., Fridley.

1967: Addition to Senior High built, including library, classrooms and swimming pool.

1967: Columbia School razed.

1968: Assessed valuation of Dist. 13 was \$21,075,273.

1970: School enrollment was 7500 students. Enrollment peaked.

1974: Oakwood School closed, sold to Oak Hill Baptist Church.

1974: Supt. Howard Jensen retires.

1975: Dr. Alan Osterndorf becomes superintendent.

1979: Columbia Heights beats Richfield 8 to 3 for the State "AA" Football title.

1980: Middle School at Central Junior High formed.

1981: Silver Lake Elementary closed, sold to First Lutheran Church.

1981: Columbia Junior High closed, sold to NW Electronics School.

1981: Nelson Elementary closed, sold for condominiums.

1983: University Ave. land belonging to Dist. 13 sold for housing. This land had been purchased in the late 1960's in anticipation that another elementary school would be needed. After several years of serious discussion about the need for another school, it was decided to sell the land.

Don Burton, who was a Dist. 13 public school administrator from 1953 until his retirement in June, 1983, recalled the two decades after 1953 as the school building boom. He was a principal at Oakwood when there were so many children they were taught in split shifts. "It worked out all right, but it was a mess while one group was coming and the other was going!"

Burton was the principal for the new Valley View Elementary School built in 1960. "The school was to be ready when school opened that fall. In August we learned it wouldn't be ready and the children would attend Columbia, which was being used as an emergency elementary school. I was told 704 of the 706 students would need transportation! Forth-ninth Ave. was a sea of mud. I had to have people out holding signs to direct traffic.

"We got into the new school at Thanksgiving, but we had no gym, no lunch-room, no office. We set up an office in a classroom with a temporary phone. Valley View School was in an open field, and we had a problem with mice: they came

in and ate the teachers' styrafoam coffee cups overnight.

"But after Oakwood, Valley View was Utopia. At Oakwood, the stairs were falling, we had to have a carpenter crew in one weekend to prop them back up. And at Columbia, we had to move children from room to room because the plaster was falling from the ceilings."

Howard Jensen served as Dist. 13 superintendent from 1955 to 1975 when he retired. He coped with the growing pains of the district as it tried to keep building programs abreast of enrollment, and again when schools were closed because of slowing enrollment. He recalled the student protests of the late 1960's along with the tensions in the district as Columbia Heights experienced one of the earliest teacher-union organizations in the state.

But his lasting impression of Columbia Heights public schools was the closeness of the parents with the schools through PTA organizations. "There were disagreements at times, but parents here care about how their children are educated. When people care, there are apt to be disagreements."

Alan Osterndorf was superintendent during a decade of declining enrollment and fiscal limitations. He noted necessary staff reductions were made through retirements and leaves when possible. Restructuring of the facilities into elementary grades one through five, middle school grades six through eight, and high school grades nine through 12 allowed the district to keep pace with changing times and curriculums. Osterndorf noted particularly "lots of enthusiastic citizen involvement and strong staff support" in the hard decisions which had to be made.

Through the hectic years of growth, building and change, the schools kept, through personnel, the kind of stability children need. When Warren Schultz retired as principal of Silver Lake Elementary after 28 years, and Maurice Volker took his place, one young student looked up at Volker and asked, "Are you the new Mr. Schultz?" That's continuity.

Immaculate Conception Catholic School was built in 1939 and started classes that year with 107 students, grades one through eight. The staff of eight Sisters of St. Francis of Sylvania, Ohio, lived in the school until the convent was built in 1948.

A wing was added to the school in 1953. Enrollment peaked in the school year 1961-62 with 1220 students. At that time the school had 16 teaching sisters and six lay teachers.

A kindergarten was started in 1973 and another wing was added in 1975. In 1986, just over 300 students, both Catholic and non-Catholic, attended the school, with seven teaching sisters and 14 lay teachers. Curriculum at Immaculate Conception School is basically the same as in the public schools except that religion is taught as a major subject.

Northwestern Electronics Institute, a post high-school private non-profit technical school, began classes in the Columbia Junior High building in 1982. Average enrollment for both day and evening classes is 925. The institute is governed by a board of directors, president is David Arneson.

CHAPTER 5

Churches - Lasting Values



The churches of Columbia Heights began almost as soon as the village was formed. But before they got organized and were able to serve all the spiritual needs of the community, the residents of the town attended places of worship in Minneapolis. Frenchman Dennis DeMars explained how it was on Sunday mornings: "We all got on the streetcar to go to church. It was full at 37th and Central. Then the Irish got off at 24th Ave. to go to St. Clements. At Broadway, the Russians, Germans and Poles got off to go to St. Mary's Russian Orthodox. By the time I got off the streetcar on the Mississippi River to go to Our Lady of Lourdes, I was all alone!"

Even before 1900, Columbia Heights residents began forming the basis for their churches. A group of people from an area in northeast Minneapolis, called "Hansonville" because of the many persons named Hanson who lived there, started a church at 37th and Main St. to serve Columbia Heights. Records are scarce and contradictory, but descendants of former members recall its being called both the Norwegian Salem Covenant Church and the Norwegian Danish Episcopal Church. Services were held in both Norwegian and English.

In 1913, the entire building was moved across the open fields to 39th Ave. and 5th St. where it was remodeled and enlarged. By 1950, the building was sold to VFW Post 230, after which time it burned. The money received for the sale of the building contributed to the development of Fridley United Methodist Church.



Columbia Heights Community Methodist Church and Parsonage, 800 37th Ave., built 1907. (Photo, Minnesota Historical Society)

Community United Methodist

In 1903, the Northern Minnesota Conference Year Book reported that Columbia Heights was "to be supplied" with services. In 1904, a retired Methodist Minister, Rev. J.H. Deward, was appointed to lay the groundwork for the new church.

The first Community Methodist Church was built on the corner of Quincy and 37th Ave. Rev. A.F. Thomson was the first minister and the church was dedicated in 1907 with 14 members, a church valued at \$3000 and a debt of \$800.

In 1921, Community Methodist had outgrown its first building. A site was acquired at Central and Gould, and a new church was built that year. This church served as a center for many community activities such as civic organization meetings and youth athletic events such as basketball in the basement. That church burned in 1949 and services were held at the Field House.

In 1952, a new church was built at a site across the street from the original Gould and Central location. A parade of members and Sunday School classes from the Field House to the new site preceded the laying of the cornerstone.

An education wing was added in 1957. A parsonage was built at 4131 Cleveland after the old one at 3705 VanBuren was sold.

Community United Methodist continued its focus as a center of community service, hosting Boy and Girl Scouts, delivering Meals on Wheels program and housing a Day-Care Center. Rev. Kenneth Rice became minister in 1979.

First Lutheran

First Lutheran Church had its beginnings in 1909 under the name "Zoar Norwegian Lutheran Free Church." Three Jerpbak sisters, Maren, Anna and Emilie, were instrumental in getting the new church started.

It first met in the old fire barn on Mill Street, where the city offices were later built. It had eight in its first Sunday School. In 1910, the church held services in Columbia School. By that time, the six-member Ladies Aid had accumulated enough money to buy a one-room building on VanBuren and lots on 40th and Quincy St., where the church was built in 1911 and which became its permanent home into the 1980's.

In 1915, the congregation sold the old chapel and moved it, making room to excavate and finish the basement of the first church building. The Men's Club was organized in 1923 with 11 members. In 1926, the superstructure of the first church was built and dedicated. Women's Mission Society was organized in 1923, and Boy Scout Troop 125 started in 1934. In 1936 a residence at 4023 Quincy was purchased for a parsonage.

A chapel, offices, classrooms, gymnasium and increased seating capacity in the sanctuary were added between 1952-55. A new parsonage was finished in 1958 at 4020 Quincy St. The old parsonage at 4023 Quincy was sold and a residence at 4017 Monroe was purchased for the assistant pastor in 1960. A parking lot was also acquired.

First Lutheran Sunday School enrollment grew from eight in 1909 to peak at 1100 in the 1960's. J.A. Peterson, Merrill Gilbertson and Walter E.N. Wahl were among pastors who served First Lutheran Church. The congregation bought Silver Lake Elementary School in 1981.



First Lutheran Church permanent church built in 1926.

Immaculate Conception Catholic

The Catholic Church in Columbia Heights got its first modest start when Mrs. George Warren held catechism classes in her home at 4144 5th St. in 1919. In 1921, a group of women organized a Sewing Society and raised \$1700 in three years through bazaars as a start toward beginning a parish in Columbia Heights. One of the bazaars was held in the Community Methodist Church basement.

A Catholic League was formed in the early 1920's for social events and to help eventually to form a congregation. Requests to have a priest serve the growing population were at first refused by the bishop because "a priest would have to be a linguist to serve so many nationalities." A priest, Rev. George Rolwes, was finally appointed in November, 1923, to begin a parish in Columbia Heights. He stayed at the Joseph DeMars home and the first Mass in town was said there. The first public Mass was said in the unused dance hall at Forest Park on December 8, 1923.

In 1924, 14 lots were purchased between 40th and 41st on Jackson with the money raised by the Sewing Society. A church was built there and dedicated December 8, 1925. The church received its name from the Feast of the Immaculate Conception celebrated on that date.



Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, built 1925. Original church later used as part of the school. (Photo, Minneapolis Journal, Minnesota Historical Society)

By 1938, the parish had grown to 450 families. Because Father Rolwes' health was too poor to take on building a school, Rev. Joseph Lapinski was appointed to be the parish priest. The school was completed in 1939 and opened with 224 students.

A convent for the teaching sisters and a rectory were built in 1948. A new wing was added to the school in 1953 because of growing enrollment, and a new church was built and dedicated in 1959. Rev. Lapinski served as pastor until his death in 1972, when Rev. Vincent Colon became the pastor. He served until 1981 when Rev. Walter Sochacki came to the parish. Rev. Sochacki is the son of Columbia Heights' favorite athlete son, "Red" Sochacki.

A second addition to the school, including a gymnasium and parish offices, was built in 1977. By 1982, 2100 families belonged to Immaculate Conception Church.

St. Peter and Paul's Russian Orthodox

St. Peter and Paul's Russian Orthodox Church was started about 1926 at the corner of 44th and Central. Irene (Kocur) Guhanick was the first person to be baptized there in 1927. Her parents were John and Anna Kocur, who arrived in Columbia Heights in 1918. She recalled that the church never had much of a superstructure -- "We always had to go downstairs to get in."

The church is remember by former members as a strong congregation which sponsored ice cream socials in addition to its services. Several priests served the church. One is recalled as having a pet goat which he took on walks and tethered in front of the post office. Columbia Heights kept the Christmas streetlights up until after the Russian Christmas, which was usually Jan. 7.

St. Matthew Lutheran

About 1930, a canvas by the Hennepin County Lutheran Mission Society determined there were enough prospects in Columbia Heights to warrant setting up a Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Mission. Luther Willer was assigned to the area. He began ringing doorbells, made calls, and extended invitations to attend services. The first was held in the American Legion Hall at 3957 VanBuren St. Jan 17, 1932, with six persons present. Sunday School was started the following Sunday with three boys. Evening services were started Feb. 14.

In May, 1932, a house was rented at 3934 VanBuren St. and furnished to look like a church. A chair and table were donated by Mrs. J. Baird; altar cloths were made by Mrs. Burmeister; the organ was given by Rev. J.C. Meyer; a crucifix came from a church in St. Paul; candlesticks from St. Peter's Church in Afton; and a rug from Rev. H. Matzkus. Luther Willer was installed as the first pastor.

During 1932, the Ladies Aid, Men's Club and young people's society were organized. The church was known at this time as the Missouri Lutheran Mission. It was incorporated Jan. 24, 1933 and was named St. Matthew's at that time.

A house at 4105 Washington St., the present site of the church, was purchased in 1933 and a basement church was constructed.

By 1941, the church numbered 200 communicant members. They gathered enough money to build the superstructure of the church, and it was dedicated in October, 1941. Sunday School space was added in 1948. Pastor Willer left in 1949. A new parsonage was built in 1957.

Membership increased and a new St. Matthew's sanctuary was dedicated in 1959. A new education building was erected in 1966. Staff and programs expanded to meet the needs of a growing congregation. Rev. William Otte became pastor in 1973.

People's Church

The first services of the new People's Church were held in 1942 in the Columbia Heights Field House. John Elrod started the church while he was a student at North Central Bible Institute. In 1943, the growing church was recognized by the Assemblies of God. The John Seman building on Central Ave. was secured to fill

the needs for a church site.

The church was completed in 1955 at 4054 VanBuren. The church parsonage was at 6175 Central Avenue. Rev. Henderson completed 37 years of service in 1984 and retired. Rev. Sherman Buschow became pastor in 1984.

People's Church has an active youth program, world-wide missions program, and Sunday School for all ages. It is affiliated with the National Association of Evangelicals.

Shiloh Bethany Presbyterian

Although Shiloh Bethany Presbyterian Church was not built at 43rd and Stinson Blvd. until 1957, its roots grew from a meeting in 1884 in a storeroom near Central Ave. at 24th Ave. The growth of Shiloh Presbyterian Church at that location resulted in eventual merging with Bethany Congregational Church and became known as Shiloh Bethany Presbyterian Church.

In 1955, Rev. Roy Johnson began the church's ministry in Columbia Heights, holding its Sunday School and Worship services at Silver Lake Elementary School. A new church building was dedicated at 43rd and Stinson in May, 1957. The church was enlarged and dedicated in 1966. Rev. Paul Waite became pastor of the church and continued to serve for two decades.

The Church's Women's Society has carried on a continuing ministry to Central Nursing Home on Central Ave. About 1968, Christian Service Brigade for boys and Pioneer Girls for girls of the congregation were started. The church has always had active junior, senior and college groups.

St. Timothy's Lutheran Church

A survey was conducted in 1957 in the Columbia Heights and Fridley areas to determine whether a church, Lutheran Church of America, should be formed in the area. The first interest meeting was held in September, 1958, with 84 adults present. A steering committee was formed, and it received permission from the School Board for temporary use of Nelson School for worship.

The first worship service, later that month, had 223 in attendance. Adult and youth choirs were organized in November and the first wedding service was conducted by Pastor Hamlin in December, 1958. Pastor Hamlin was elected president at the first congregational business meeting in March, 1959. In September, property at 825 51st Ave. for the future church of St. Timothy's was purchased for \$18,000.

The Lutheran Church Women were organized in 1960 with 50 women in attendance. Groundbreaking for the first unit of the new church was in April, 1961. Later that year, the organ being purchased on time payments (and uninsured) was stolen. Several years later it was located in Florida but was in such poor condition it was not returned.

By 1964 the church congregation had grown to nearly 1200 and a second unit of offices, fellowship hall and larger sanctuary were planned. Pastor Hamlin

resigned in 1969 and Rev. Robert Ross was installed, followed by Rev. Gene Heglund in 1972. In 1979, the church council voted to sponsor a refugee family. Ten families agreed to assist the family to become self-supporting. The family was welcomed in 1980.

Oak Hill Baptist Church

Most recent addition to the roster of churches in Columbia Heights is Oak Hill Baptist. That Church bought Oakwood School when it closed in 1974. In addition to serving as a church, the building was rented out for five years to a Christian school not connected with Oak Hill Baptist.

Present membership of the church is about 170. Karl Smith is minister. The church is making plans to build a sanctuary on the northwest corner of the property.

CHAPTER 6

Government- Lacing the Town Together



In a democratic society, government is a boot-strap affair, done by the citizens for themselves. People take stock, look at their needs, and do something about them. So it was in Columbia Heights.

With the recording of the first village plats by Thomas Lowry in 1893, the area later to be known as Columbia Heights began to take on the qualities of an organized politically defined body. Industries were established. People were moving in and building homes. Paths became roads of sorts. Traffic patterns became established.

In 1898, a couple of major occurrences influenced the future of Columbia Heights. The steel rolling mill burned to the ground and was not rebuilt. That put the brakes on Columbia Heights' future as the Pittsburg of the West.

The other event was that on March 14, 1898, Columbia Heights became a village, separate from Fridley Township. It contained 1696 acres, 100 citizens and 20 houses. The Anoka County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously to approve the action. Miles Ailes was appointed first council president, and Clifton Wadsworth was village recorder.

The new town was named Columbia Heights by way of a contest. Two entries were awarded the \$50 prize, which they split. Their names are not known.

Several ideas have been suggested as to why Columbia Heights was chosen as the name: One idea was that the new town in Minnesota resembled a city by the same name in New York State. Another was that it obviously had "height," being the highest point in Hennepin, Ramsey and Anoka Counties at 47th and Stin-

son Blvd. Another possibility is the town's nearness to Columbia Park, which many people passed when they took the streetcar to Forest Park. Yet another idea is that the 400th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America was celebrated just six years earlier and the name "Columbus" was fresh in people's minds.

Although the names of the winners of the naming contest are not known, the name of a near-winner is known: Carl Andersen, Malcolm Watson's grandfather, who lived in northeast Minneapolis. He suggested the name "Columbia" without the "Heights," and was passed by. "Too bad," Grandmother Andersen said at the time. "We could use the money."

To learn "who was who" in the earliest years of Columbia Heights, the following election notes were compiled from the Minneapolis Journal, March 1903: H.M. Verrill, president; Loren Hanson, Charles Lundren, and tie between A.P. Sanborn and J.E. Carpenter, trustees; C.H. Covyson, recorder; H.J. Verrill, assessor; Milton C. Ailes, treasurer; William Spain, P.C. Dickson and R.H. McKague, all tied for constable; and Michael Krisko and J.M. Canfield, justices of the peace.

E.M. Christian became president in 1904; J.W. Fletham in 1905; William Spain in 1906, 1907 and 1908. Some other officers in those years included Neil W. Mc Cullum, O. Ostrander, Phillip Stack, C.H. Flowers, Henry Kramer, O.H. Bakke and W.D. Oakins. In 1907, Peter Glenske became the first poundmaster and Ed Christian became the first street commissioner.

Columbia Heights' books were scrutinized by the State Examiner in 1909, with criticism directed against minor matters. Among items studied were poor record-keeping. Salaries of the village council were held to have been excessive. And treasurer's records were reported as deficient "owing to the lack of knowledge as to how to keep them." The examiner suggested ways of improving the bookkeeping system but discouraged installing a double-entry system "until the village officers have mastered the single-entry system." (from Minneapolis Journal)

Bookkeeping reprimands notwithstanding, life went on in Columbia Heights, both in official and social circles. Streets were named and numbered to 45th, beyond which were family farms. People continued to move in, build houses, plant gardens and raise children.

In the election of 1910, O.H. Bakke was named president of the village council, with 119 votes cast. The amount for roads and bridges and the town fund were left to the village council. It was voted to reincorporate the village under state laws of 1905.

Taxes were on people's minds in Columbia Heights in 1910. The Anoka Herald ran complete lists of Anoka County residents who paid property taxes. Taxpayers were urged to read every installment of the township lists to see how "the habitual tax dodger has been caught napping." Taxes listed varied from as low as 4 cents to \$135.60. Arcade Investment Co., the company formed by Thomas Lowry to develop Columbia Heights, was listed as paying \$21.73.

Presidents of the Columbia Heights village council were: In 1911, Frederick D. Gould; 1912, J.B. Vincent; 1913, W.C. Gauvitte. Some other village office holders those years were George Burgoyne, F.H. Morton, H.C. Dierling, H.G. Pratt and C.N. Dahl.

Further reference to Columbia Heights taxes was made in the Anoka Herald in 1912, indicating high taxes: "For the size of the place, Columbia Heights pays



From the Heights to the depths-- Building streets was a continuing project for Columbia Heights government. This street needed work in 1955.

(Photo, Paul Wychor)

a comparatively large personal property tax.”

Political hype in 1914 was not exactly understated. The Citizen ticket declared: “For the past five years the smell of politics in Columbia Heights has reached the state line. There have been charges of graft and theft. Vote for us. We have no promises.”

“Progressive but not extravegant. Right must prevail” was the slogan of the Progressive Party. The Federal ticket warned, “Don’t be misled by loud talk and big noise. We ask your consideration of the sterling character of our candidates.”

Further comment in the Anoka County Union noted: “The Columbia Heights voter shivers with fear that he will make some mistake that will cost the prosperity of his town dearly. The weight of responsibility of citizenship in Columbia Heights just now is causing sleepless nights.”

W.C. Gauvitte ran for reelection in 1914 on the Progressive ticket and was council president again in 1916. A.L. Evans was president in 1918 and 1919. Other officers in 1919 were Charles Tucker, clerk; George Burgoyne, trustee; F.N. Morton, treasurer; J.N. Betts, justice of the peace; and Gus Sundberg, constable. Good roads and community development were issues in the election of 1919. Population of Columbia Heights in 1920 was 2968.

