

**The North Loop of Saint Paul's Grand Round:
A History and Preliminary Evaluation of Historic Resources**



Prepared for the
City of Saint Paul
and
SEH
Vadnais Heights, Minnesota
by
Landscape Research LLC
Saint Paul, MN

July 2015"
FTCHV



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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

The Grand Round North Loop Plan developed by SEH and its subconsultants for the City of Saint Paul will add new cycling amenities along Pelham Boulevard, Raymond Avenue, Como Avenue and Wheelock and Johnson Parkways (Figure 1). The 12.3-mile route crosses many historic Saint Paul neighborhoods that have been shaped by the parkways since their earliest development. The project will include new bike lanes as well as upgrades to existing lanes. The project may involve changes to existing roadways or boulevard width and the addition of wayfinding and other features.

This historic resources report supports the Grand Round project planning and design team with an historic landscape background for the project area. It also reports on previous evaluations and findings of potential National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility of various parkway segments and properties. A general survey of character-defining historic features, including boulevard and landscape features, planting design, structures, and related features identified along each parkway segment was also conducted.

Previous inventory forms, evaluation studies, and NRHP nominations prepared for properties along the parkway corridor during the period 1976-2008 were reviewed and the results are reported on Table 1. The current study did not prepare any new property inventory forms but includes recommendations for properties that may require additional identification and evaluation to determine eligibility for the NRHP or local heritage preservation designation. Alterations to eligible properties, including historic landscapes, may require review for compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. Depending on location and source of funding, this review may be coordinated by the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, State Historic Preservation Office, and/or the Cultural Resources Unit of the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Potential archaeological resources were not included in this study.

Landscape Research principals Carole Zellie and Amy Lucas conducted the fieldwork and research and prepared this report.

1.1 Grand Round Description

A system of parkways linking the Mississippi River with Saint Paul's northern lakes was envisioned in 1872 when landscape architect H.W.S. Cleveland encouraged city leaders to acquire the river banks and lakes before urban development destroyed the landscape or made park and parkway acquisition too costly. Como Park was acquired in 1872, but a city-wide parkway system was not fully realized until the 1930s.

The north loop of the Saint Paul Grand Round is comprised of parkways and avenues that link the north end of Mounds Park with North Mississippi River Boulevard (Figure 1). The east end of the loop begins on Saint Paul's east side at the intersection of Burns Avenue and Johnson Parkway. This intersection is north of Mounds Park and the Municipal Forest. From here Johnson Parkway proceeds north to Wheelock Parkway, intersecting at the south end of Lake Phalen and Phalen Park and Boulevard. Wheelock Parkway next continues west, edging Phalen Golf Course, across a terminal moraine to its "horsehoe bend" at Virginia Street, and then southwest to its intersection with E. Como Boulevard. Most of the parkway to this point is lined with houses, most dating from ca. 1900 to 1960. The loop continues west, following Como Parkway to Nagasaki Road and Horton Avenue, and then along Como Avenue, through Como Park. Midway Parkway alternatively follows across Snelling Avenue to the east gate of the State Fairgrounds. Como Avenue, flanked by early twentieth-century houses and a small commercial district, proceeds

west across Snelling and along the south side of the fairgrounds en route to the intersection of Raymond Avenue.

Raymond Avenue was never constructed as a parkway. It follows south to University Avenue where it jogs on Myrtle Avenue to join Pelham Boulevard. Raymond intersects with the University-Raymond Commercial Heritage Preservation District (Figure 52).

Pelham Boulevard, once known as Como-River Drive, edges the Town and Country Golf Course and intersects with North Mississippi River Boulevard north of the Marshall-Lake Street Bridge. The parkway and avenue segments cross largely residential areas as well as the Minnesota State Fairgrounds and dispersed commercial and industrial land uses in the south corridor.

Along the length of the corridor, rail crossings include two along Wheelock Parkway, one along Johnson Parkway, and the broad Midway Transfer Yard is bridged by Raymond Avenue north of Energy Park Drive. Raymond Avenue is bridged by the Great Northern at Energy Park Drive and crosses the Green Line light rail line at University Avenue. Pelham Boulevard bridges the CM&StP Short Line and Interstate 94.