A 28-page proposed Charter of the City of Columbia Heights was published and adopted July 21, 1921. The Preamble read: "We, the people of the Village of Columbia Heights, in order to become a self-governing city under the municipal home rule provisions of the constitution and statutes of Minnesota, do adopt and establish this charter of the City of Columbia Heights." The charter established the council-city manager type of government, a city of the fourth class, and was the third city in the United States to adopt this type of home rule charter. It could be changed only by amendment. Listed as officers and members of the charter commission were: E.A. Carlson, president; O.H. Prestemon, secretary; M.E. Bean; Lewis I. Birdsall; J. Burmeister; E.M. Christian; A.T. Evans; William C. Gauvitte; Alfred Lucier; James McKenna; F.H. Morton; F.G. Borrison; L.S. Seelye; H.E. Soderholm; and P.T. Stack.

William Gauvitte was elected first mayor of the new city. George Burgoyne, Matt Ledwein, Arthur L. Bentzen and James McKenna were elected to the first council. James Corr was appointed the first city manager. His salary was \$2400 a year, his assistant received \$1000 a year.

The new government went to work immediately, and got itself into debt for \$12,617 to lengthen watermains and enlarge the area receiving electricity. The council gave a license to Forest Park to show movies, and it tightened the rules about alcohol consumption and use in the city. The ordinance even regulated the entrance of grains into the city which might be used to make alcohol. Mayor Gauvitte appointed the first regular police department with Dan Schiavone as chief.

The political scene continued to be contentious. A candidates' meeting sponsored by the fledgling Columbia Heights League of Voters in 1923 nearly broke up in fisticuffs. City manager James Corr resigned in 1923, and city clerk Ed Semple disappeared. Ava Ostrander was the first woman council member in 1924, followed by Mrs. Gould in 1925.

Many kinds of laws were passed in the 1920's which helped define the character of the city. The first building codes were established. Curfew laws were passed. Providing services such as sidewalks, passable roads and water to the growing community were top priorities of the council.

But a certain degree of distrust was evident. Dennis DeMars recalled that a fine artesian well was believed to be located at the site of the old steel rolling mill offices at 38th and Jackson. The city offered \$100 to the person who located this well. A man named Sputs Helwick said he knew where it was but wouldn't tell until he got the \$100. The city refused to prepay the \$100, and Sputs refused to tell where the well was. It was never found, but a lot of old foundry pipes were dug up during the hunt.

Hardy Soderholm became mayor in 1925, followed by William Foster in 1927. In 10 years, by 1930, population of Columbia Heights had nearly doubled, to 5613. H.F. Welch was elected mayor in 1931, and faced, along with the city, the growing effects of the national Depression. City jobs and the budget were a concern in the election. City salaries were cut. The Columbia Heights bank was forced to sell some of its collateral to provide working capital. The American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars appeared before the council stating they could no longer provide relief for the city's poor because both organizations were broke.

With the lifting of Prohibition in 1934, control of alcohol consumption was

again a matter for social comment. O.H. Prestemon noted with some irony that "beer should be easily available for the tired housewife on washday. Any child old enough to walk should be allowed to get it for her."

In 1933, a municipal liquor ordinance repealed all obsolete and conflicting ordinances. In 1935, Columbia Heights began selling liquor through municipal stores. Profits from these stores were channeled into running the other parts of government such as streets and police. In 1935, too, the new Farmer Labor Club was formed in Columbia Heights.

The Depression continued to hurt. City license fees were cut in half. Land was foreclosed. The city considered hiring a new city manager for \$130 a month who could also do maintenance work.

Columbia Heights bootstraps got a boost from federal funding in 1935 when the Federal Works Project Administration (WPA) came to the rescue with a \$79,462 project approval for Columbia Heights. It was earmarked for sidewalks, library books, curbs, roads, sewers and a clerk.

Another federal program which helped put people to work was the National Youth Administration (NYA) which made 1000 cement block and brick a day in Columbia Heights, giving work and income to unemployed youth.

Men who served as mayor of Columbia Heights during the 1930's were Ralph Crisp, Pete Tema, Andrew Spekulant, and Louis Bassett.

After a decade of slow growth, Columbia Heights population had reached just 6035 by 1940. Liquor store profits were listed as \$10,000 that year. The Planning and Zoning Commission was established in 1940 with seven members, with power to recommend but no decision-making powers. City offices moved to an addition on the Field House in 1940.

During the years of World War II, construction was necessarily limited, but substantial gain in construction of sidewalks, curbs, gutters and asphalt streets was reported, mainly through the WPA. In 1944, the mayor received \$8 a month, councilmen received \$6.

By 1945, the outlook for development was improving. Columbia Heights planned to provide sewer and gas mains for every Columbia Heights street. The city budget increased accordingly, nearly tripling from 1943 to 1946. The average property tax paid in 1947 was \$100. The city also bought lots on the east side of Central Ave. between 40th and 41st Avenues in 1945 for a new municipal liquor store. H.E. Soderholm was elected mayor for the second time in 1948. A fire occurred that year in the municipal liquor store. Columbia Heights closed the 1940's decade by ordering the removal of the outside toilets at 39th and Jackson.

In 1950, when O.H. Prestemon was mayor, population of Columbia Heights was 8175. The city was about to embark on an enormous growth spurt which would tax the expertise, the resources and sometimes the patience of the city government. Ray Ernst was named acting city manager. The city council moved that there was no need for two liquor invoices, two counts and two reports. The city engineer position was created in 1950 and the state invited bids to improve Central Ave.

John Stopka was elected mayor of Columbia Heights in 1951. At 22, he was the nation's youngest Democratic office-holder.

Many advances in city government were made in the early 1950's. A charter commission was set up to study the 30-year old charter. The Columbia Heights

Recreation Commission was established.

In 1955, it was charged that the new municipal liquor store was not being properly built because a north wall collapsed during construction. "No pilasters!" was accused as the culprit of poor construction.



Government at work -- At a council meeting which stretched to midnight, council members and interested citizens examined the new municipal liquor store foundations which had buckled because of swampy ground on the east side of Central. "No pilasters!" was blamed for the weakness. (Photo, Paul Wychor)

The post office moved to a new building at 41st and Central in 1955. The area west of Central between 43rd and 44th was rezoned from residential to commercial and a shopping center was proposed for the area over the strong objections of nearby residents.

In 1955, Columbia Heights annexed part of Fridley Township by ordinance: Seventy acres between Central and University Avenues north of 51st Ave., 80 acres east of Central Ave. south of 49th Ave., and 415 additional acres, also from Fridley Township, bringing the city's total area to 2258 acres and its present boundaries.

After deciding not to run for re-election in 1955, and bowing to a petition urging him to run, John Stopka won the mayor's seat again by a margin of two votes. The election was contested by George Martonik. Good government was expanded in 1956 with the issuance of the first Columbia Heights dog license, to Harold Anderson's rat terrier, Dibbles.

The city issued 590 building permits in 1956. A second municipal liquor store was built on University Ave. in 1958. In 1959, 790 building permits were issued. Liquor sales from 1935 to 1960 totaled nearly \$8 million, with nearly \$1 million having gone to police, fire and street departments of the city. The figures were compiled in preparation for an election to choose between continuing a municipal liquor system or issuing private licenses. A split liquor plan was chosen in 1961. In 1962, net profit from liquor was \$90,000. A new municipal liquor store was built to replace a condemned leased building on University Ave.

Warren Armstrong was mayor from 1959 to 1965. By 1960, the population of Columbia Heights had tripled since the 1950 census to 17,535. A 1965 mid-decade census showed another big increase, up to 23,283. The 1970 census, however, showed a very minor increase to 23,997.

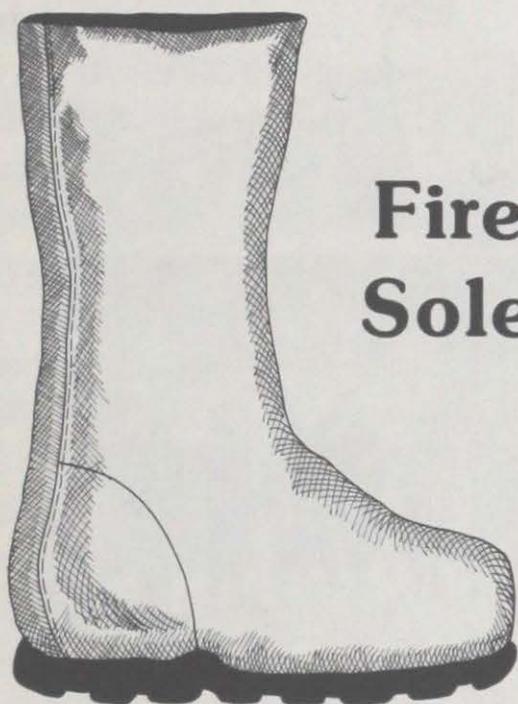
Malcolm Watson was city engineer starting in 1951, then served as city manager from 1957 to 1977. Many administrative changes were made during those years including defining department responsibilities and establishing complete garbage and rubbish pick-up by the city.

Bruce Nawrocki was elected mayor in 1965 and served continually into 1986 during years of rapid growth and development in Columbia Heights. During those years, the utility system--water and sanitary sewers--were rebuilt; a storm sewer system was built; the park system developed; library and book collection significantly expanded; new municipal garage built and city hall enlarged; 40th and Central business district redeveloped, including Parkview Villa, office tower, condominiums and shopping center; Columbia Manor for seniors built; Sullivan Lake area, including Midland Co-op, developed.

The city budget was kept fiscally responsible with an A-1 bond rating and positive fund balances in all accounts.

Economic and political conditions in the country changed enormously since 1898 when Columbia Heights began. In the later years of government interdependence, a community could no longer exist by bootstraps alone--that self-help ethic by which Columbia Heights had first started. Cooperation with other government units was essential. Nawrocki represented Columbia Heights at metropolitan and state levels of government in order that the city could participate in programs which were available through state and federal funding.

In 1976, Columbia Heights celebrated the nation's bicentennial along with everybody else in the country. Budget for that year was over \$5 million. Signs of the city's development in that bicentennial year included a new post office at 44th Ave. and Central, a new water tower, dedication of Wargo Mini-Park, and starting publication of a city newsletter.



CHAPTER 7

Fire, Police, Water - Sole of City Services

Fire Department

In 1900, Columbia Heights had 20 homes on its tax rolls; businesses were growing on Central Ave.; industries were building on University Ave. But the city was still receiving its fire protection from Minneapolis. Clearly it was time for another bootstap, self-help endeavor.

On May 28, 1907, the Columbia Heights Fire Dept. was organized and received its charter. The department listed 16 volunteers with Phil Stack as the first chief and Alex Reynick as first secretary. A two-wheel hose-cart pulled either by the volunteers or by a team of horses was the first equipment. The fire alarm was a bell on top of the building at 40th and 7th St. Grass fires were the big threat, the most notable being the one which destroyed the Lincoln funeral coach in 1911. Some members of the fire department in 1911 were Louis Bassett, Tom Degman, Einar Udsted, C.F. Perrin, O.W. Buege, George Ballenger, Carl Jevne, Herman Karrow, Nob Lindberg and Charlie Crabbe.

In 1913, a Model T Ford truck with soda and acid chemical tanks was purchased. Even with this new equipment, the Minneapolis Fire Dept. occasionally helped out. One such time was for the Minneapolis Electric Steel Foundry fire at 38th and 5th St. in 1917.

Early in 1919, an embarrassing fire occurred: the fire station itself was destroyed by fire, along with all equipment and records, plus many city records. The Minneapolis fire truck which tried to help then was held up by the mud at 40th and Central. The fire was caused, according to a fire department history by long-

time fireman, Omar Schwartz, by a "caretaker who had a hot fire going in a stove which was surrounded by several rolls of tar paper. As he had been playing a game of Gesundheit with a flask of White Mule, he barely saved his own hide."



Columbia Heights Fire Dept. in front of the "new" fire station at 40th and 7th St. in early 1920's.

A new station was built at 40th and 7th St. and in 1920 a Nash quad-wheel-drive truck with greatly increased water capacity was put into service. At this time, rubber coats and boots and leather helmets were added to the equipment. The police department operated from a corner of the fire department building at that time.

The 1920's were the years of Prohibition, and the Columbia Heights police confiscated a fair share of bootleg liquor. Al Kremer recalled a story about when the police dumped moonshine down the police department sink, which had no drain but simply emptied out to the side of the building, "and the locals were outside, catching it in tin cans."

Court was held in the fire station on Saturdays. In 1921, the old fire bell was replaced with a three-horse-power siren. However, the bell was retained to ring the 9:30 curfew and to use when the siren froze up. George Bailergeron (Ballenger) was fire chief from 1921-1926.

Grass and wood-shingle fires were the most common fire calls in the early part of the century, but in the mid-1920's, Schock Parlor Frame Furniture Factory at 38th and University burned. Smoldering debris and sawdust required three days of wetting down by the fire department.

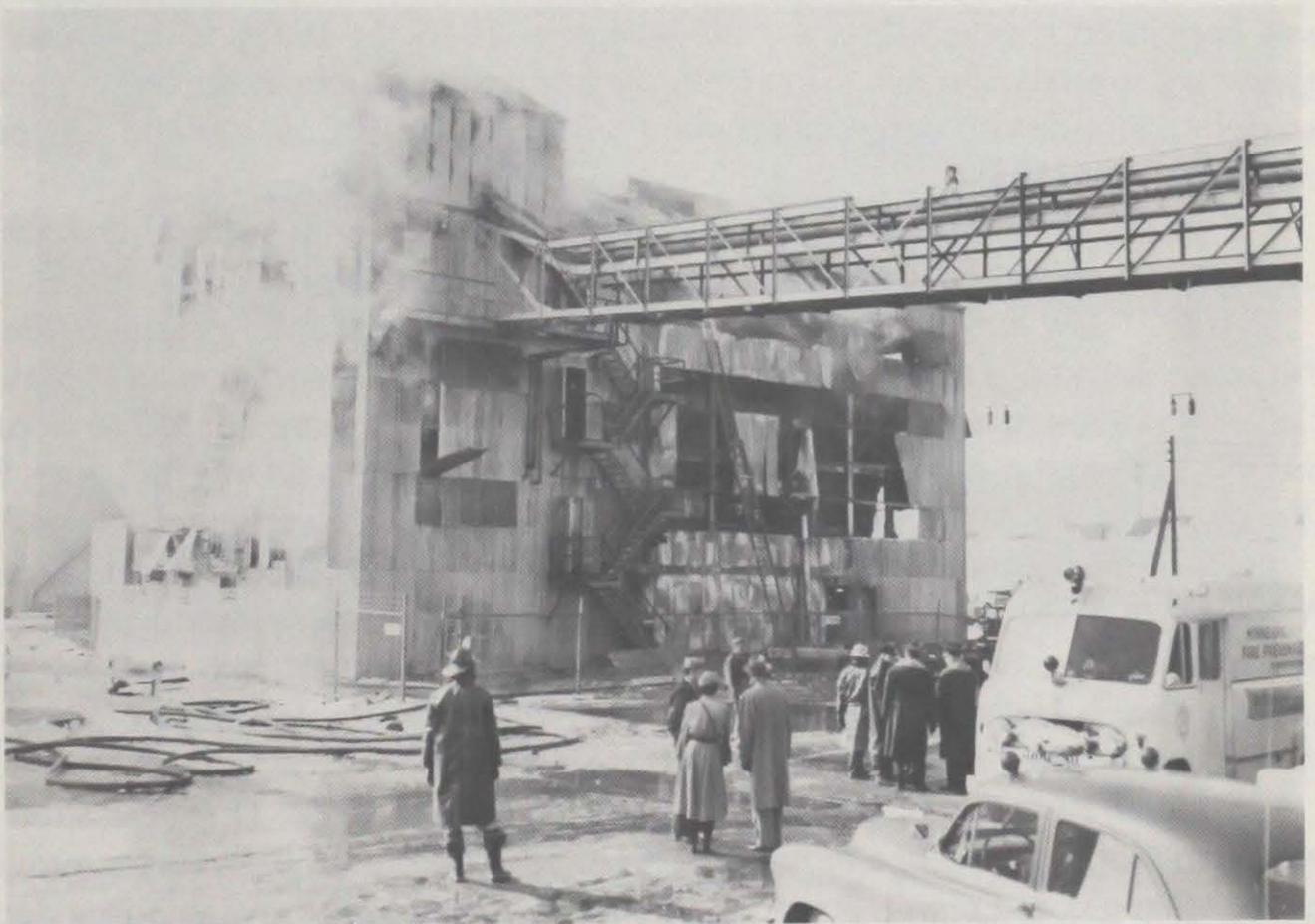
The growing department needed space, and a new fire station was built by WPA labor at a cost of \$8700, finished in 1942. This was the year the first regular fireman, Chief Omar Schwartz, was appointed. William Ostmoe, born in Columbia Heights in 1911, was the second regular fireman appointed, in 1944. Also in 1944, the fire department was put under the Fire Civil Service Commission which included Ralph Lawrence, John Hogan and Ellsworth Hollepeter. Pat Kennedy was the

third fulltime fireman, appointed in 1946. Training in fire-fighting and new equipment and procedures were utilized all through the years. By 1954, the fire department had, besides three fulltime men, 19 volunteers.

In 1959, an addition was put on the fire department building, and in 1978 a major expansion of the municipal building at 40th and Mill St. gave the fire department new facilities. The old brass sliding pole was rendered obsolete by a radio alert system for members.

By 1982, the department's 75th anniversary, it had seven emergency vehicles, including two life-support ambulances for medical emergencies; 24 fire-fighters and four officers under Chief Don Johnson. Service in the fire department seems to be a family tradition in Columbia Heights: by 1985, five generations of DeMars had served in the department.

Besides the Lincoln funeral car fire, the fire station fire and Schock Parlor Frame Furniture, several other noteworthy fires occurred in the community: Steel Rolling Mill, 1898; Old Heights Theater, 1920's; Danielson's Drug in 1935; Linseed Oil Plant, 1940; Municipal Liquor Store, 1948; Methodist Church, 1949; Cargill explosion, 1955. In 1965, Zayres Dept. Store, formerly Grand Central, at 43rd and Central, burned for a \$6 million loss. Lack of access to the building caused delay, and firemen finally entered by use of cutting torches and a front-end loader.



*The Cargill explosion and fire in 1955 was one of the city's most spectacular.
(Photo, Paul Wychor)*

An explosion and fire at Al and Wally's Drug Store at 40th and 5th St. occurred in 1966. A gas leak was blamed, and five persons were hospitalized. The Bandbox Cafe at 40th and Central burned in 1971.

In his fire department history, Schwartz recalled humorous incidents in the early days of volunteer firemen: throwing an expensive mirror out of the window, then hand-carrying out a bed chamber utensil; smashing a door in, then discovering it was not locked; reaching for the snuff after a fire and discovering that in the rush of responding to the fire bell, the pants were left at home.

Schwartz also noted that any fire in those early days was a good time to get a bath, as drowning of a fire in those days resulted in water damage exceeding fire loss about 10 to one.

Police Department

Columbia Heights, formally defined a village in 1898, struggled without organized police protection for seven years. Even then, it began as something less than a formal department. It was in 1905 that August H. Beurger was paid \$1 for one day of constable service. August Schnetka was also listed as a constable in 1905. L.C. Johnson and H. Marx were acting constables in 1907. Serving in that capacity in years 1908 to 1916 were A.L. DeMars, Walter S. Booth, F.S. Mosier, Hallis Poden, Mr. Prado and Don Walthers.

By 1916, things were apparently getting lively at Forest Park, and Gust Sundberg and H.S. Barland were appointed special officers for the area. L.W. Bassett was appointed special officer for the village in 1916. In 1919, Gust Holms was appointed special constable to keep people from cutting ice from the skating ponds, according to a history of the department written by W.E. Cottrell, who was police chief from 1941-63.

In 1920, Dan Schiavone was appointed captain of police and Gust Sundberg was granted payment for use of his car for police work.

1921 saw many changes in Columbia Heights, and many of them affected the police department. In April, the Parents and Teachers Association and Commercial Club requested a curfew law enforced, so policemen were appointed to patrol the streets from 8 p.m. to midnight. They received 50 cents an hour. In July, Fred West was appointed special officer to regulate automobile speeders.

In August, 1921, a new council was elected under the Home Rule Charter. A budget of \$500 was passed to pay for police service. Nine men were paid out of this fund. Dan Schiavone was appointed chief in October, with Axel Sather as captain, Jacob Heller as motorcycle officer and Ernest Poole, Steve Malarik and Henry Barland as officers.

Merlin Russ and M.C. DeMars joined the force in 1922. That year \$400 was earmarked for purchase of a motorcycle for motorcycle officer, Jake Heller, provided he kept it in gas and repair. Andy Elsenpeter, Sr. joined the growing police department in 1922, and the budget for that year, for both police and court, was \$1800.

After incorporating in 1921, the new village began to take the reins of government firmly in hand. Automobile traffic, along with the many horse-drawn vehicles still in use, was in need of control. Village ordinances specified lanes for turning, with signals made either by hand or whip. Speed laws of 10 MPH in crowded districts and 15 MPH in residential areas were passed.

In July, 1923, Andy Elsenpeter was appointed Chief of Police at a salary

of \$150 a month. Jake Heller, motorcycle traffic officer, was to receive a salary of \$125 a month, and the city manager was to keep him busy with other work when he wasn't working on police duties. Chief Elsenpeter's reign as police chief was short-lived: he was laid off in December when the force was cut to one man. A petition on his behalf, signed by 461 persons, was denied. In October 1924, \$1500 was set as the police budget. A stop-and-go signal was voted to be erected at 40th and Central at a cost of \$475, but was later cancelled. In 1925, the force consisted of Chief Jake Heller, James French and Kuhn.

The department moved to the Heights Theater in 1926, along with the court and the city manager's office. By 1927, the force was down to one man again, and the chief's salary was cut to \$140 a month. But in 1929, a traffic squad was put on to patrol the main highways. A car was hired at 10 cents a mile and \$1 an hour for the officers. W.E. Cottrell was hired in 1930, the year triplicate traffic tags were put into use.



Columbia Heights Police Dept., early 1930's, at 40th Ave. and Quincy.

1931 saw modern science and affluence added to the Columbia Heights Police Dept.: radios were installed in the two police cars and a contract was entered with Minneapolis Police Dept. for police radio service. Chief Heller had moved on as deputy sheriff for Anoka County and James French was chief, with officers Frank Foster, Carrigan, Cottrell and Eugene Jenkins.

Organization of public services became ever more formal. In 1934, under Mayor Ralph Crisp, Civil Service for the Police Department was adopted. Ray Ernst, Gust Holms and Fred Spencer were appointed to the commission, Ray Murphy was added to the force.

But times got tougher again, and the police department was again reduced to one man in 1935, with a fireman deputized to be on call for 24 hours a day.

After Chief French died in 1940, Mayor Louis Bassett appointed Sgt. Cottrell as acting chief. He was named chief in 1941. Two way radios were installed in the police cars that year. By 1954, the department included a chief, seven men and a clerk.

In 1955, Chief Cottrell requested an improved police department building and claimed the department was dangerously low in personnel and equipment. His request caused heavy discussion between Mayor John Stopka and the council, and the request was tabled several times.

The police department grew along with Columbia Heights after World War II. By 1962, the force consisted of 12 patrolmen and Chief Cottrell. An investigator and juvenile and family relations officer were added. Chief Cottrell retired in 1963, and Merle Glader became chief until his death in 1975. Stuart Anderson became chief then.

In 1977, Patrolman Curtis Ramsdell was killed in the line of duty. The major expansion of municipal buildings in 1978 gave the department new facilities.

By 1970, Columbia Heights population was 24,000. The city joined five other cities that year to form the Anoka County Joint Law Enforcement Council in order to implement regional services. Heights had 18 sworn officers and three civilians serving the department. The 911 phone system was installed in Anoka County in 1982. A police training program, outdoor firearms range and major crime investigation unit were established, along with a computer system allowing local agencies access to state and federal records.

A Central Communications Center was installed from which all fire and police units are dispatched, eliminating the need for several police departments to have 24-hour personnel on duty.

Water

Although the water treatment plant on Reservoir Blvd. does not belong to Columbia Heights, it is completely surrounded by the city. And since Columbia Heights uses Minneapolis water, the treatment plant has a direct bearing on the city's history.

In the mid 19th century, sanitation facilities were rather casual, even in the big cities. Sewage was dumped into the Mississippi River at 3rd Ave. in Minneapolis, and water was pulled and run directly from the river into the mains. Bouts of typhoid fever were frequent.

In 1884, Thomas and Beatrice Lowry donated that part of approximately 80 acres which lies east of Reservoir Blvd. at 45th Ave. to Minneapolis for \$1. About that time, Minneapolis decided to avoid the typhoid epidemics by taking the city water from north of the sewage dumping, where the river was unpolluted. In 1888, a pumping station was built by Minneapolis on the west side of the Mississippi River at Camden and Washington Ave. The water was pumped across the river to the property donated by Thomas Lowry where two stone-lined reservoirs had been built. The water then could be pulled by gravity from the reservoirs to serve Minneapolis.

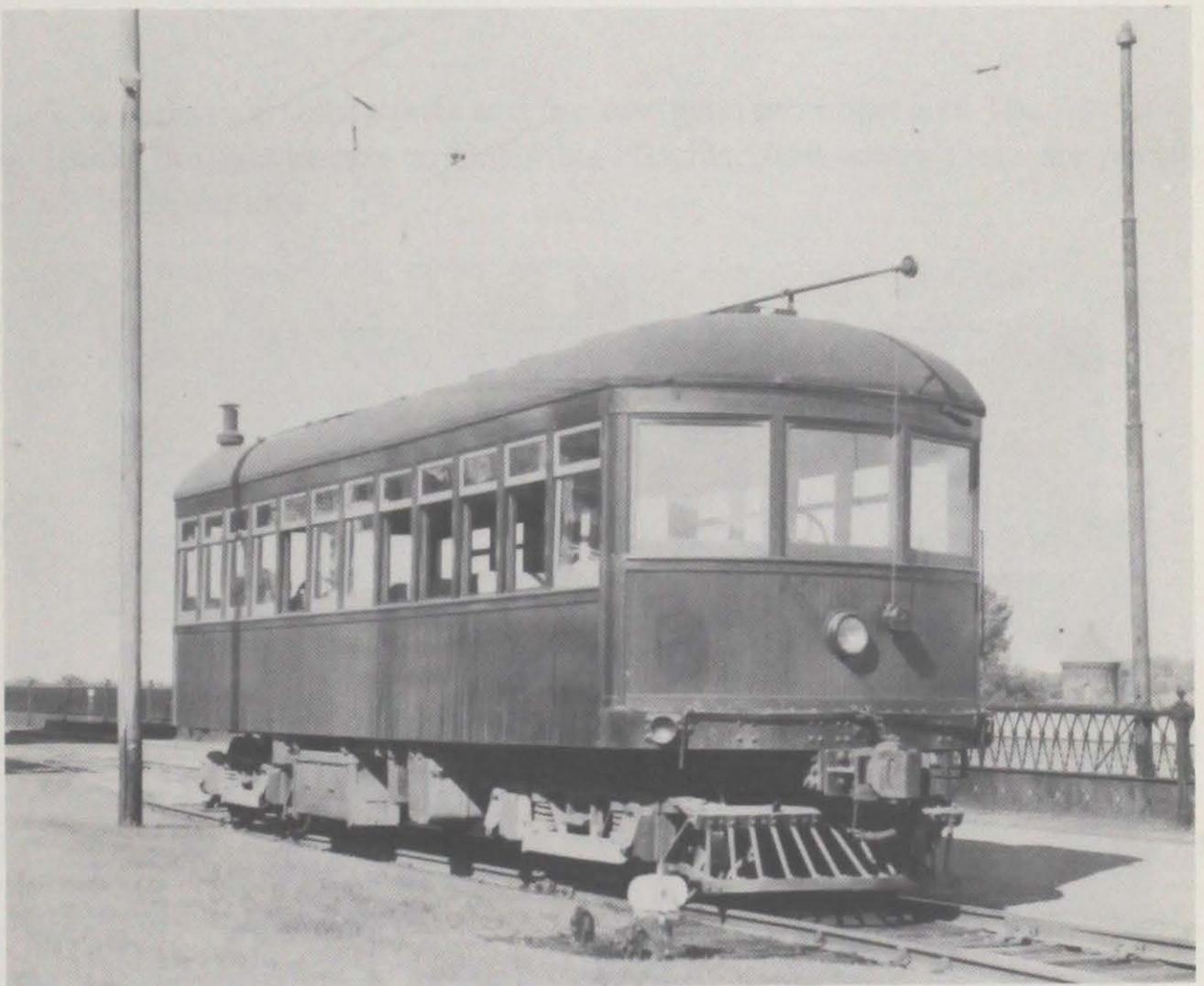
Those two reservoirs are still in use today. They are built of sandstone blocks

with walls wider at the bottom than at the top to withstand the weight of water. They each hold about 40 million gallons of water. They are sealed with clay on the outside and are still fairly tight.

In 1894, a pumping station was built on the east side of the river and is still in use. In 1906, property west of Reservoir Blvd. at 45th Ave. was donated to Minneapolis by Arcade Investment Co. for \$1. Reservoir Blvd. was acquired by Minneapolis about the same time. The large square home which until recently was located on reservoir property was built after 1906 and was the home of the water treatment plant superintendent as part of his salary.

In 1911 a treatment plant was built and one of the reservoirs was roofed. Water was pulled into one reservoir, treated in the plant, then run into the roofed area for storage. An addition to the plant was built in 1913. Also in 1913, Columbia Heights residents voted down a proposal to issue bonds for water mains.

When the treatment plant was built, the need for transporting chemicals to the plant led to laying of a single railroad track along Reservoir Blvd. from the railroad intersection at Central Ave. It was served by an electrically powered car which carried both chemicals and passengers.



Streetcar which carried chemicals and passengers along Reservoir Blvd. to the water filtration plant. Note the stone tower at right (photo, Minnesota Historical Society)

When the streetcar system was abandoned in the early 1950's, the Reservoir Blvd. tracks were taken up, and supplies were trucked to the plant. Columbia Heights took over the maintenance of Reservoir Blvd. at that time.

Although the water reservoir in Columbia Heights is still in use, it is a secondary plant, used mainly in the summer and when the Minneapolis water plant in Fridley is down.

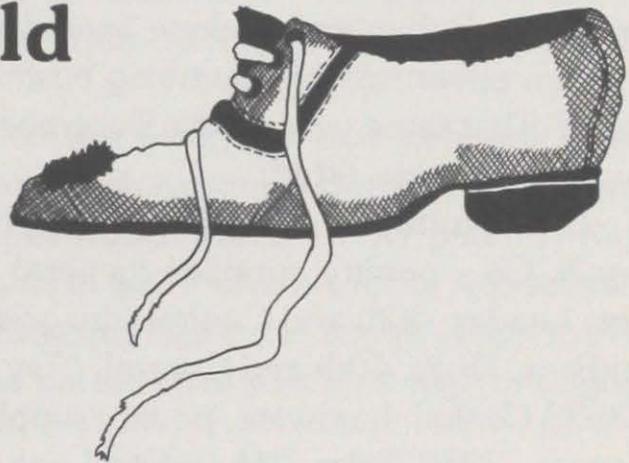
While Minneapolis was building the big reservoirs and filtration plant, Columbia Heights residents were using them. One story reports that before a water softening plant affected the water in the reservoirs, fish lived in the settling pond, and during the Depression, city employees caught small-mouth bass and dozens of frogs there to augment their diets.

Kids swam in the sedimentation basin at night and played in the tunnels of the plant. The Hilltop Golf Course had four golf holes laid around the water plant on land leased from Minneapolis.

Water mains, along with sidewalks and roads, were being extended to Columbia Heights neighborhoods all through the next decades. In 1951 alone, water, sewer and rough grading were extended to 159 new home. That year, a new 50,000 gallon water tower was erected. Another water tower was built in 1976.

CHAPTER 8

Business - Scrambling For A Toe-Hold



The early steel rolling mills and the energetic promotions of Thomas Lowry in the 1890's brought people to Columbia Heights. And where there are people, there will be commerce.



One of the earliest commercial buildings in Columbia Heights, partially destroyed by fire and razed in 1977.

One of the first commercial sites on record was at the northwest corner of 40th and Central--a saloon. That building is recalled also as the site of a locksmith or blacksmith, a location for political meetings, as a series of groceries, and finally as Myron's Candlelight Cafe. The building partially burned as was razed in 1977.

Other very early Columbia Heights businesses included Dominic Fernaro's Shoe Shop south of 40th on Central; Beeman Tractor, Twin City Tank and Iowa Paint on University Ave. In 1914, George Eckenroth ran a grocery store at the corner of 41st and Central.

As the population grew, demand for services increased. The 1920's saw a burst of new businesses: Nick Super's Drug predated Danielson's Drug at 40th and Central. John Behun and Andrew Spekulant had grocery stores at 42nd and Central. Gust Holm advertised his plumbing business in 1922 at 3722 VanBuren: "No job too dirty!" That same year, in the December 1922 Poultry Show Program the following businesses were listed:

L.W. Northfield Co., wood, coal, building materials, 3901 5th St.; Carlson-Seeley & Co., poultry supplies, general hardware, 40th and Central; Columbia Heights Leader, 40th and Central, dry goods, clothing, shoes, N. Lozar, proprietor; Super Bros. Drug, 40th and Central, "Try the Drug Store First!"; Dawson & Robinson, 3638 Central, hardware, poultry supplies, "all varieties of baby chicks in season"; H. Joncas, 3912 Tyler, "My white Leghorns and Y-barred Rocks are producing eggs!"; Columbia Heights Billiard Hall and Recreation Room, 820 40th Ave., Carl Sorenson, soft drinks, confections; J.B. Conely, 40th & Central, barber shop, baths; Hillside White Wyandottes, Hillside Poultry Farm, 3926 Tyler St.; Walthers & Carlson, 40th and Central, fancy and staple groceries, meat, fish, hay and feed; Super's Sanitary Meat Market, 506 40th Ave. "We give and redeem red trading stamps";

McKenna & Shivone Plumbing and Heating Contractors, 616 40th Ave.; Condon's Home Bakery and Delicatessen, 40th and Central, "Try our home-made potato bread, two one-pound loaves for 15 cents"; Carter & Hughes "Your Grocers," 37th and Central; McDonald-Parthun Co., Insurance "in all its branches", 526 Summit St. NE; Columbia Heights Pharmacy, J.E. Griffin, 3940 5th St., poultry remedies and disinfectants; Miller Bros. Meat Market, 3702 Central, choice meat, dressed poultry, fish, oysters, turkeys, geese, ducks;

Columbia Garage, J.L. Morgan, 3932 Central, oils and greases, tires and accessories; Wm. Spain, wood and coal, office 37th and Central, Columbia Heights and Reservoir Hills real estate; Columbia Lumber Co., 3900 Jackson.

Welch's Bakery was established in 1920's. In 1923, Bill Sinnott was selling Rhode Island Reds Poultry. Also in 1923, Tony Maciaszek's parents, Albert and Mary, had the Columbia Meat Market on 40th and Jackson. Tony noted, "Before the 1930's, the city didn't issue business permits, you just opened up a store and that was it!"

That building at 40th and Jackson still stands. Over the years it was used as the town's library, as an Anoka County Relief distribution point in the 1930's, and for various businesses. Don Markow's parents, Ann and Theodore Markow, lent the \$800 it cost to build it in 1921. Markow moved his TV repair business there in 1965. He noted the building is still sound with solid wood timbers, dry basement and the original gas light fixtures in the ceiling.

William Super was an original stockholder of the Columbia State Bank, incorporated Sept. 25, 1923, for a period of 30 years. Capital stock was \$25,000. First Board of Directors included John W. Black, (who held 203 of the 250 shares of stock) John Jezeski, G.O. Lee, A.N. Nelson, S.V. Wood, Nicholas Doll and E.M. Christian.

Business cropped up in residential areas. Louise Mosiman Criswell remembered a big barn and thriving pigeon business at 43rd and Stinson in 1923, where pigeons were raised and sold for food. Craftsmen worked both on their homes and from them: Martin and Inga Ottem bought a three-bedroom house at 4228 6th St. in 1924. Martin was a carpenter and cabinet maker. He added to the house until it had four bedrooms and two baths, then he helped build many houses for other people and made toys and skis.

Billman's Hardware, K.W. Stephenson Insurance and Leonard Keyes Insurance were established by 1926, as was Ralph Rustom's Barber Shop. Romance bloomed in his barber chair; Adeline Jones Rustom recalled her parents, Ray and Gertrude Jones, came to Columbia Heights in 1921 when Adeline was seven years old. "Dad took me to the barber shop to have my hair cut in bangs. Ralph the Barber put me on a board across the arms of the barber chair to lift me high enough. And that's how I met Ralph."

Kresge's Clothing appeared in the late 1920's. Voss's Hardware had one of the few radios in town, and people crowded in to hear the football games, standing room only.



Kassler's served Columbia Heights shoppers from 1931 to 1970 at the corner of 41st and Central. (Photo, Paul Wychor)

Kassler's Grocery was founded by Abe Levitt, Harry Kassler and his father, Sam Kassler, in 1931 in a building on the west side of Central Ave. between 40th and 41st Avenues. A new building was erected when the store moved to the northeast corner of 41st and Central in 1953, and a dry goods department was added. The store was remodeled and expanded in 1960. In 1970 it was purchased by Anderson's House of Furniture when the owners retired.

Herringer Construction Co. was founded by Chet Herringer in 1932. The Herringer Construction Co. was involved in many areas of the development of Columbia Heights. Chet's son, Gerald joined the firm in the late 1950's.

Hilltop Drive-In Theater at 47th and Central had been built by Ed Sullivan in 1948. The Herringers acquired it in 1960 and operated it until K-Mart was built on the site in 1972. They constructed the Marquette State Bank and shopping center at 53rd and Central and developed the Little Chief Shopping Center near Hart Lake at 37th Ave. in 1970.

Chet recalled that he owned land at 40th and Central and had wanted to build a shopping center there in 1950's but the city did not issue the necessary permits.

Gerry Herringer remembered that from 1948 to 1965, Herringer Construction Co. had "taken down the hills and put them in holes all over the city" to prepare building lots.

The Columbia Heights Community Credit Union was established in 1933. First president was William R. Foster, first treasurer was Peter Tema. Other original signers of the charter were Frank Ittner, Peter J. Gannon, Rev. Elmer Huset, Telford F. Lindberg, and James McKenna. Each share or minimum deposit was 25¢. By 1935, the union had assets of \$1988.98, and the organization continued to grow. It celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1983 with assets of \$2.7 million. It is the oldest continually operating financial institution in the city.

Teseth's Plumbing was still in business in 1935, as were Biernat's Grocery, Leader Dry Goods, C.A. Levine Shoe Shop at 5th and 40th Ave. Grant's Bakery was offering pies at 15 cents and Walter Kulla's Associated Ice and Fuel was operating at 4004 Central.

Rose Sochacki Ostrander worked at Danielson's Drugstore for many years and recalled they made their own ice cream every day at the store. The big promotion was a five-cent malted milk which "was a good seller."

In 1937, Muriel's Beauty Shop operated at 910 40th Ave. Also in 1937, the Heights Theater was offering a "Free Bowl To Each Lady" at a feature called "Women Wise." Corson and Baker sold seeds, feeds, plants and baby chicks at 4053 Central. Heights Radio Sales was established by Tony Masiaszek in 1937, adding TV repairs and operating until 1970. Lakota's Bar operated on Central from the 1930's.

Paul Trench Variety appeared on Central Ave. in 1938 and Columbia Motor Sales (Phillips) was at 3968 Central.

The decade of the 1940's brought more commercial endeavors and a few pipe dreams. There were hopes for an airport just beyond 45th and Main St. Promoters noted, "It's all in the future, of course." The area served only three planes. End of airport.

In 1940 a new furniture store at 3984 was opened by Earl Roe and Ernest Wall. Johnson Brothers Filling Station east of Central between 40th and 41st was opened by Floyd Julkowski in 1940. Broullard Motors started a used car lot at 40th and Central. The Band Box Cafe was the popular hamburger spot at 40th and Central. Korba's Grocery and Andrew's Bar had joined Spekulant's Grocery/Meat Market at 42nd and Central. A tanning factory was operating on University Ave., and Wally Murray sold Keepfull Products at 39th and Quincy in the 1940's.



Interior of Band Box Cafe, 40th and Central, in 1940's. Manager Pat Carey is at left.

Heron's Dept. Store opened in 1944. Wes Weldon's Coast to Coast opened in 1945, advertising "gifts you wanted a long time: tire pump, broom, hot plate and kitchen stool." Coast to Coast moved to a building near Gould and Central in 1949. That building was razed in the early 1980's to make room for the new office complex in the redevelopment of downtown Columbia Heights.

Al Naegle and Waldo Edwardson started Al and Wally's Drug in the old Buffum's Drug location at 5th St. and 40th Ave. in 1945. Heights Bakery, Brown's Meat Market, Vane's Food Market were in business in the late 1940's.

The Candlelight Cafe was started at 4000 Central in 1950 by Mr. and Mrs. Vane Switzer. Heights Hardware under G.E. Chirhart opened that year at 40th and 5th St., as did Herman's Dept. Store. A new Cornelius Co. plant was built at 39th and Jefferson in 1951. In 1953, Cargill built a new elevator, William Levy was granted a theater license, and A & W. Rootbeer was built. In 1955, an explosion at the Cargill flax plant resulted in the deaths of four men. The plant was rebuilt.

The post-war shopping malls were beginning to appear, and in 1955, Heights businessmen said they did not object to a shopping center east of Central at 40th, but the center was not built until the early 1980's.

In 1955, the Columbia Heights State Bank bought out the old Post Office building for \$15,025 and a promise to exchange property to the City of Columbia Heights. Mady's Bowling Center was built in 1956 at Gould and Central. In 1957 Modern Furniture was started on the west side of Central, moved to Trench's Variety building in 1963, and into the old Kassler building as Anderson's House of Furniture in 1973.