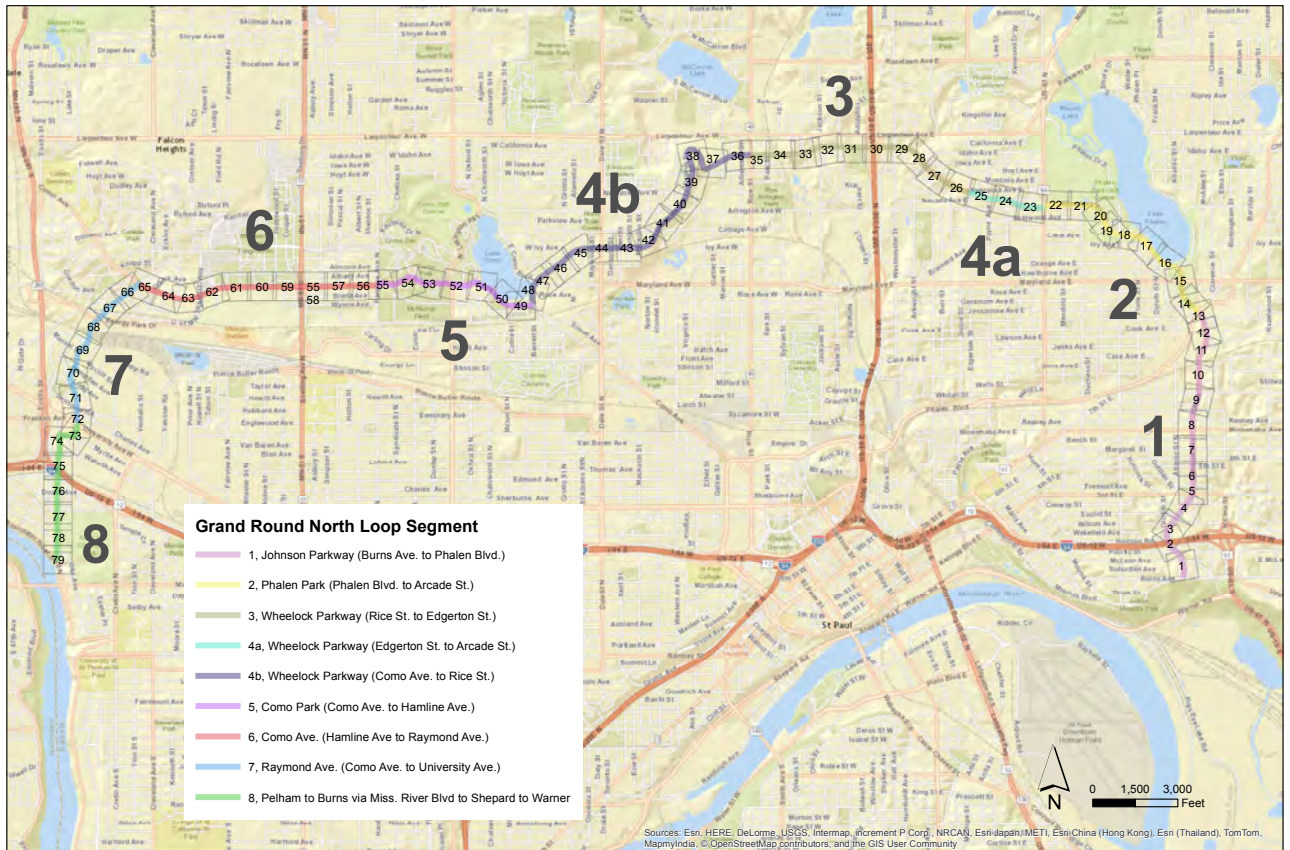


Figure 1. Grand Round North Loop Segment Study Areas, 2015. (SEH; J&J)

2.0 SOURCES AND METHODS

2.1 Background Research

The consultants conducted research at the Minnesota Historical Society, the Ramsey County Historical Society, and the Saint Paul Public Works and Parks and Recreation departments. The *Annual Reports of the Board of Park Commissioners of the City of St. Paul*, 1888-1965 (hereafter *Annual Report(s)*) are a chief source for documentation of the history of the Saint Paul park system. Historical maps also document the progress of the parkway system, most notably the 1884 and 1916 city atlases (G.M. Hopkins). Apart from those for Como Park, available historic photographs of parkway segments were somewhat limited; after 1914 the annual reports were typically not illustrated. The *St. Paul Globe*, *St. Paul Pioneer Press* and *Minneapolis Tribune* and other Minneapolis newspapers for the period 1887-1930 also provided information about parkway history.

H.W.S. Cleveland occupies an important place in the history of late nineteenth-century American landscape architecture. His projects span New England and the Mid-Atlantic and Midwest. He served as the Saint Paul park board's landscape architect during 1888-1889, but the published drawings documenting his parkway recommendations were prepared during the superintendency of Frederick Nussbaumer, 1891-1922. With the exception of those for Como Park, no plans apparently directly prepared by Cleveland have been identified. The *Twenty-first Annual Report of the Board of Park Commissioners of the City of St. Paul* for 1911 contains plans for Johnson, Wheelock and Midway parkways, and the Como and Raymond Avenue segments. A 1909 parkway system map developed by Nussbaumer was published in the *Annual Report* for 1910. After 1914, the park board's reports were combined with City of Saint Paul annual reports, and maps of parkway construction progress were shown on standard city maps. Saint Paul Public Works Department records document parkway construction and maintenance since initial surveys.