Chet's Shoes was started at 40th and Central, and the Redwood Cafe at 513 40th Ave., both in 1958.



Chet's Shoe Store, northeast corner of 40th and Central, was in business from 1958, and moved to 44th and Central in early 1980's.

The 1960's brought Grand Central Shopping Center to the Jackson Pond area at 43rd and Central. It was damaged by fire in 1965, was rebuilt in 1968, with sprinklers, and eventually became Rainbow Foods, C.O.M.B.S, Columbia Heights Warehouse Liquors and Walgreen Drugs in the mid-1980's. Columbia Heights State Bank became Marquette Bank of Columbia Heights in 1974 and moved to 53rd and Central in 1975. Northeast State Bank opened in Columbia Heights in 1978 and moved to the new complex at 40th and Central in 1983. The 1970's saw the proliferation of fast-food businesses on upper Central Ave.

Although many smaller businesses continued to flourish, the national trend toward larger enterprises was evident in Columbia Heights commercial development. In 1974, the Downtown Council was formed to implement redevelopment of the traditional 40th and Central Columbia Heights business district.

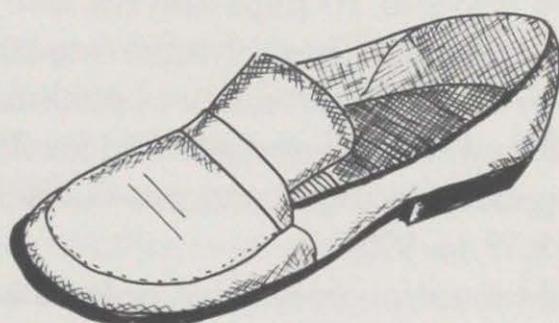
Many plans were studied before final approval of a plan and subsequent building in 1980, including clearing 14 acres by the city and erection of a parking ramp. Several old buildings were removed at that time, including Chet's Shoe Store which moved to a new building at 44th and Central., Johnson's Service Station, the Columbia Heights Municipal Liquor Store, and the old Kassler Building, to allow the new shopping center to be built at the back of the lots with parking located in front. A seventeen unit apartment building which housed low and moderate income persons was moved from 40th Ave. to Peter's Place and Gould Ave. to make room for the shopping center.

A six-story office building and shopping center were built on the east side of Central Ave. by Terry Evenson. Jim Ruvelson built an office complex at 42nd and Central. Bill Hagen built a new appliance store on the west side of Central between 40th and 41st Avenues.

The successful redevelopment of the 40th and Central business area fulfilled the desire by many Columbia Heights residents to keep alive the sense of industry and energy which promoted the original business district to grow there.

CHAPTER 9

The Professions - Uppers



Journalism

The professions of medicine, law and journalism seem to have kept a very low profile in the first few decades of Columbia Heights' existence. Residents mention midwives. Advertising fliers and neighborhood information sheets must have circulated. And no doubt certain fine points of law were decided and put into practice at moments of crisis in the early years.

But the first records of a formal newspaper refer in 1920 to a Mr. Lang of Lang Hardware Co. who acted as business manager of a newspaper called the Columbia Heights Bulletin. The editor was Paul B. Carr. Unfortunately the venture was short of money, and died after four issues. Lang called on O.H. Prestemon, and he in turn called on Hardy Soderholm. They assumed the liabilities of the paper, continued publication, maintained its continuity and preserved its legal status.

They searched for a new editor, and eventually the Minneapolis Argus took over the publication. At that time, the paper became The Record. To Mr. Duemke, who published the Argus, the Record was a headache and losing venture. He announced to the Columbia Heights Commercial Club he would suspend publication unless a local editor could be found.

O.H. Prestemon saved the local paper a second time, starting as editor in the late 1920's with no editing experience but with the conviction that the town needed a newspaper. He worked day and night for three years to keep it going. With the help of Mrs. Herbert Deeble, he increased circulation from 250 to 1100. The Deeble family was a strong supporter of the press, early on. In 1908, Dorothy Deeble,

Mrs. Deeble's daughter, won an eighth grade essay prize when she wrote on "Why Columbia Heights Should Have a Newspaper."

Pete Tema began as editor in 1930, and he bought the paper in 1933, editing and publishing it until 1956 when he sold it to Ed Kapszak. However, it reverted to Tema, and he sold it to Wally Miller, who in turn sold it to Sun Newspapers in the early 1960's when it became the Columbia Heights Sun, publishing under the name "Focus" after 1984.

Meanwhile, back in the 1920's, other publishers were getting their products onto the streets of Columbia Heights. Val T. Kuechenmeister launched a publication called The Record in 1923, but no further mention is made of this venture.

In 1935, Harry Starr put out a "Daily Reminder" of one or two typewritten pages of local and social news. Al Naegle recalled one headline referring to the fact that Al's dog and 10 pups and his wife had a baby the same day. The front-page headline read: "Al has 11 more mouths to feed."

The Daily Reminder was published by J. Mittelstadt for a time in 1937 when circulation was 1705 and ads sold for 25 cents. Val Kuechenmeister surfaced again in the publishing world and put out another small paper called the "Broadcaster" from 1937 to 1939.

Many strongly worded political ads appeared in these sheets. One such item in 1935 urged the public to vote for Municipal On and Off liquor sales: "Municipal liquor is an improvement in the morals of the community. It is a better protection of the morals of children than the old saloons. It is the best money-making proposition the town ever had."

John Stopka worked for Pete Tema on the Columbia Heights Record and published the Columbia Heights Echo for a few years in the late 1950's.

Pete Tema recalled the old days in governing a community. "People were political then, interested in the community. They used to choose who would run for office: 'It's your turn now.' Nobody was paid. Now it's different."

"Politics were most gorgeous then," he recalled. He said he wanted to sue one publisher who had written something about him. He took the article to a lawyer, and "the lawyer just laughed! End of lawsuit!"

Newspapers changed in format from tabloid to broadsheet and back to tabloid size, but O.H. Prestemon's column, "Prestemon's Points," were a constant feature, sometimes on the front page, gently teasing, prodding, touching the prides and foibles of the community for 33 years, from 1929 to 1962.

Law

A municipal court was established in Columbia Heights in November, 1921. One of the first references to the justice system was in a 1922 newspaper item which noted that drunks were fined \$10 to \$15, while sober persons with liquor in their possession were fined up to \$100.

But the groundwork for Columbia Heights' legal profession was being laid years before. In 1914, Andrew and Mary Wargo came to Columbia Heights. Their son, Joseph, was two and a half years old. They lived at 4105 2nd St., beyond the streetcar tracks. "We never got over to Central!" Judge Wargo recalled. Andrew

worked at the Great Northern Railroad. The family spoke Czech at home, and Joseph learned English at Oakwood School.

The family had an acre and a half garden in which Joe worked as a boy. In addition, a farmer from Fridley picked him and a couple of other boys up after school and took them to work at his truck-farm. "He had two-block long rows of onions," Judge Wargon recalled. "We weeded them, pulled them, took them down to the Mississippi and washed them, wrapped them and sent them to market. We got 10 cents an hour, 50 cents a day and we worked till dark."

His future brightened considerably when he got a job at American Brake Shoe Foundry at 40 cents an hour. There he tipped loads of metal into the fire, the sulphur came up--"It was murder!" He applied for a job at Western Union on the way to an eighth grade party, got the job, never got to the party, and delivered telegrams all summer in 1926.

He worked his way through law school at the University of Minnesota, became Columbia Heights city attorney in 1945. He served as Columbia Heights municipal court judge from 1957 to 1968; as Anoka municipal judge from 1968 to 1971; and Anoka County court judge from 1971 - 1979. During those years he helped raise \$10 million for the Variety Club for cardio-vascular research at the University of Minnesota and received many awards for community service. In his practice, he helped many Czech people because he could speak their language.

In 1929, the first session of Columbia Heights Juvenile Court was held with Judge Leeds H. Cutter presiding. There were five cases which received strict probation: the juveniles must attend school, obey the curfew and report monthly to the court. One 10-year-old dared the court to do anything to him because, he said his father paid \$30 a month protection. There was no indication that his claim to immunity influenced the court.

Pete Barna was another early Columbia Heights lawyer whose parents arrived in town about 1922. They lived at 4124 Quincy. "right in the middle of things." He recalled the single track railroad along Reservoir Blvd. which ran the "dummy line" railroad. The car had two front ends, sometimes took passengers for a 3 cent fare in addition to hauling chlorine for the water plant, and was operated by a man called "Happy" Handy.

Barna's law practice, which was originally started by Joe Wargo, grew into the firm of Barna, Guzy, Merrill, Haynes and Giancola, which, with 23 attorneys, was the largest law firm in Anoka County when it moved to the new office building in the redeveloped 40th and Central business district.

Leonard and Celia Keyes came to Columbia Heights in 1923. Their first home was an upstairs apartment on the northwest corner of 40th and Central. Eventually they bought a home at 3818 VanBuren and lived there until the late 1970's. Keyes had an insurance business. He was elected municipal judge in Columbia Heights in 1923, probate judge of Anoka County in 1928, 18th District Judge in 1934. Besides his profession of law, Keyes had many avocations--deer-hunter, golfer, avid photographer and bee-keeper.

More people meant a need for more legal services in the city. C.P. Richeau was city attorney in 1940. Milt Ouimette was a lawyer and part-time municipal judge in the 1940's. Clyde Johnson also served as municipal court judge during those

years. Stu Kvalheim practiced law and was city attorney around 1950. Vern Hoium set up his law practice in 1958. Ed Orwoll, John Terpstra and Dick Merrill started a law firm in the mid-1960's.



The law firm of Barna, Guzy, Merrill, Hynes and Giancola moved into the new office complex at 40th and Central.

Medicine

Columbia Heights set up its local Board of Health in 1921. Before that time, midwives served some of the medical care needs, among them Mrs. Ortonstone, Lillian Twedts and Hilda Helander.

One of the earliest health officers was Dr. J.S. Blumenthal, a heart specialist who set up his practice in 1924 upstairs at 3988 Central Ave. A dentist, Dr. Harold Heckler, also had his office in that building. About 1941, Dr. Blumenthal moved his office to a new building at 585 40th Ave., the site of the former Forest Park.

Dr. Hoff D. Good set up his practice in 1930 over the Heights Theater, helped

in the office by his sister Hazel Johnson. In the early 1930's he converted a one-car garage at 38th and Central to a waiting room, then added rooms one at a time and moved his spractice there in 1933.

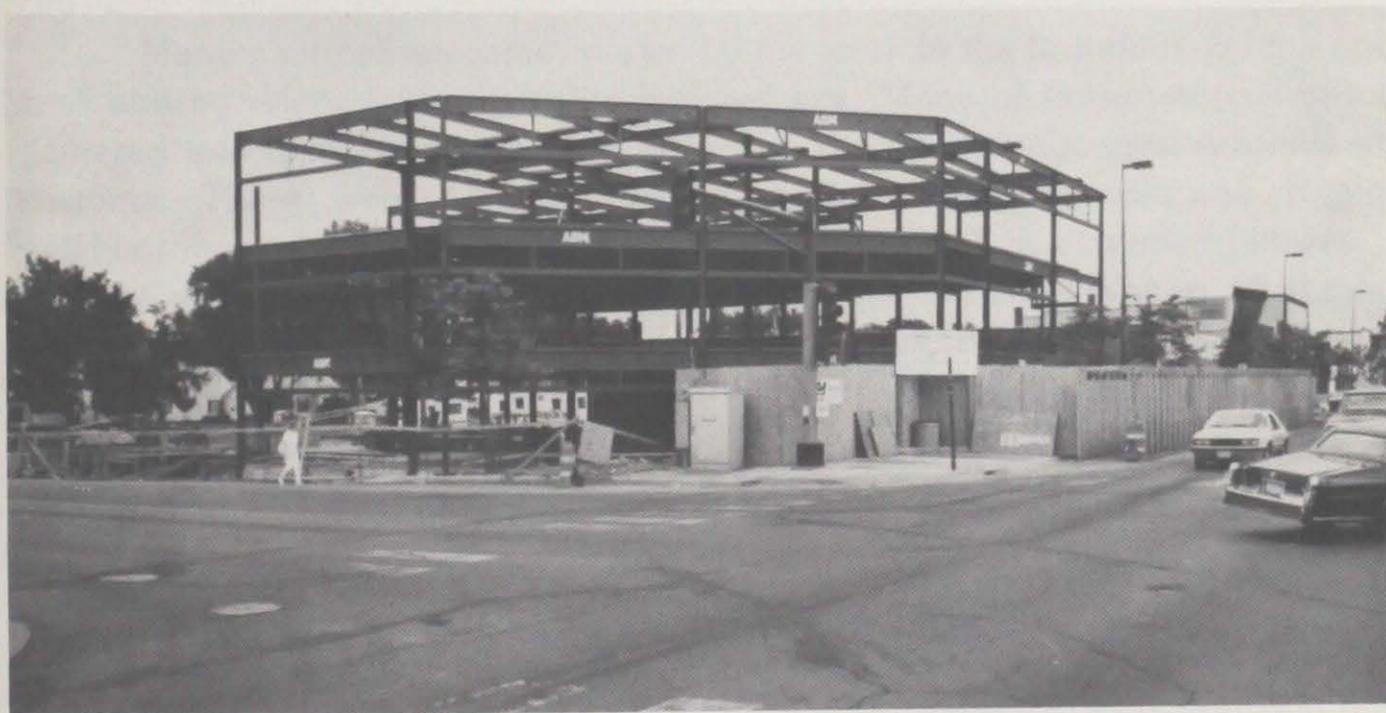
Over the years, many doctors served with Dr. Good, including Dr. Ronald Risch and Dr. L.J. Roberts. Dr. Roberts later established Columbia Park Clinic at 3620 Central Ave. Others who worked with Dr. Good were Drs. Colburg, Earl Eli, Albert Kreiser, Paul Williams, and Valenco Jo. Dr. Howard Foster was the dentist in the Good building for many years. Dr. Hoff Good's son, Dr. Gary Good, began practicing at that same location in 1957.

Dentists E.C. Hyberg and H.C. Manaugh had offices over the Heights Theater in 1933. Dr. Thorkelson was health officer for Columbia Heights during the early years and posted quarantines for scarlet fever, small-pox and diphtheria. Dr. L.J. Leonard practiced at 427 40th Ave. in 1945.

Dr. Paul Williams moved to the Silver Lake Clinic at Apache Plaza in 1964 and moved with it when the new Silver Lake Clinic was built in Columbia Heights on Stinson Blvd. at 40th Ave. in 1967. His sister, Audrey Williams worked for Dr. Hoff Good since 1936 and continued for Dr. Gary Good for a total of 50 years.

Audrey recalled that in the 1930's, office calls cost \$1, house calls were \$3. "People paid doctor bills 25 cents at a time. We were very busy, weekdays and weekends 24 hours a day. We went to schools to give shots. There were no emergency clinics then."

Dr. Wilbur Herbert set up his practice in the Heights Theater in 1941, practiced from his home at 40th and Quincy until 1969, and was the health officer for the city for many years. He said Columbia Heights had a most exceptional immunization project in the schools. He recalled as most important the cooperation among the city government, the schools and the churches in Columbia Heights. "It was a very professional atmosphere, including that with the pharmacists and legal professions. This cooperation was very important."



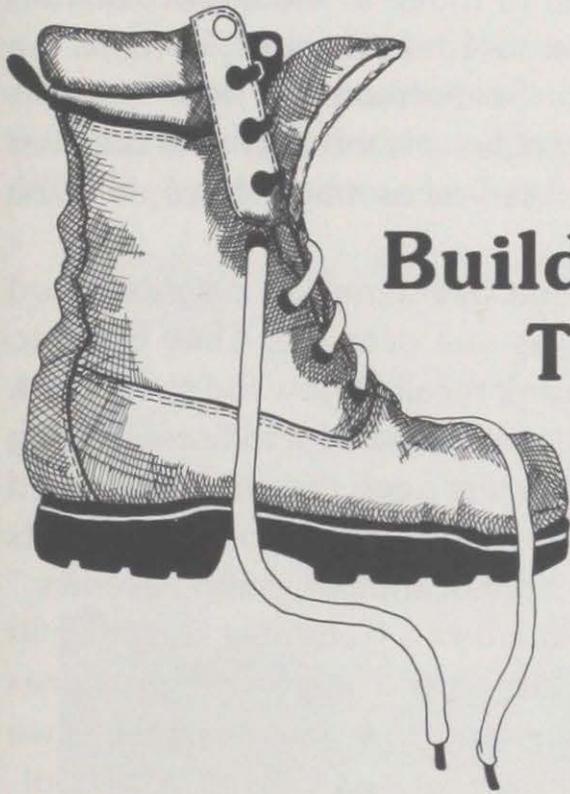
Columbia Park Clinic is building at the former site of Myron's Cafe at 40th and Central. (Photo, Paul Wychor)

Those pharmacists who filled prescriptions ordered by the doctors were an important link in the health care chain. One of the first to serve the city was Nick Super, who owned the drug store at 40th and Central. Anna Danielson, who owned Danielson's Drug for a time, was also a pharmacist. Bob Walther, who later bought Danielson's drug, Joe Huntzinger, Al Naegle, Waldo Edwardson and Gerhardt Samuelson all were pharmacists at Danielson's over the years. Samuelson died in the 1935 fire at Danielson's

In the early 1940's, Naegle and Edwardson moved to the old Buffum Drugstore site at 5th and 40th Ave. to start Al and Wally's Drugs.

Dr. L. W. Wilke, chiropractor, joined Dr. Conrad Nauman, optometrist, to practice in a small building at 4256 Central in 1953. Dr. Wm. Ashford set up his chiropractic office about 1959.

And to serve the animals in the rural parts of Columbia Heights, Dr. E.L. Orput, veterinarian, had an office in 1944 at 3984 Central.



CHAPTER 10

Building Neighborhoods - Tongue and Groove

Early residents of Columbia Heights knew how to bootstrap. After working long hours at hard jobs, they built their homes, often with scrap lumber for a shack at the back of the lot. With little more than energy, muscle and optimism they created stable neighborhoods which served for 80 years as dependable foundations for the city.

Many nationalities came, drawn by the work in the foundries, by the open land and by relatively inexpensive building lots. Many of these national groups gathered into tight neighborhoods, secure in their own languages, religions and customs. There were German, Polish, Scandinavian, Slovak and Russian neighborhoods. These close national settlements served as extended families.

Col. William Spain, who sold real estate for Lowry and Walton, filled many other roles in the town. Marge Johnson recalled him as "a distinguished--looking gentleman who looked a lot like Col. Sanders of the chicken restaurants. He went every day to the drugstore to get a Bromo-Seltzer." Frances Tatting recalled him as "fat, jolly and bow-legged."

Spain served as village constable in 1903, and as village president in 1906, 1907 and 1908. He drove a smart horse and buggy to show lots and houses. He sold milk from his cows which were pastured in City Park (now Huset) and caused the area to be known as "Spain's Pasture."

Dennis DeMars worked for him, driving one of his five teams of horses, building streets and houses. "First thing in the morning I milked his cows, then drove a team all day, then milked his cows again, all for \$3.50 a day. Then I hauled gravel

for 50 cents a load from Frank Early's gravel pit at the north end of town for street-building the next day. It was easy to drive into the pit with an empty wagon, but not easy to get out with a load of gravel. Two teams had to work together, taking turns hitching our teams and pulling each other out."

John and Mary Soderholm came from Sweden in the 1890's. Their son, Hardy, and his wife, Lydia, were some of the first to move to the 4100 block on Quincy St. Quincy and Monroe Streets, from 41st to 43rd Avenues, became the Scandinavian neighborhood of Columbia Heights. Solderholm was very active in promoting the growth and well-being of Columbia Heights. He was a charter member of the first Columbia Heights Commercial Club and served as mayor twice, in 1925 and 1948.

Ellen and Claus Anton Fransen came to that Scandinavian neighborhood on Monroe St. in 1912 when their son, Frank, was one year old. They came to Columbia Heights because the land was cheap. Frank recalled how the street work was done then. "The roads were wagon trails. Streets were plowed with horses pulling V-shaped wooden plows. In winter, drifts were eight feet deep, horses were buried to their heads. The earth from 41st and 42nd Streets was taken to fill low spots on 43rd Ave. by three teams of horses, one team in front of another, pulling eveners." He recalled the fun kids had, riding a dozen at a time down Columbia Heights hills on sheet metal from railroad car covers. He said his mother used to order groceries and they would be delivered a few days later--"but we never knew just what we would get!" His father carried drinking water from the well at Columbia School.

Fransen recalled that neighbors helped each other, and there were many social get-togethers in the tar-paper shacks which were the first homes. "They were heated with stoves which got red-hot and you were still cold! For houseparties, we moved the furniture out. Four men would lift the hot stove onto the porch, and lift it back into the parlor after the party."

Another Fransen son, Lawrence, was born in 1913 in Columbia Heights. He married Irma Bolling, daughter of John and Ingeborg Bolling, who came to Columbia Heights because they "loved the land."

Irma recalled that she and her sister caught 100 big bullheads in Silver Lake, carried them down Central Ave. on a line, and their mother cooked them for the chickens. Irma's mother kept a goat which ate everything in sight, including Irma's sister's underwear which was hanging on a line in the back yard.

Other families who lived in that Scandinavian neighborhood were Carl Carlsons, John Anderson, Charlie and Godfrey Johnson, Oscar Mattsen and Mrs. Ortenstone, who was a midwife and lived to be 103.

The block between 43rd and 44th Streets on Monroe was the German neighborhood. An early settler there was John Burmeister who came with his wife, Dorothea, to Columbia Heights in 1907. Their daughter, Dorothea Burmeister Kraus, recalled, "They came with four children, then had four more." Dorothea was one of the last four, born in 1911 at 4323 Monroe St. "in a little shack at the back of the lot." It took them 10 years to save enough money to build a house on the front of the lot. John Burmeister was an upholsterer and an early councilman in Columbia Heights. Among the Burmeister's neighbors were the Schaefers, Reinkes, Bunnings, Spiegels and Schultzes.

Dennis DeMars' family lived at 4201 Monroe St. in the German neighborhood although his family was French. His parents were Joseph (Candy) and Sophie DeMars and they came to Columbia Heights in 1912 when Dennis was 10 years old. Candy bought four lots for \$50 each and built a five-bedroom home for his family. They had cows, chickens and pigs. Alfred Kuhn and Jake Haugen were DeMars' neighbors.

A chief site of entertainment in that neighborhood was Bunning's Pond, now Jackson Pond and businesses at 43rd and Central. It was the central skating rink. DeMars noted that "kids came from all over, sometimes bringing the neighbor's fence posts for bonfires because there were no warming houses."



Jackson Pond (formerly Bunnings Pond) was a favorite entertainment site. In 1940 the area was considered for a lake and park, but the city determined it was too expensive to acquire and develop. (1955 photo, Paul Wychor)

In 1940, the Jackson Pond area was considered for a lake and park, but the city determined it was too expensive.

James and Florence Lewis came to Columbia Heights in 1923 when their daughter, Mary Louise Fischback, was three years old. Their neighbors near 38th and Jackson St. were the I.H. Allisons, Al Stinsons, Barringtons, Colbergs and Clarence Nelson.

Anthony and Elizabeth Netkow bought a three-room house at 3972 Tyler in 1915. It had no water, electricity, plumbing or basement. Anthony had grocery stores, was a schoolboard member and later city manager. He was also instrumental in getting a priest for the Columbia Heights parish, according to his son Harold.

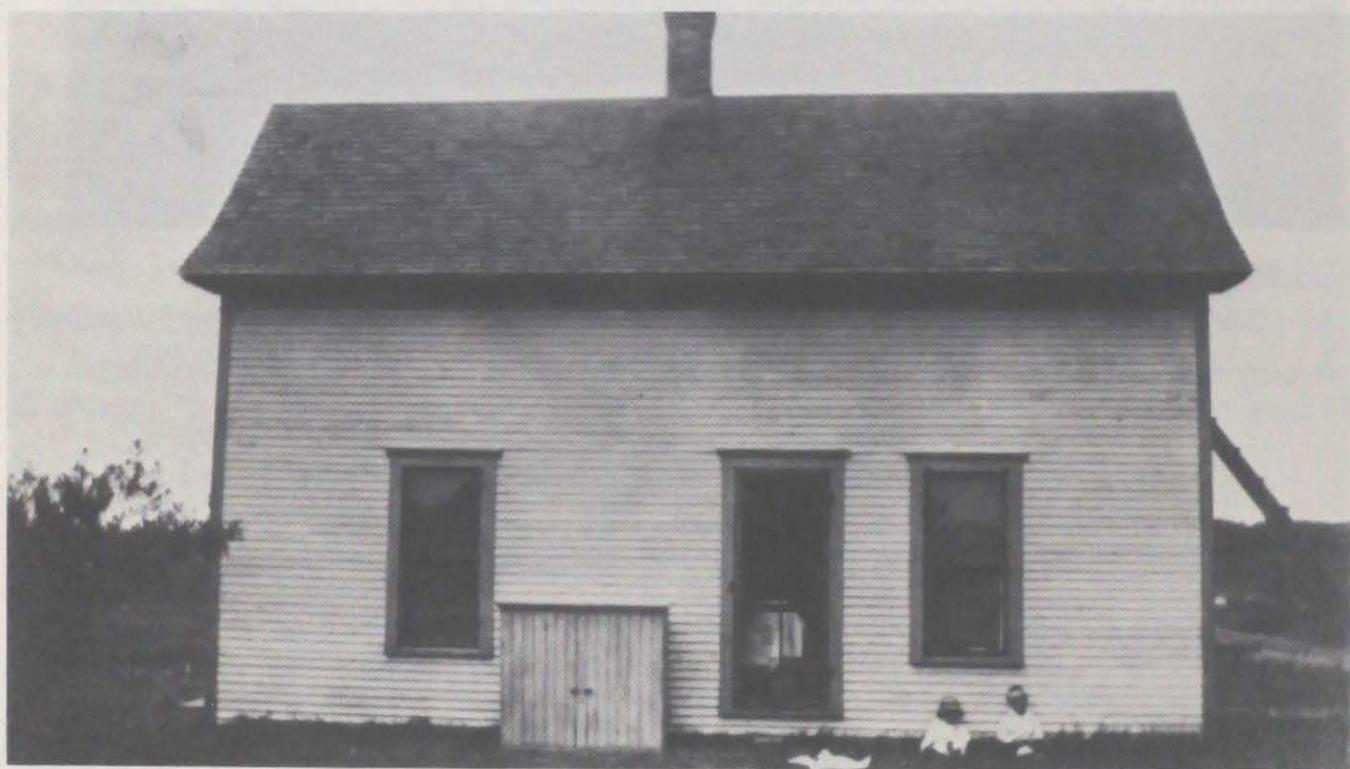
Dorothy Stinson came to Columbia Heights at age five in 1920 to live with her mother, Margaret Burt, and Grandmother, Sophie Collins. They bought three acres at 37th and Johnson St., had to let two acres go for back taxes, but kept one acre where they built a one-room tar-paper shack. Dorothy lived there until she married in 1937. There was no electricity, they carried water from 37th and Buchanan. Her father-in-law, Joe Stinson, was on the Columbia Heights Council in the early 1930's.

Alice Ledwein moved to her house at 3922 VanBuren in 1908 when she was two years old, and lived there until moving to an apartment in 1985. Her parents were Mathew and Petra. Petra was a charter member of Community Methodist Church.

A little further north on VanBuren, Andrew and Nellie Reinholdson homesteaded in 1918. They built a little house at the back of the lot at 4438 VanBuren and raised 10 children there. They carried water from the Dooies farm at 45th and Central.

About 1925, the Reinholdsons figured it was time to build a more permanent home. Their daughter, Evelyn, recalled how her father, who worked as a grain shoveler, used a pickax to dig up the clay in front of the lot. Nellie loaded it into a wheelbarrow and a son, David, 9, hauled it further back on the lot for fill. The basement for an eight-room house was dug that way. Andrew, although not a carpenter, built the house himself.

Evelyn remembers in those days; people had a milk man, ice man, laundry man, insurance man, magazine man, coal man, oil man, bread man, junk man, rag man, egg man, seasonal vegetable man, and a mail box over a block away.



Early Columbia Heights homes were modest. This home with no frills was built in 1914 by Derk Kremer, Sr., at 4456 VanBuren.

Al and Derk Kremer were the first Reinholdson neighbors. Al came to Columbia Heights in 1913 at the tender age of two weeks. He married Ann Tomala, whose parents, Peter and Josephine, moved to 42nd and Jackson in 1915. Al's father, Derk Kremer, Sr., was an early street commissioner, and Al recalled "It was no desk job--he plowed the streets with a wooden plow." Al was named for his uncle, Al Dooies, who owned the farm north and west of Central Ave. which became Hilltop Stables in the mid-1930's.



Mail delivery at 40th and 2nd St., 1923. (photo Minnesota Historical Society)

Delores Winge Schutz was nine years old when she came to Columbia Heights with her parents, Bennie and Tillie Winge, in 1923. She recalled that their neighborhood on Arthur St. was "full of relatives. We all went to Uncle Oscar Winge's for venison after deer season."

Gould Ave. was one of the early streets on the east side of Central Ave. to be settled. The Deebles, Herbert and Zementa Orilla, moved into a small building at the back of a lot on Gould Ave. early in the 1900's. Harriet Deeble, wife of the Deeble's son, Jim, noted that "Grandpa Deeble just started building and adding on. He worked as a grocery clerk at \$18 a week. Eventually he was postmaster in Columbia Heights and also served on the council. (His son, Jim, also served on the council.) Grandma Deeble was an avid politician. She was after the 'crooks,' of which we had a few."

Harriet also recalled there was no plumbing in the house on Gould, and the only well was at Columbia School. "Grandma took the six kids along because there was no one to leave them with. She walked up to 41st, climbed a tall bank that used to be there, got water and carried it back to do the laundry. She also rounded up food to take to families who were worse off."

The Gould neighborhood included, at various times, Etta GoemanPott; Florence and Elmer Dahl, Ronald Schueleins, Ruth Anderson and Charles Baker.

Over on Main Street, at 40th Ave., the house where Mabel Gadbois grew up was built in 1910.

Thomas and Doris Walker came to Columbia Heights in 1919 and bought one acre of Lowry land on 37th Ave. near Buchanan for \$700. They had two children and built a little house of second-hand lumber. Walker died in 1924, and Doris later married Carl Hinrichs. They had four more children. They added a kitchen and later a porch to the house, which still stands "through the grace of God," Mrs. Hinrichs said, on railroad ties without a foundation. They carried city water from 39th and Polk, paying 50 cents a month. Mrs. Hinrichs recalled they were happy in the spring when the slough near Buchanan filled so they could get water for laundry as it was closer. "There were no streets in the area. The house had a tar-paper roof and walls, and there were a dozen crickets under everything you picked up." They bought 100 chickens at the dime store for 10 cents each, hoping to make \$4 a week, then they would build a new chicken coop. "We had no mash, no shells, no water fountains. We never made any money from them, we only got 38 pullets to lay eggs. but thank God for Columbia Heights," she added, "It is a fruitful place."

Art and Jennie Porter came to Columbia Heights in 1909 and built a house at 42nd and Madison St. They paid taxes of 50 cents a year in two installments, hauled water from the hill by Columbia School. They bought a radio and sewing machine for 25 cents down, 25 cents a month. Art Porter had a barn and business, Porter's Northeast Feeds. He had horses and plowed gardens for people.

Their son, Larry remembered the cemetery in the Roslyn Park area, about 45th Ave. and 5th St., and that the bodies from that cemetery were removed about 1930 and that many graves were unmarked. Another son, Leo, said he peddled newspapers in the Heights when there were "no roads, only grass," and he had the whole town for his route.

Celia and John Wychor came to Columbia Heights in 1923 and built a home at 43rd Ave. and Jackson. They dug the basement with horses, Celia dug out the corners and took the dirt away in a wheelbarrow. She mixed cement and carried the block just a few months before the youngest of five children was born--"and I came out of it just fine." They had 200 chickens, a cow, rabbits, pigeons, a garden, "and then one day one of the boys brought home a goat, and I took care of that too!"

Alpha Malmberg Bissett came to Columbia Heights in 1920 when she was five years old and lived at 43rd and 4th St. Her parents were Selma and Carl Malmberg. Their neighbors were the Elsenpeters and Helanders. "Only two houses had phones," Alpha recalled. "We had no car, everybody looked out for everybody else. There were no roads, no sidewalks, nothing but sand and stickers!" Alpha married Robert Bisset, whose father, Fred Bisset was on the school board. His mother was active in Heights activities.

Jessie Morton was born in 1912 in Columbia Heights. Her parents were Fred and Ella Morton. They built their home on 5th St. between 41st and 42nd in 1908. Fred Morton was the third mayor of Columbia Heights. Jessie remembers a team of runaway horses pulling a wagon down 5th St. when she was rollerskating at age five. Her mother called "Get behind a tree!" She also recalled when, about 1920, all the children were kept in Oakwood School until men hunted down and shot a rabid dog.

The Jevnes lived right next to Forest Park. Frances Jevne Tatting was born in Columbia Heights in 1910. Her parents, Carl Martin and Agnes Jevne, bought four lots on 40th and 7th St. across the street from the park where "there was always

something going on." Frances' father was a volunteer fireman and helped put out the 1911 grass fire which destroyed the Lincoln funeral car.

Frances recalled the excitement in the neighborhood when the cry rang down the street "The gypsies are coming!" and how uneasy Mrs. Udsted, the storekeeper, would become when the gypsy women reached into their flowing skirts for money.

Frances later taught kindergarten in Columbia School. Her husband, Fred Tatting, was a principal in Heights schools and was involved in education all his life.

Harold L. Anderson's father, Andrew, came from a farm in Brewster Minn., and moved his family to Columbia Heights in 1909 when Harold was nine months old. Andrew worked as a carpenter for Arcade Investment Co. He built his first home at 4112 5th St. He also helped build Community Methodist Church which burned in 1949.

Neal Gillett came to Columbia Heights in 1920. His father, Frank Gillett, was on the Columbia Heights council. Neal's wife, Rosemary Warren, came to 4244 4th St. in 1916 when she was two years old. Her parents were Odila and George Warren. George Warren was on the school board when Columbia High School was built in 1926. Her aunt was Lucille Hawkins, Columbia Heights librarian for 30 years.

Rosemary's mother, Odila, had asthma. Because Rosemary was the oldest of nine children, she couldn't leave home until the next in line was graduated from high school and took over at home. "My sister, Eileen, was smart. She got a job as a secretary and hired a housekeeper," Mrs. Gillett recalled.

John Chudek arrived in Columbia Heights at age three in 1916. His parents, John and Hattie, added to a house partially built at 4222 Washington St. Chudek recalled there were four groups of young people in the Heights who had various backgrounds and differences of opinions. According to Chudek, they were the Polacks, The Grasshoppers (of mixed heritage), the Razz (who had seceded from the Polacks) and the Swedes. Their biggest crimes, Chudek said, were stealing watermelons and apples and having sling-shot fights "at long range." He recalled that everyone had chickens and horses, "the law against them was ignored by all." He said during the 1930's there were nine taverns in Columbia Heights, five of them between 40th and 41st on Central Ave. He recalled that Jack Covern had a tavern at 45th and University Ave., where Mrs. Covern baked bread to make "a wonderful 15 cent ham sandwich--but Covern was too fastidious to last in the tavern business."

Wally Murray's parents, Guy Amos and Ann DeDoda, moved to Columbia Heights in 1909 and Wally was born in 1910. They had a "two-lot farm" at Washington and 42nd St. where they raised fruit trees, chickens, geese and a few cows which were pastured part-time in Spain's Pasture, along with the fire department horses. Guy Amos was on the fire department.

Wally worked for a grocer, Heine Obersold, on 40th and Madison, when he was eight years old where he swept floors for candy bars. "He had only dark flour, and made cheese." Dan Walthers was constable then, "and he made the kids behave." Pranks included greasing streetcar tracks and pulling the trolleys off the tracks.

Further north, Thomas and Adelia White bought a five-acre farm at 4800 Madison about 1925 and worked it until it was sold in 1937. Main crop was pigs.

Another resident, Jim Johnson, moved to the 48th and Washington area

in 1941. "That's when it wasn't Columbia Heights, it was Fridley Township," he recalled. During the years of annexation by adjacent towns, the area had been divided until there were only seven miles of road left. Residents attended both Fridley and Columbia Heights meetings to decide which municipality they should join. Because Columbia Heights had been established longer it was voted to join the Heights. "Then when the water and sewer came in, the taxes went up!" Johnson recalled.



During the 1940's, many Heights homes started below ground, and remained that way for some time because of a shortage of building materials (and sometimes money.) This was Marge (Reinholdson) and Don Sandgren's home at 4438 VanBuren in 1948.

The three Duschik brothers, Art, Al and Joe, lived at 45th and Washington for three years during the mid-1940's. They recalled all dirt roads north of 44th with grass in the middle. Their mother stopped frequently at the library and one time got clippings from a Christmas cactus from Librarian Lucille Hawkins. The cactus lived and bloomed for forty years.

East of Central Ave. were a couple more "national blocks." John Rak, who served on the Columbia Heights Park Board from 1958 to 1979, was born in the Polish block at 1328 44th Ave. His parents were John and Agnes Rak, and they built their house in 1918. Rak's wife's parents were Emil and Nellie Helm, who built at 4028 Jefferson in 1922.

Nellie Proft Helm's parents were John and Nora Casserly. Nellie recalled that many people who lived in northeast Minneapolis staked their cows in open fields in Columbia Heights, and came out on the street car morning and evening, carrying covered pails, to milk their cows.

Rak recalled other families who lived on his block: Goemans, Lataweics, Guziks and Tomacyks. "They all had big gardens and a cow staked out on a chain.

Mother had a half acre garden and a man plowed it for \$1." He noted the Guziks and Tomaczks each had 10 children, other families had several children, so they had enough players for their own football teams. "We were known as the 'children of the hill' because we lived on the hill going up toward the water reservoir."

Rak recalled that some of the neighbors, the Lakotas and Behuns, had pig farms. "They picked up garbage from cafes into big tanks on trucks. Behun had a swamp by his house and a few tame ducks. In the fall, wild ducks came through, every once in a while in early morning we would hear 'Kaboom!' and we knew John had another duck!"

Vincent and Stella Guzik came to 44th Ave. in 1919. Vincent was employed by Columbia Heights. Their son, Stan Guzik, was born there, and remembers there was no electricity and the family carried water from Lakota's every day for two years, "but there was plenty of room to play." He remembered 'Chicken Boss' who had a rambling building on 42nd Ave. with lots of cats and chickens. Guzik also remembered sliding down 'Norway Hill' on Mr. McLeod's 10-foot sled on which he pulled furniture to reupholster. "We slid from the top of the hill to Central."

The Russian block was on 43rd, east of Central. Among the families living there were the Lakotas, Dennis's, Jedinaks and Dusenkas, Pauline Jedinak Rusinyak was born in 1917 in a three-room house at 1020 43rd St. Her parents, Mitro and Julia, had come to the Heights in 1914 and built the first part of their home, adding the upstairs later. Their neighbors were John Behun and Andrew Ulmaniec.

Forty-second Ave. was the Slovak area: George and John Pribula, the Yenko, Fetzek, Kordiak, Dravetz and Konek families lived there.

Meanwhile the Irish held sway in the Fridley Township area which would eventually be the northern part of Columbia Heights; the Sullivans, Dooies, Mulcares and Molans had farms north of 45th Ave. Frank Early had a gravel-pit at 53rd Ave.

Part of the eastern edge of Columbia Heights is bordered by Silver Lake. When John Henry Betts found a home-site on the southwest corner of Silver Lake, he declared it "the prettiest spot this side of heaven," according to his daughter, Dortha Betts Christopherson. She was born there in 1915. The street was Robbins Ave. then, later renamed Stinson Blvd. when a permanent street replaced the dirt track. Betts was a municipal judge and justice of the peace for Columbia Heights. Dortha recalled a whole family of uncles and cousins lived on the west side of the lake. Her memories include the tin dipper in the water pail at Silver Lake School and that her dad used to get to 40th and Central on snowshoes.

Columbia Heights neighborhoods played a part in the social fabric of the larger metropolitan area during Prohibition, from 1920 to 1933. According to many early residents, some of those back-yard chickens thrived on the mash from basement stills. "Everybody had livestock, its odors offset aromas of cooking mash and animals ate the leftovers," as one old-timer put it. "The boot-leg whiskey produced in those stills made for many a happy-go-lucky night in Minneapolis."

Population in 1950 was 6035, and 339 homes were built that year. As the population grew, demand for building lots became more insistent. The farms north of 45th Ave. were broken up and sold in lots. The 100 -acre Mathaire neighborhood began building. The Hilltop neighborhood developed after the golf course was sold in 1950.

Crest View Lutheran Home opened in 1964 at Reservoir and 45th. It was

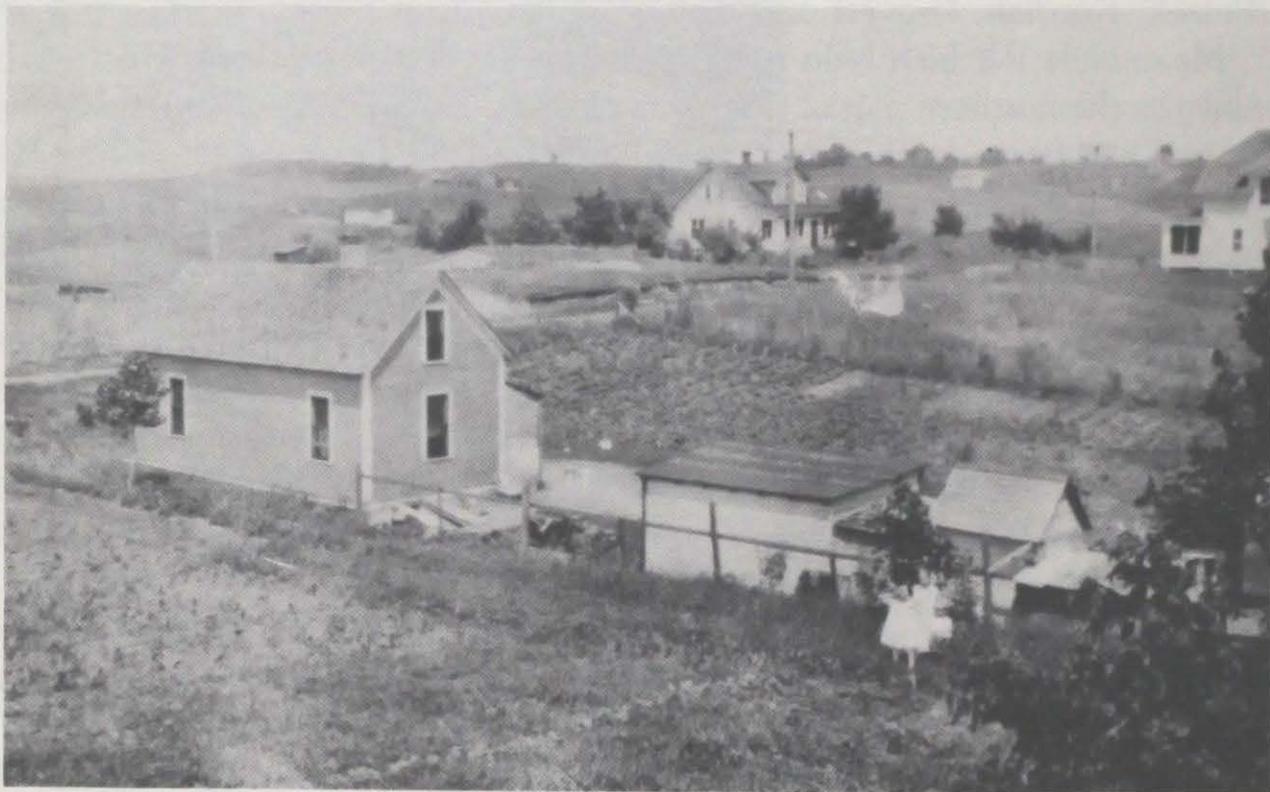
a new kind of neighborhood for older persons and those needing some nursing care. The Boulevard Apartments were added in 1974.

Innsbruck land was acquired by Columbia Heights in the late 1950's and that neighborhood developed in 1963-64.

In 1975, Columbia Heights first high-rise building, nine stories tall, created another new neighborhood -- the senior citizen Parkview Villa of 100 units on 40th near Central. Condominiums near LaBelle Park became homes for hundreds of people. In the early 1980's, multiple dwellings were built on University. During those years too, Nelson School was remodeled into townhouses.

As Columbia Heights neighborhoods started, developed, matured and aged, changes were bound to take place. The new buildings have different architecture, different kinds of yards. The big lots have split and the big gardens have given way to more houses. Some of the earliest homes have been razed and new ones erected in their places.

But a strong sense of community -- that closeness which brought nationalities together and created strong neighborhood units--continued to fortify the town. There have been many "family discussions" about streets, taxes, sewers and alleys. But, as quoted earlier, "people who care often disagree." Marie Eng, who taught school and lived in Columbia Heights for many years, expressed the strong sense of community: "I love this city. I want to spend my life where Columbia Heights people can touch me."

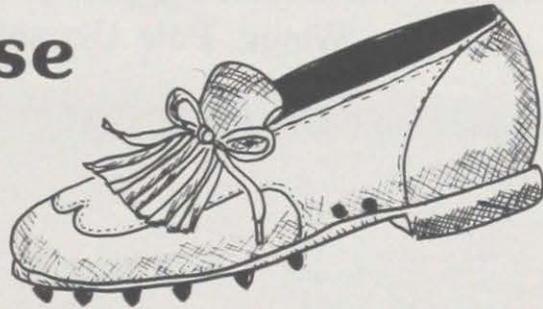


First home of Julia and Mitro Jedinak at 1020 43rd Ave. (the Russian neighborhood) in 1913.

CHAPTER 11

Hilltop -

Revamping a Golf Course



The site of the Hilltop neighborhood began first as a farm, then became the rolling hills and water-hazards of a golf course before finally being built into homes. Stretching north from 45th Ave. an eighteen hole golf course served many of the Big City Sportsters from Minneapolis as well as local golfers.

M. K. Lamberton bought the farm in 1921 and developed the golf course. Holes 10, 11, 12 and 13 were laid out around the water reservoir. That area was leased from Minneapolis. The 15th hole was where the Kordiak Park building was erected. The 14th tee lay where the high school was eventually built. And the 18th tee was where the Columbia Heights water tower was erected. "It had a nice view of Minneapolis," former caddy Chet Latawiec recalled. The course had a practice putting green and an underground water system through which it drew water to its own reservoir. The hills and water holes which made both farming and home-building difficult were ideal for a golf course. The club manager lived in the big square house at the corner of 45th and Chatham Road. The clubhouse was across the alley.

Lamberton died about 1934, and his nephew took over the golf course, leasing it to a man named Clovour who operated it until 1939. At that time, about 50 club members bought it for \$25 a share and operated it until World War II. During the war years, money to operate golf courses was scarce and, according to Latawiec, "the course went to seed." The corporation wanted to sell the course to Columbia Heights, but the city felt at that time it had no need for a golf course. Such a purchase for park purposes was discussed in 1943, but the purchase did not materialize.

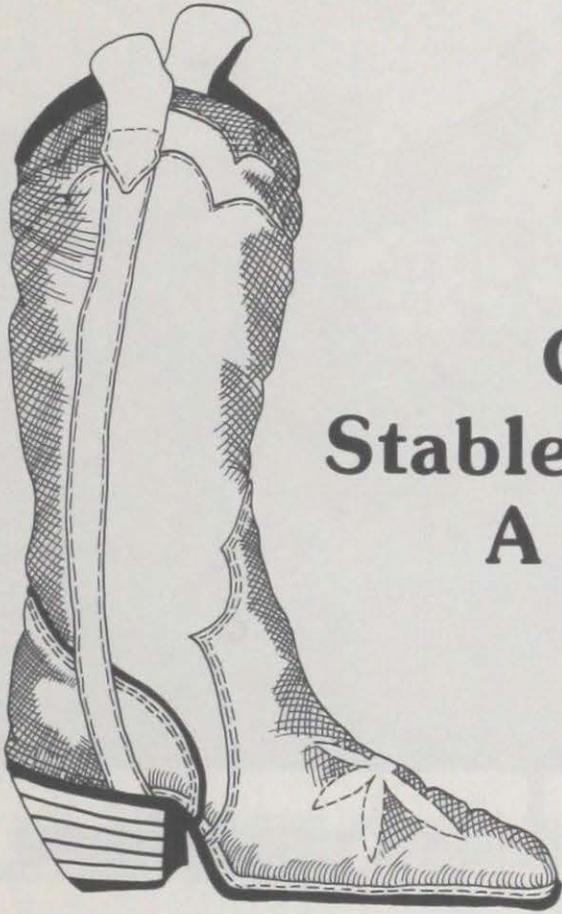
Ralph Arone bought the course from the shareholders in 1945, hoping to get a liquor license. Arone improved the course and ran it through 1946, but when his efforts to obtain a liquor license were unsuccessful, he sold the property to Wilkinson Realty. The area was replatted and 20 homes were completed in 1947.

By 1955, homes in the Hilltop area were advertised in the newspaper: "Homes from \$13,900 to \$16,400 are available." Golf Place, Fairway Drive, and Heights Drive are the only visible reminders of Hilltop Golf Course.

A group of people who spent a great deal of time on the links of Hilltop Golf Course were the Columbia Heights boys who worked as caddies. Among them were Chet Latawiec, Stan Guzik and John Lakotas. These young men learned the game from the ground up and many of them became near-professional players. Lakotas won the public links state championship in 1937. Latawiec won the Gross Golf Club Invitational in 1958 with a record-breaking 67. Other capable local golfers who played the course were Don Winge, Pete Ulmaniec, Jim Deeble and Gordie Peterson.



Columbia Heights in 1921, looking northeast from above VanBuren St. toward 40th and Central. Columbia School is at far upper left. Hilltop Golf Course was on hills at top of picture. (Photo, Minnesota Historical Society)



CHAPTER 12

Stables - How To Stirrup A Neighborhood

The Hilltop area, four square blocks west of Central Ave. between 45th and 49th Avenues, began as part of a dairy farm owned by Al Dooies. In the mid-1930's the area became Hilltop Stables and Oak Grove Riding Academy. One old-time resident described it as "out in the boonies." The original clubhouse was located at 4501 6th St.

The area included a wide variety of activities including a trailer park, which held 50 trailer sites in 1948 when Leslie and Mary Anne Johnson bought it. A filling station and grocery store, located where the southbound traffic on Central Ave. would later be running, served the residents of the park. The park eventually held 250 trailer sites.

The stable and riding academy seem to have caused a certain amount of neighborhood distress. A 1944 news item refers to two Fridley men appearing before municipal court, arrested for unlawful assembly, assault and cruelty to animals at Hilltop Stable in a Memorial Day fracas. The Oak Hill Riding Academy was under district court order in 1945, "not to maintain a barn, corral and stable for horses in present numbers which habitually produce odors, gases and noise offensive to the sense of neighbors."

There was also a large pavillion where young people gathered to dance to the juke box. O.H. Prestemon noted in 1946 in a tongue-in-cheek column that "Oak Grove Riding Stable will now get pinball machines to educate the youth and stimulate trade." When the stables closed, the pavillion was used for auctions and flea markets.



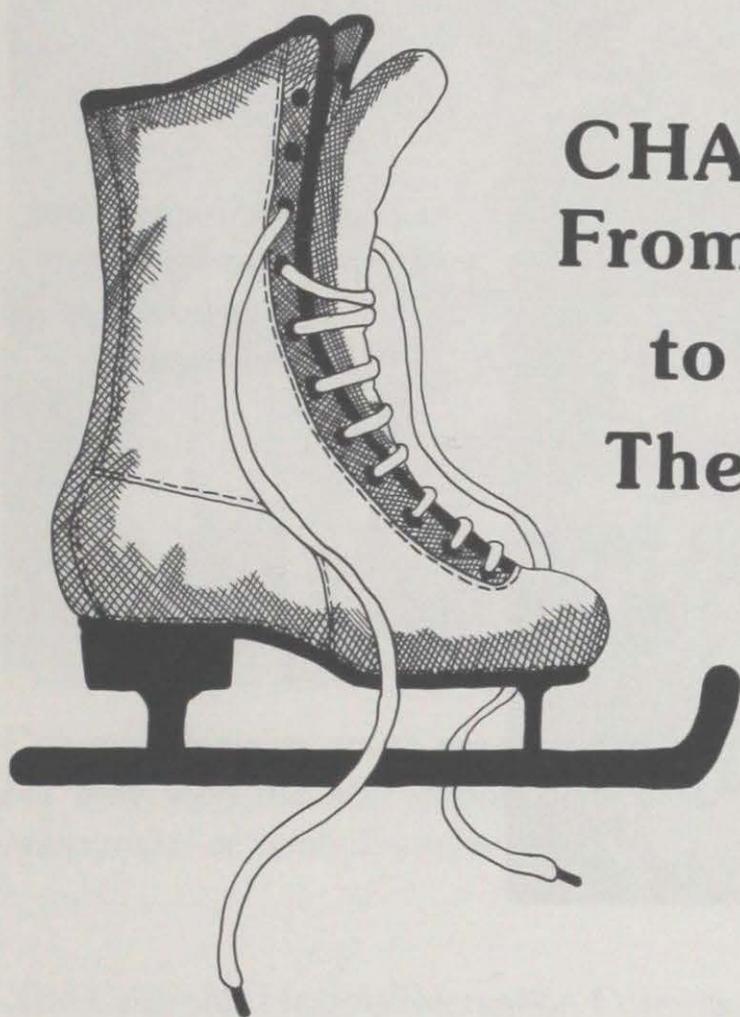
“Old Shep” stood on the icy pond in front of Al Dooies’ barn in 1912. The view looks east toward Central Ave. at 45th Ave. The barn became the Hilltop Stables in the 1930’s.

There were also many stories about after-hours high-stake gambling and sometimes violence at the stables. One such story had it that one night a gunshot put holes in a house across the street. Soon after that, the stables and academy were closed.

Because the Hilltop area was unincorporated, there was still considerable discussion about it in the 1950’s after the stables were closed. The trailer homes were against Columbia Heights ordinances, therefore the city did not want to annex Hilltop. But the residents required services such as water and sewer, and there were many discussions as to how these needs would be met and funded. Hilltop residents were assessed \$85 a lot for their share of the new Columbia Heights water tower in 1953.

In the mid-1950’s, Hilltop residents came to the Anoka County Board requesting incorporation as a village. At that time, incorporation was accomplished by 1) a petition with a certain percentage of residents’ names; 2) designation, location and date of incorporation elections; and 3) designation of the geographical area to be incorporated. The county board was under state law required to accept results of such requests and elections.

Hilltop was incorporated in May, 1956. Bill Wychor was the first mayor. In 1958, consideration was given by Columbia Heights to challenge the incorporation of Hilltop and annex it to Columbia Heights, but the suits never materialized. Hilltop has a mayor and four councilmembers. It contracts fire protection from Fridley and police protection from Columbia Heights.



CHAPTER 13 From Swamps to Parks - The Big Lift

The swamps of Columbia Heights were a way of life. People skated on them, swam in them, launched their boats on them, cut ice for their ice-boxes from them, raised fish in them. Columbia Heights swamps were even the object of puns. From the Minneapolis Journal in 1913, "Columbia Heights voters yesterday completely swamped the license question ..." Many of those swamps eventually became the sites of Columbia Heights parks.

Some of the low marshy places included the sites of Miller Funeral Home and Immaculate Conception parking lot. The swamp east of Central reached from 39th Ave. nearly to 43rd., making construction there difficult. It was spanned by a long wooden bridge in the early 1900's so people could get up the hill to Reservoir Blvd.

The swamp at 44th and Jackson was known as Bunning's Pond and covered parts of several blocks. It was remembered as being a watery swampy area with ducks, geese and redwing blackbirds building nests among the cattails.

But whatever pleasure skaters and nature-lovers derived from the swamps, they continued to be a headache in the development of the city. They made building and street-grading difficult. They were dangerous: In 1944, Paul Lindquist saved the life of a three-year old who fell into the swamp at 45th and Central.

One thing the swamps did for the community was to encourage ice skaters. Every low spot was shoveled by hand at the first snow and kept clear for skating all winter long. A strong hockey program was one result.



Ebba Reinholdson took a dip in the swamp in front of the house at 4438 VanBuren St. in 1925.

Attention to youth activities began in 1935 with formation of the Columbia Heights Athletic Association. It was aimed at helping post-high school and non-high school students. The Columbia Heights Youth Center opened in 1937 in the Community Methodist gym.

Frenchie VonDell, Dom Hebzynski and other interested citizens became active in the youth programs. They had headquarters upstairs above a grocery store at 40th and Central. The hockey program started in an old one-car garage on Jefferson St. across from Huset Park. The hockey rink was so bad, Hebzynski recalled, that teams from other towns wouldn't come to play there, so Columbia Heights teams always had to go to other towns to play.

Another person instrumental in promoting youth programs in Columbia Heights was Bernard Reuper. He worked with the park department in the Central and 40th Ave. center, where private donations provided a pool table, table tennis and juke-box for dancing. Pete Tema, Joseph Wargo, Chet Herringer and John Voss were among those who sponsored dances at the Field House and such activities as basketball teams, providing uniforms and jackets for the players. One of the teams was called the Dig-Digs, for the sponsor, Herringer's Excavating Co.

In 1948, when Columbia Heights celebrated its 50th year as a village, its young athletes were featured. The Columbia Heights Midgets (under 13) played a double-header against St. Louis Park. They were reported as "the talk of the baseball circles in the surrounding areas." That celebration also included softball game by both men and women, a street dance, a municipal band concert directed by William Wilke, and a Slim Jim Radio Show.



Columbia Heights youth program hockey players didn't have uniforms but they won the Minneapolis Championship in 1942. At left, Dom Hebzynski, at right, Frenchie VonZell.

The Columbia Heights Recreation Commission was established in 1953, and in 1958, the Columbia Heights Athletic Boosters was re-formed.

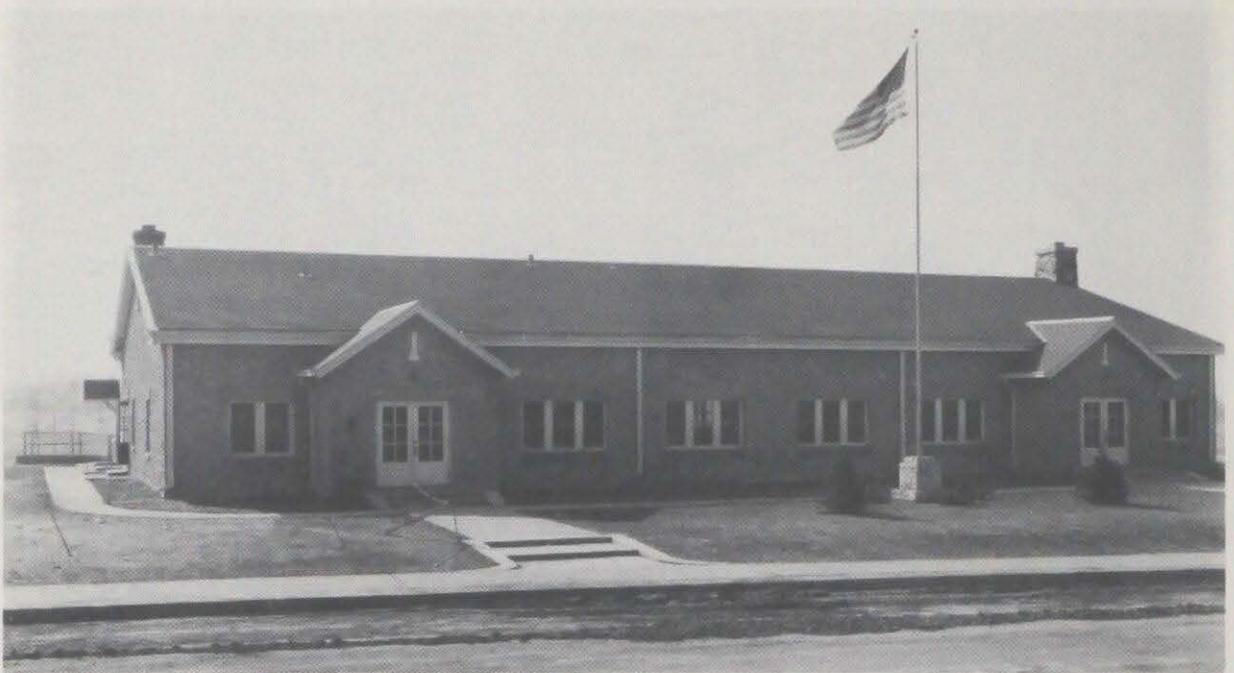
The Park Board of Columbia Heights was formally established in 1939. First park superintendent was George Baker, the next was Otto Dunneman. John Murzyn joined the park department in 1939, and became the third park superintendent in 1947, serving until he retired in 1979.

Murzyn recalled his early years with the department. "By the time we got around to acquiring park land, all the high spots were built on, so we got the swamps. They were full of garbage and old furniture. The foundries had dumped wastes in them. We were always begging for good fill. But we built good parks." Developing Columbia Heights parks meant pulling them up out of the swamps--another bootstrap operation.

The first park, Huset, formerly called City Park, was the scene of much of Columbia Heights earliest activities. Cows and horses were pastured there. Children swam in a stream which ran through it. The original fire department was located there.

Elmer Huset, a minister at First Lutheran Church and the city manager for a time, went to the state legislature and got 60 acres from 37th Ave. to the alley below 40th Ave., and from Quincy to 5th St. for about \$10,000. The ordinance creating Huset Park was passed in 1939. About 30 acres of the property eventually became industrial land.

The Field House, later renamed John Murzyn Hall, was started in 1939 by WPA. It contained a commissary, kitchen, bathroom, dance floor and six bowling alleys in the basement. At the Grand Opening of the Field House, 425 lines were bowled at 15 cents a line. Pinsetters were paid five cents a line.



Columbia Heights Field House (later Murzyn Hall) was built in 1939 by WPA. (Photo, Minnesota Historical Society)

The building has undergone several remodelings since that time. In 1959, Huset Park was the first in the city to have lights for a ball field, and a recreation building was erected east of Jefferson as part of the Huset Park facilities.

In 1944, the park department was placed under jurisdiction of the city manager, with the park board to serve in an advisory capacity.

Silver Lake Boat Landing and Silver Lake Beach developed at widely different times. The land around the lake was privately owned, in acre lots, through the early part of the century. Frank, Peter and John Weir, brothers, owned a couple of acres on the west side of the lake, north of the present boat landing. They operated a public beach in the 1920's with bathhouses, confectionary and sunshade.

According to one story, a man drowned in the lake in the late 1920's, and the lake was dynamited in an effort to find him. This action destroyed many of the springs which fed the lake. Whatever the reason, the water levels sank extensively. It was decided the lake was too valuable an asset to allow it to become another swamp, so a request was made to Minneapolis Water Reservoir to add water to the lake and bring it back to something near its former levels. The Salvation Army, which owns the north shore of Silver Lake, put in a pipe from the Reservoir. Some of the springs apparently later re-activated themselves, and the lake, with the addition of water from storm drains, maintains its level without pumping.

The boat landing at 41st Ave. and Stinson Blvd. was acquired by Columbia Heights through a conveyance of tax forfeited land in 1940. In 1945, the Park Board advised against buying more lots to enlarge that area, which was being used mainly as a swimming beach then, because it was determined certain weeds in the lake caused rashes to swimmers and resulted in a very short swimming season.

In 1964, the city acquired the lots at the northwest end of Silver Lake, some through tax delinquency and some through condemnation. A swimming beach was developed there on swamp land which had served as a settling pond for run-off water headed for the lake. The area required extensive fill.

Back in the mid-1940's, after Sam and Rose Salpietro moved into and rebuilt a house on the northwest corner lot of Silver Lake, they decided to make their own swimming beach at the foot of their lot. They pulled eight truckloads of junk, including old cars, tires and household trash, from the lake.

One-acre Hilltop Park, at 4557 Heights Dr., was developed in 1955 with the volunteer money and labor of residents to build the \$10,000 shelter. Mrs. Muriel King led the drive for the park. The park department provided a furnace and plumbing for the shelter.

By the mid-1950's, a destructive fungus (Dutch Elm Disease) was noticed in city park elms.

Mathaire Park, eight acres at 49th and Johnson, was acquired in the late 1950's as part of a 100-acre residential tract acquired through an annexation trade with Fridley. It was developed in 1961. Murzyn recalled that park site as having "outlots which were big and boggy. We filled in the hockey rink, and the east end would always sink."

Keyes Park is at 45th and Buchanan St., and is named for Judge Leonard and Celia Keyes. It contains 16 acres. The original site probably contained the biggest altitude variance in Columbia Heights. Stan Guzik remembers it as Norway Hill. "It was lot higher than it is now. They sliced off the top and filled in the bottom. It was a real test of cars to get up that hill!"

The bottom of Norway Hill was another of Columbia Heights many swamps. It was a deep one, and was the site of trashburning and dumping for many years. The burning of such items as rubber tires caused considerable unrest among the growing numbers of nearby residents in the early 1950's.

The area was included in a tract of land which had never been formally annexed to Columbia Heights. There were no residents on it and therefore had no one to request annexation. Another such tract was the Innsbruck area. It had many beautiful trees but very few people. According to Al Kordiak, Anoka County Commissioner, Fridley and Columbia Heights were looking at both sites: at Innsbruck with favor to annex as a future fine residential area, and at the dump site with undisguised disfavor.

But somebody had to solve the dump problem, so an agreement was struck: whoever took Innsbruck had to take the dump too. Columbia Heights got them both. The dump was filled in the mid-fifties, Memorial Park was developed, and renamed Keyes Park in 1976.

By 1960, park usage was nearly 17,000 people a year. A survey by park consultant, Charles Doell, recommended a \$1.6 million extensive park development, including acquisition of more land and a swimming pool. This recommendation was supported by park commissioners. A \$325,000 park bond was decisively passed in 1961, with \$160,000 to be for acquisition of land, the balance for planning and development.

Gauvitte Park, comprising 16 acres at 43rd and 2nd St., was named for William Gauvitte, first mayor of the city. It was created in 1961.

McKenna Park at 47th and 7th St., is an 11-acre tract named for James McKenna, who was elected to the first Columbia Heights council in 1921. When the park was being developed in 1963, there was enough money in the department to clear and grade it, but not enough to get grass growing. At a public meeting,

residents rose up to demand grass because the sandy park was literally blowing away. Funds were found.

Southwest Park, 39th and Main St. was built on a two-acre site acquired in response to strong neighborhood demands for it. The land was part of a parcel of land and buildings acquired from Burlington Northern Railroad at no cost to the city through negotiations with the railroad by Mayor Nawrocki. The park was to serve as a buffer between the rail-yard and adjoining residences.

Edgemoor Park is a small neighborhood park at Edgemoor Place.

Ostrander Park was named for Ava Ostrander, first Minnesota woman council-member from 1924-1928. She had filed for the office on a slogan of "Morals and sense." She was a long-time substitute teacher, volunteer worker and civic leader in the 1920's. She did investigative work for the county welfare and represented the county attorney in law enforcement. She and her husband, Homer Ostrander, had come to Columbia Heights in 1910, partly for the health of a son who had a lung weakness. Columbia Heights was lauded at the time as being very healthful because of its high altitude.

Another son, Larry Ostrander, was born in Columbia Heights in 1911. He married Rose Sochacki, whose parents were Rose and Felix Sochacki. They came to Columbia Heights in 1919 when Rose was two years old. She is the sister of basketball player "Red" Sochacki and aunt of Walter Sochacki, priest at Immaculate Conception since 1981.

Three-acre Ostrander was another park built on "boggy land," according to Murzyn, and it had another hockey rink which kept sinking. The park was developed in the early 1970's at 40th and Polk St., and received the city's first permanent park shelter in 1973.

Five-acre Prestemon Park at 39th and Cleveland was named for O.H. Prestemon, Columbia Heights columnist for 33 years. It was the first Columbia Heights park with a ballfield fence to control long balls. Murzyn noted it has excellent drainage. Water from the swamps in Prestemon Park were drained into Silver Lake.

LaBelle Park was named for James LaBelle who was killed at age 17 in Iwo Jima in 1942, and who received the Congressional Medal of Honor posthumously. The 20-acre park holds part of the swamp which, before filling, had spread several blocks east of Central Ave. from 39th nearly to 43rd Ave. The park was developed in 1973, and uses the remaining marsh with its growth of willows and cattails as a nature area and also as a place to dump snow from the streets.

Wargo Park, named for Judge Joseph Wargo and built in 1975, is the city's smallest park. It occupies a corner of a lot at 41st and Central which was originally planned for a business, possibly a filling station.

Through Judge Wargo's financial help, the corner was preserved as a scenic and restful spot and as a centerpiece for the city's redeveloped Central Ave. business district. It contains a fountain, benches, greenery and path. It was dedicated to Judge Wargo during the 1976 Bicentennial celebration. Part of the monument in Wargo Park is constructed with bricks salvaged from Columbia School which had been built on the site in 1894 and razed in 1967.

Sullivan is the city's newest park, at 51st and Madison St., and is near the earliest site of permanent Columbia Heights homes. It was named for the early homesteaders, the John and Margaret Sullivans, who farmed the area and raised



LaBelle Park has a board walk reminiscent of the board walk which allowed people to cross from Central Ave. up to Reservoir Blvd. in the early 1900's. LaBelle condominiums are in the background.

their six children there. The park contains eight acres.

Kordiak County Park is a 30-acre wooded area at 49th and Innsbruck Pkwy. The area was known by many residents as Peck's Lake and Peck's Woods. In the late 1950's, according to Anoka County Commissioner Albert Kordiak, there was no Anoka County park system. Kordiak asked the county board to acquire the Peck's Woods area for a park, but it had already been sold to local developer, Rodney Billman. The land had been platted for residential building lots. Value of the land was estimated at \$1000 an acres, and the county board made \$18,000 available to purchase 18 acres. The developer, however, was reluctant to sell. After repeated requests, refusals, and, finally, suits and counter-suits, a deal was struck between Anoka County and Billman: he would donate the land for a park if the county would build Innsbruck Pkwy. around it. That project took the available \$18,000, but Anoka County got its first park in 1959.

Kordiak recalled that he and his father, George Kordiak, went to the park in George's car, took the lawn-mower out of the trunk, and mowed the grass around several trees. Then they built a picnic table, "and that was the first Anoka County Park." They also dug up many elm trees from George's backyard and planted them in the new park. "We worked nights, month after month," Albert recalled.

After many letters and appeals to military installations, Kordiak finally acquired a World War I artillery piece as part of the park equipment. Another land-

mark in the park is a huge stone with the word "courthouse" on it. That rock and monument have to do with the naming of the park, which at first was simply "Anoka County Park." Kordiak noted that if anybody wanted to be elected to the Anoka County Board of Commissioners, he had to promise to get the county to build a new courthouse in Columbia Heights. Somehow that new courthouse got started in Anoka before Kordiak was elected to the Board. When the old courthouse was taken down, he asked for the large stone lintel and had it brought to Anoka County Park. Again he and his father worked nights, mixing cement and building the monument surrounding the rock. Area residents got up a petition to have the park renamed for Albert Kordiak, and that request was honored by the Anoka County Board through action of the Columbia Heights city council.

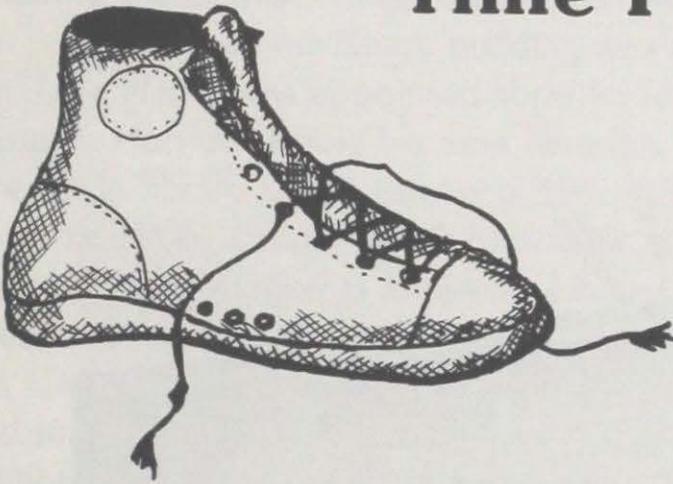
Albert Kordiak has been active in Columbia Heights civic affairs for many years. He was born in 1928 at 44th and 2 1/2 St. He was first elected to the Anoka County Board in 1954 and has served 32 years, at least 20 years as chairman.

Albert's parents, George and Anna Kordiak, moved to Columbia Heights in 1920 from Czechoslovakia. They were married in St. Cyril's Church in 1923, and Anna remembered it well. "There were only two cars in town, John Behun's and my husband's brother, Paul's. They drove us to the church, then after the wedding, they took us for a ride up to Moore Lake. We thought we were in Duluth, it was so far!"

The Kordiaks bought a lot at 946 42nd St. for nothing down, \$5 a month. "All the houses on 42nd St. were three rooms. People used old railroad cars and whatever they could find to add on." George Kordiak died March 9, 1986.

CHAPTER 14

Library - Time For Sneakers



The story is legion that Columbia Heights Library started when Martha Elizabeth Russell and Harriet Blythe walked up and down the streets of the town, pulling a little red wagon and collecting books to start a library.

The exact date of that bootstrap pioneer effort is not recorded, but Dec. 3, 1928, a library was established in the Heights Theater at a monthly rent of \$7.50. Grace Sullivan was the first librarian. People instrumental in getting the library started included Edna Mellen, Ethel Domm, Archie Holets, Grace Schweneker, Jessie Johnston, Celia Keyes, Carlton Dahl, Maude Duracha, Mildred Swennes, Mrs. H.C. Nelson and Otis Smith.

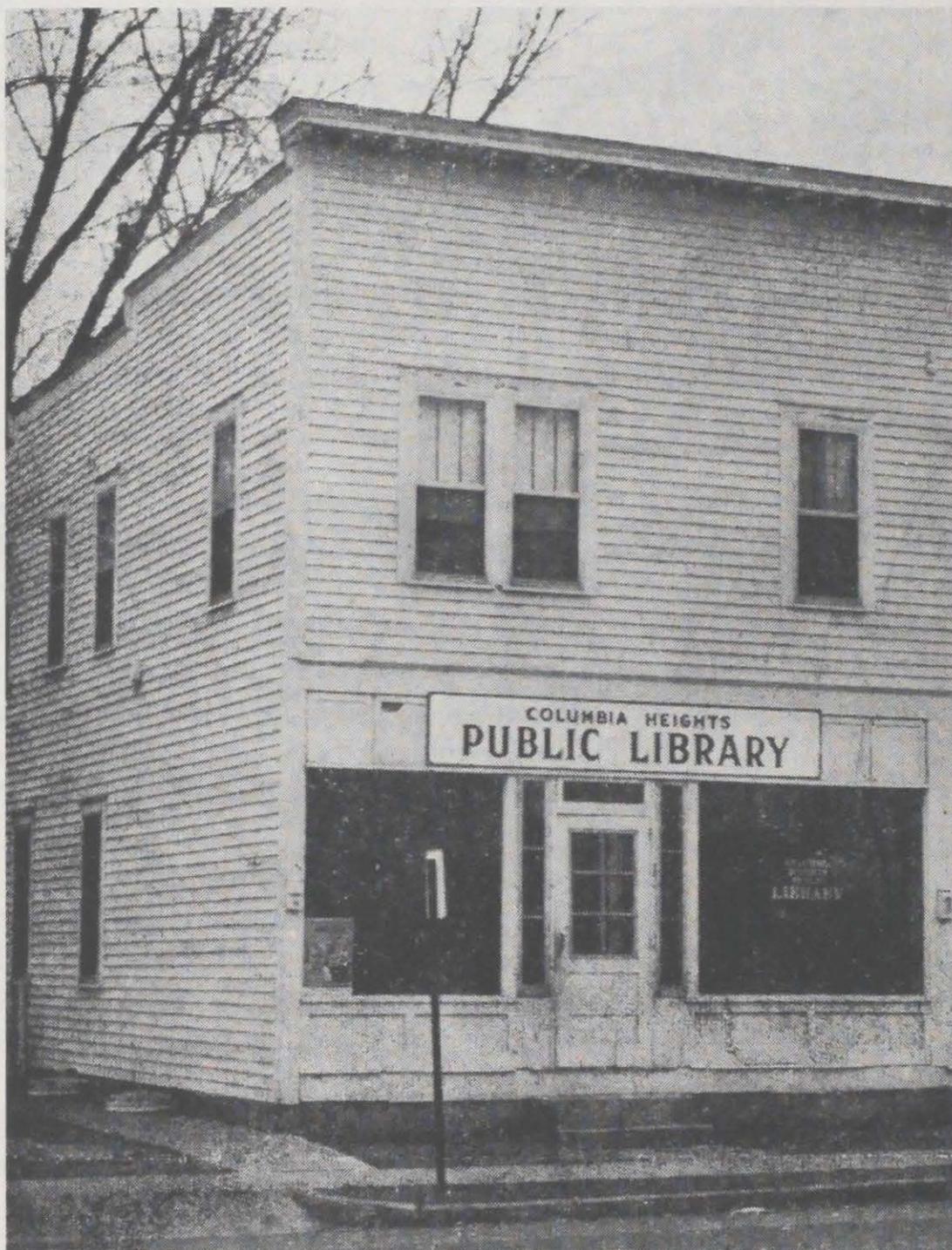
In 1929, Anoka County gave \$500 for the Columbia Heights library. In 1930, Lucille Hawkins, known as "Aunt Bob," became the librarian for \$30 a month. She eventually bought the World Book and American Encyclopedia for the library. In the following years, money was raised for new books by luncheons, teas, paper sales and theater performances. In 1930, the library had 483 books for adults, 237 juvenile books.

The library moved to the second floor of a building at 4002 Central in 1938. A clerk paid by WPA funds cataloged the books that year, helped by Helen Erickson and Ethel Scudder.

In 1939, lots at Quincy and Jackson and 40th Ave. were requested to be put on "hold" by the county auditor, E.A. Carlson, for \$100. The next year a suitable library was planned, to cost \$4,900. There was no janitor service during those years, and Miss Hawkins built the fires and mopped the floor.

The library became a "War Information Center" in 1941. It had moved to 828 40th Ave. It received \$200 from Anoka County in 1941.

Miss Hawkins' salary was increased to \$75 a month in 1943. In 1948, Chet Herringer offered to excavate, without charge, the basement for a new library building on lots acquired through delinquent taxes, but the building bond was defeated. The city manager requested that the library submit a formal budget in 1951 so the librarian's salary would not be delayed. Building plans were delayed that year. The library moved to 838 40th Ave. in 1953, its 25th anniversary year. By-laws were adopted in 1953, and the library got its own telephone. Mrs. Blythe died and Mrs. Grace Munsch was elected president of the library board. The library board was created by city ordinance in 1953.



Columbia Heights Public Library celebrated its 25th anniversary in 1953 while housed in this building at 840 40th Ave. (Photo, Columbia Heights Record)

In the next few years, the children's shelves were greatly expanded. In 1955, the library had 23,000 books and in 1957 it had 31,000 books.

Ruth Miller, daughter of library founder, Martha Elizabeth Russell, joined the library board in 1955. In 1956, the board requested that Miss Hawkins' plants be removed, but the public wanted them there, so they stayed. Mrs. Harold Hayes, a librarian, joined the library board in 1956.

The option to join the county library system was offered to Columbia Heights in 1957. Although Columbia Heights did not join the county, an arrangement was worked out at that time with the county for acquisition of new books and for weeding out some old books. Three truckloads were hauled to the dump.

In 1960, a new library building was approved, to cost \$28,200, at 820 40th Ave. Una Hallin was appointed librarian for the new library, with Miss Hawkins as assistant. Harriet Deeble became librarian in 1962. The library reported a 130% increase in library usage between 1960-65.

In 1966, Columbia Heights built an addition to the library. It was the last public library in Minnesota to receive Library Service Construction Act (LSCA) federal funds, a substantial aid to the library's early bootstrap beginnings. Those funds, along with Civil Defense funds available because the basement of the addition would be used for civil defense and as an air raid shelter and for target practice, made the addition possible. It included a children's department named for Lucille Hawkins. Joanne Scudder joined the library staff in 1966 and presented many children's programs over the years.

In the late 1960's, the opportunity to join the county library system was again offered to Columbia Heights. The offer was refused because it was determined it would cost the city some funding and its independent status. The Metropolitan Library Service (MELSA) was formed in the early 1970's. It offered opportunities for library users to use any library in the metropolitan region.

Columbia Heights was not eligible to join MELSA as a full member because of the structure of the founding compact. After a great deal of discussion and negotiation, Columbia Heights entered into a contract with Anoka County Library system in order to become an Associate Member of MELSA, which qualifies residents for full MELSA privileges, while retaining its independent status and funding.

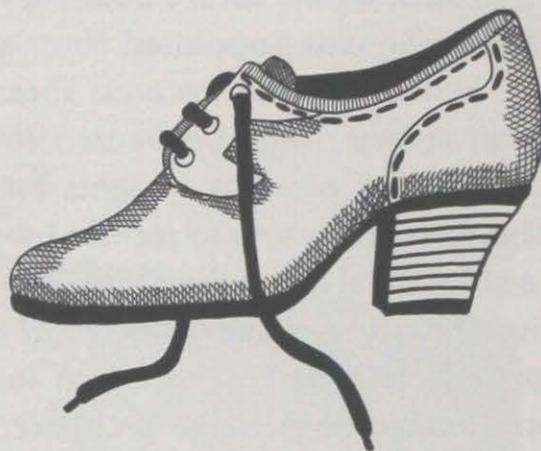
In 1976, the basement of the library was retrieved from Civil Defense storage and target practice and was made into a Children's Department. Harriet Deeble retired in 1978 and Becky Loader became librarian. Several new programs were added to the library service in 1980, including a joint Recreation/Library Book Bus to the parks and a homebound program which is associated with the Friends of the Library. In 1982, the Children's Department was remodeled to meet building codes and expanded.

Several library support groups had been formed over the years. Most recent was the Friends of the Library, reorganized in 1979 with Helen Merrick as first president. The group holds fund raisers to buy equipment and supplies, hosts special library events.

CHAPTER 15

Service Groups -

Arch Supports



People help themselves and their neighbors in many ways. One of the earliest organized efforts of people to help each other in Columbia Heights started in 1920 when a group was organized by Roy Bentzen, James McKenna, Fred Lucier and Andrew Anderson as the Willing Helpers. Aim of the group was to help feed the poor people in the community during the Depression which followed World War I. There was no government support for relief at that time. Another group which worked in the same area was the Columbia Heights Relief Association.

Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts

The next helping group was the Boy Scouts which were started in Community Methodist Church in 1922. Over the years, Scouts have met in many Columbia Heights churches including Immaculate Conception, First Lutheran and St. Timothy's Lutheran.

League of Women Voters

Columbia Heights League of Women Voters, formally organized in 1924, was one of the earliest Leagues to be formed in Minnesota after passage of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1919 gave women the right to vote.

Among charter members were Celia Keyes, Martha Elizabeth Russell, Mrs. O.H. Prestemon, Mrs. Herb Woodward, and Helen Ashford. The League started



Columbia Heights PTA, established in 1916 in addition to encouraging communication between parents and teachers, contributed to the culture of the community. The PTA Choral Club posed in 1932: Back row, left to right: Mrs. Ittner; Mrs. Helen Eckstrom; ? ; Rosemary Warren; Harold Betts, director; ? ; Lucille Hawkins, Mrs. R. J. Miller; Etta Goeman-Pott. Front row: Mrs. Archie Holets; Mrs. H. Deeble; Miss Helen Haberman; Beatrice Munton; Mrs. J. H. Betts; Mrs. O. Winge; Mrs. Charles Oden, Mrs. Theodore Ostmo, ?.

as a small group which met in the daytime and sponsored candidates' meetings from its earliest years.

Object of the League was to inform voters and encourage them to use their franchise. The League did many in-depth studies of the city, local schools, state and national programs, and shared its knowledge with the community. The League also published many informative booklets including a detailed study of Dist. 13 schools in 1969.

Celia Keyes, wife of Judge Leonard Keyes, was active in many areas of early Columbia Heights service endeavors. She was active in the Willing Helpers in the 1920's. In addition to being a charter member of the Columbia Heights League of Women Voters, she was on the Anoka County Welfare Board and chairman of the Columbia Heights United Fund. During World War II, as captain of the Victory Aides, she raised 125% of the Red Cross quota.

Those World War II days gave everyone a chance to share: sugar ration cards, coffee rationing and 40 MPR speed limits to save gas. Columbia Heights was allotted two tires in 1943. And the town shared its citizens: 2119 Columbia Heights people served in World War II. In 1943, Paul Trench chaired the War Bond drive.

Mrs. Keyes was active in cancer fund drives and was the first woman director of the Columbia Heights Community Fund. She made the newspapers when she hired people to do the housework so she could work on the community fund drive in 1931.

Martha Elizabeth Russell, wife of Community Methodist Minister, B.T. Russell, came to Columbia Heights in 1926. Besides helping found the Heights Library and League of Women Voters, she was instrumental in starting a local chapter of the

Womens Christian Temperance Union (WCTU).

Her daughter, Ruth Russell, married Gilbert Miller, was also very active in Heights service organizations such as Community Chest and Red Cross fund drives. She organized the All-Nations basketball tournament in the early 1940's which featured the many nationalities of the city.

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 230

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 230 charter was adopted March 4, 1931, with 31 members. The Ladies Auxiliary of VFW Post 230 was chartered six weeks later. First Commander was A.E. Jydstrup. The first VFW card-party drew 176 people; \$170 was collected from the sale of 2725 poppies in May, 1931, with 75 volunteers working. Other fund-raisers included holding rummage sales and operating a fireworks stand at the early Jubilee celebrations.

The Post's first home was purchased in 1957, the former Norwegian Salem Covenant Church at 3938 5th St. Community services by Post 230 and Auxiliary include support of youth athletics, pancake breakfasts for the elderly, hospital work, blood donor programs, Americanism awards, and donations to city schools and city fire and police departments.

American Legion

The Ralph Pohl Post #367 of the American Legion was issued in 1928, the permanent charter in 1932. First Post Commander was Emery J. Anderson. An American Legion Auxiliary was formed in 1928 with a membership of 20. Mrs. Emery Anderson was the first president. The unit was disbanded in 1976.

Nick and Anna Super, who came to 4105 Quincy St. in the 1920's, were both very involved in the Legion activities. Anna was in charge of selling the Legion poppies for many years. But poppy sales weren't enough to beat the Depression. The Legion appeared with VFW Post 230 before the Columbia Heights council in 1931 to report they had no more money to help the needy of the town.

The Post was incorporated in August, 1939, with Commander Melvin B. Prestemon. Many Columbia Heights men have been involved with the Legion over the years, sponsoring youth activities, helping needy families, sponsoring awards programs for the police and fire departments, and helping veterans and their families.

A project in which the Legion joined the VFW was the Flag Pole Monument in front of the Field House on which were inscribed names of Columbia Heights veterans who lost their lives in World Wars I and II, the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

Efforts to keep the Ralph Pohl Post #367 active failed due to dwindling membership. The Post Charter was cancelled Aug. 11, 1978 after 50 years of service to the community.

Activities Committee

In an effort to beat the doldrums of the Depression in the early 1930's, Columbia Heights leaders, including businessmen, police and fire departments,

planned a summer celebration. The first one was a picnic in City Park and was called a Jubilee. It later became the Jamboree. An Activities Committee was formed, with delegates from each of the town's service organizations, to put on the celebration. The first queen was Helen Tunsky in 1934. Margie Sample was queen in 1937.



The Fire Dept. Auxiliary helped liven up the 1939 Jubilee: Anita DeMars, Adina Ottem, Dorothea Ostmo (Kraus), and Laura Burgoyne Schaefer.

The Jamboree grew over the years to include carnival rides, a parade with community floats and many local entertainment booths sponsored by service clubs. At one time teen dances were sponsored, but were dropped when attendance fell off. Junior king and queen and senior king and queen competitions were added. Floats and winners of the royalty competitions have entered the Minneapolis Aquatennial activities in past years. Among the many citizens who worked on the Activities Committee were Ruth Welch, Clarence Coffel and Pat Olynyk.

Lions Club

Columbia Heights Lions Club was founded in 1955. Its first president was Jerry Chirhart. Wally Murray, long-time Lions Club member, recalled that a group of men first met in the basement of the Redwood Cafe, then owned by Dave Warren. The group included a representative of Lions International and Leonard Lange, Jerry Chirhart, Walt Cottrell, Bob King, George Martonik, Max Johnson, John Pappas and Jake Heller, Dues were set at \$12.

By 1960, the club was involved with the Lions Eye Program, bought uniforms for the community hockey teams, and held their first pancake breakfast with a net profit of \$40.17. Over the years the Lions have donated money for many park projects, to the schools and to charity. By 1975, the pancake breakfast netted \$1314. They bought bullet-proof vests for the police department in 1982; began working

with Southern Anoka Community Assistance (SACA); contributed to the Lions Hearing Foundation; offered scholarships, among many more gifts to the community.



Jerry Chirhart, second from right, received the Columbia Heights Lions Club charter in 1955 from Al Shervin, Lions Charter Governor. Looking on were John Pappas, far left, and members of the Lions International. (Photo, Paul Wychor)

Knights of Columbus

The Fridley-Columbia Heights Council #4381 of Knights of Columbus was recognized March 17, 1957. Stanley Danielwicz was elected first Grand Knight and John Yencho was appointed financial secretary. Dues were set at \$12. Knights Wives was formed in 1959. They help raise funds and promote friendly cooperation among the members.

The Council spent part of its energies looking for a home. It acquired a two-family house on 40th Ave. to use as a meeting place, but found being a landlord was not easy. The Council sold the house to Columbia Heights and the site was used for the new library. Another search led the Council to purchase a site at 61st and 4th St. in Fridley, but that land was used for St. William's Catholic Church. Finally, the Council acquired land at 68th and Central Ave., Fridley, and a permanent building was erected.

In over 25 years of existence, the Knights of Columbus Chapter 4381 has contributed many community services including religious events, youth athletic events, distributing food for the elderly and assisting after the 1965 Fridley tornado.

Jaycees

Columbia Heights Jaycees started in 1958 with John Knutson as first president. John Smetana became president in 1959. The Jaycee Women became active in Columbia Heights about the same time.

The Jaycees, supported by the Jaycee Women, have organized the New Years Eve party at John Murzyn Hall for many years. They have awarded the annual Distinguished Service Award to a young adult in the community since 1964. Jaycees aim to encourage personal development through community service and development, and help people do things, according to Bob Nickolaus, 1984-85 Jaycees president. In 1985, the Women of Today was organized by some members of the Jaycee Women.

Kiwanis

Columbia Heights Kiwanis was formed in 1959 with Russell Sparks as first president. Among early members were Paul Miner, Pat McAlpin, Malcolm Watson, Don Bailey and Bob Walther. The Fridley Kiwanis joined with the Columbia Heights Kiwanis to form one club, the Columbia Heights/Fridley Kiwanis. Key Clubs are sponsored by the Kiwanis to enlist the energies of high school students into the community projects of the club. The Golden Keys for older men was formed in 1984. These branches all work on such community efforts as building ramps for the handicapped, contributing to scholarships and youth organizations like Boy Scouts and YMCA, and working at SACA. Membership in 1984 was about 40.

Southern Anoka Community Assistance

Southern Anoka Community Assistance (SACA) was organized in 1974. It first operated out of the station wagon of Helen Treuenfels of Fridley. With a few friends she gathered donated food and distributed it to persons who needed it--a bootstrap effort of direct community service.

As needs grew, so did the SACA program. The director's salary is now paid through Anoka County and a federal fuel assistance program. Fridley makes substantial cash donations every year, and Columbia Heights donates use of the SACA house at 627 Jefferson St. (which once belonged to Pete Tema) and pays utilities bills for the house.

Aside from the executive director and some paid partime help, SACA is run and funded completely by volunteer work and donations, including that from groups such as Lions, Jaycees and Kiwanis. All food, clothing and incidentals given to needy families are donated by individuals, businesses, churches and service groups. A large Christmas Project provides food and toys for hundreds of families every year. Rosemary Byrnes has been SACA executive director since 1980.

SACA serves needy families on an emergency basis from Columbia Heights, Fridley, Spring Lake Park, Hilltop and southern Blaine.

Strictly Social

Columbia Heights people have always gotten together just for fun. In 1935, the Old Age Pension Club #3 was formed in the city. The group held dances, bunco and card parties at Oakwood School. One gathering of the club offered a \$1 prize for the best-dressed lady in calico to attend the party.

National groups such as the Slovenian Club met in the 1930's. The Columbia Heights Garden Club formed in 1938 and was noted by O.H. Prestemon to have encouraged "improvement in yards and increased interest in yards and gardens." The club held garden fairs in the Field House during the early 1950's.

Half a dozen men formed a Clown Club which livened up celebrations and parades in Columbia Heights and surrounding towns, in the 1940's and 1950's. A Square Dance Club was organized by Bernard Reuper and was active also during the 1940's and 1950's. The Old Timers Club was formed in 1980 for persons who have lived in Columbia Heights for 50 years or more. They meet once a year to reminisce.

Golden Age Club

The Golden Age Club, a social club for people over 60, was started at community Methodist Church in 1956 by Rev. Donald Woodward. It was organized for church members, then began including friends of members. Over the years it grew to include over-60 persons from other communities.

The group met in Community Methodist Church for about the first 25 years, then moved to the Field House to have enough room. By 1985, membership had grown to nearly 200. Dues are \$2 a year. Members meet for programs and lunch. "We don't have any heavy projects," according to Helen Ashford. "We've done our heavy projects by now."

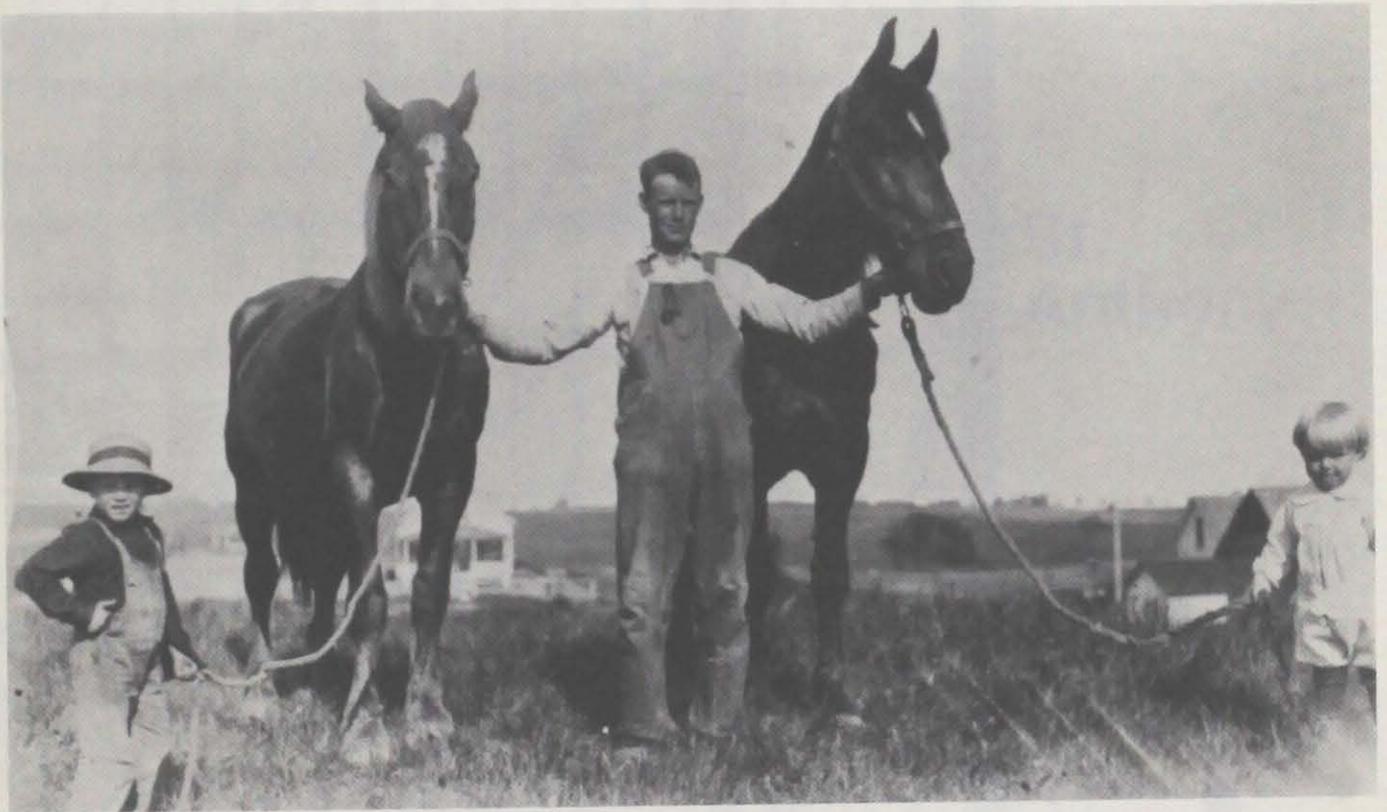
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FOOTNOTE

The chapter on Service Groups is an appropriate note on which to close this social history of Columbia Heights.

These groups personify the way this bootstrap town grew: people helping themselves and helping their neighbors. The strength and vitality of any town is its people.

Columbia Heights has been lucky.



Children, gardens, horses, hard work and faith in the future made up the lives of the early Columbia Heights residents. Derk Kremer, Sr., held his horses, Cub and Dan, with the help of his son, Al Kremer, right and friend, Ray McCullum, between Central and VanBuren at 45th Ave. in 1915.

Fridley

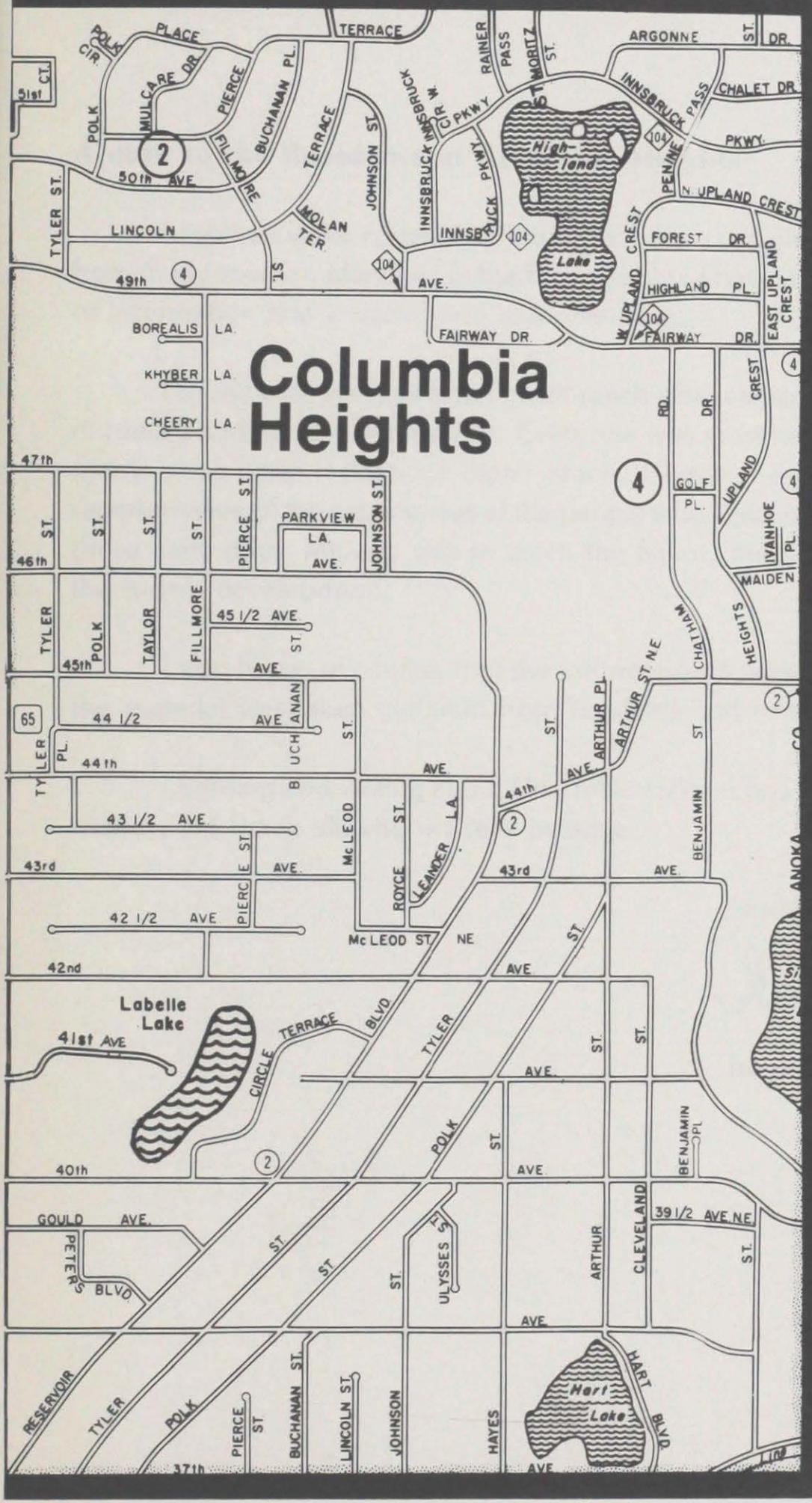
Locations of Historic Sites in Columbia Heights

1. Sullivan Farms
2. Mulcare Farms
3. Hilltop Stables
4. Minneapolis Waterworks
5. First Commercial Development
6. Forest Park
7. Columbia Hotel
8. Lincoln Funeral Car
9. Columbia School
10. Oakwood School



N.E. Minneapolis

Fridley



Columbia Heights

New Brighton

St. Anthony

Locations of
Historic Sites
in Columbia M...

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A note to the Residents of Columbia Heights:

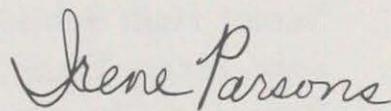
In gathering the material for this social history of Columbia Heights, I borrowed from many sources, identified in the Bibliography. I have tried to organize the wealth of information into a useful and readable form.

I spoke with every person I could reach who was suggested to me as a source of history and/or community lore. Everyone was most helpful. I am sure there are many more early residents I didn't reach. I hope the information I received is representative of the experiences of the people who lived in Columbia Heights during those early days. My aim was to catch the flavor, the rhythms, the 'real stuff' of the town's development.

I also hope, of course, that the information is reasonably accurate. Much of the material was taken verbatim from residents and cannot be verified.

Learning and writing about Columbia Heights has been an experience to be treasured. I thank all who made it possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Irene Parsons". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

Irene Parsons

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Anoka County Minnesota Collection of Historical Sketches and Family Histories, published by Anoka County Historical Society, 1982.

History of Anoka County by Albert M. Goodrich, Hennepin County Publishing Co., 1976.

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Columbia Heights, Minn., a Historical Sketch, by Philip Aasen, 1976.

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Minnesota Historical Society files.

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Sun Newspapers.

Minneapolis Journal.

75 Years of Service (First 50 Years) by Omar Schwartz, Col. Hts. Fire Dept.

Police Department History by Walter Cottrell.

Notes and booklets from family of Hardy E. Soderholm, including:

Program for Second Annual Poultry Show, 1922;

Senior High School Dedication, 1926;

John Henry Finds A Home;

Proposed Charter of Columbia Heights, 1921.

Universal Title Insurance Co., Anoka.

Jim Hayek, Minneapolis Water Dept. Director.

Al Kordiak, Anoka County Commissioner.

Fred Salisbury, Columbia Heights Public Works Director.

Stuart Anderson, Columbia Heights Police Chief.

Anoka District Court Records.

Many residents of Columbia Heights.