2.2 Fieldwork

Fieldwork was conducted across the project area by automobile and pedestrian survey. The survey recorded character-defining features of the parkway segments. This information is of use to the planning team in selecting alignments and other activities. The fieldwork also contributes to an understanding of potential local heritage preservation and NRHP districts. Properties already listed on the NRHP were also viewed.

**Table 1.
Saint Paul Grand Rounds North Loop: Determined Eligible or Listed NRHP Properties, 2015**

Property Name	Address	Architect	Date	Evaluation	Photo
Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Railway Bridge	Johnson Parkway at Case Ave. E.	American Bridge Company of New York	1906	Not Evaluated	
Gillette Hospital West Wing-Children's Hospital	Phalen Park-1003 East Ivy Avenue	Clarence H. Johnston Sr.	1924	Local designation, 1980	
Como Park Conservatory	Como Park	Toltz Engineering	1914-15	NRHP, 1974	
Como-Harriet Interurban Line Streetcar Waiting Station	1224 N. Lexington Ave.		1905	To be determined	
Como Park Elementary School	780 Wheelock Parkway	Charles A. Hausler	1916	Not Evaluated	
Bridges No. L-5853 and 92247	Lexington Ave in Como Park	William S. Hewett	1904	NRHP, 1989	
Salvation Army Women's Home and Hospital	1471 Como Avenue	Clarence H. Johnston Sr.	1912-13	NRHP 1983, Local, 1983	
University-Raymond Commercial Heritage Preservation District	University Ave. from Hampden Ave. to vicinity of Hwy 280; Raymond Avenue to Charles	Multiple	1910-1955	Local designation and certified NRHP, 2005	

3.0 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: The Development of the North Loop of the Saint Paul Parkway System, 1872-1965

3.1 Introduction

Building on the legacy of a few pioneer urban squares, Saint Paul created its system of parks and parkways during a roughly sixty-year period beginning in 1872. Inspired by the Minneapolis Grand Rounds so named in 1891 by William W. Folwell—but apparently not named the Saint Paul Grand *Round* until ca. 2000—the city incrementally built its lake, creek, and riverside parks and parkways during periods of economic growth and decline. This section discusses the development of Saint Paul parkways prior to 1965, which is the cut-off for eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) designation.

Landscape architect Horace William Shaler Cleveland established the early vision of a system of parks and parkways linking the river and lake Como and Phalen. His influence in Saint Paul began in 1872 and extended sporadically until about 1890, overlapping with the creation of the Saint Paul Board of Park Commissioners in 1887 and the superintendencies of John D. Estabrook and Frederick Nussbaumer. Saint Paul's park-making efforts reflected those in many other American cities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and by the turn of the twentieth century intersected with efforts to create a modern city according to principles of the City Beautiful Movement. Completion of the north loop segments of the Grand Round was still underway in the 1930s. The Raymond Avenue segment was never constructed as a boulevard due to pre-existing residential and commercial development.

3.2 St. Paul Park Foundations, 1849-1872

The present system . . . has been carefully thought out and elaborated,
from a plan presented by nature itself.

Lloyd Peabody "History of the Parks and Public
Grounds of St. Paul" (1915), 523

Saint Paul was incorporated as a town in 1849, the same year that the Minnesota Territory was created by the U.S. Congress. When the plat of St. Paul Proper was recorded in 1847 it provided little acknowledgement of the townsite's picturesque perch on a steep sandstone and limestone bluff above the Mississippi River. Its grid-plan blocks, some surveyed across small hills of glacial drift, were aligned to the river, while most subsequent plats followed the cardinal points of the compass. George Nichol's map of 1851 shows the city's downtown bluff lines as well as the modest provision for public space (Figure 2). Two blocks were intended for occupancy by the courthouse and the Minnesota State Capitol, and Market Square (Rice Park), Smith Park, and a residential quarter that became Irvine Park were also set aside. Various acquired by donations, the squares were characterized as a "haphazard lot of open spaces, which had come to the possession of the city in all sorts of ways" (Peabody 1915:610). Like the upriver settlements of Minneapolis and St. Anthony, no single plat envisioned impressive broad avenues lined with civic spaces; such proposals would wait decades.

The pioneer Saint Paul settlement was focused on the points of trade at the steamboat landings at the Upper (Chestnut Street) and Lower (Jackson Street) landings. Here, overland routes, including those from the Red River valley, converged and created demand for storage of bulk goods and supplies that investors in the Lowertown area would soon meet. To the west of the Lower Landing, Third Street rose along the bluff as a principal commercial avenue. Vital Guerin

donated Court House Square between 4th and 5th Streets and Wabasha and Cedar streets to Ramsey County in 1850 (Peabody 1915:610). The county deeded half of the block to



Figure 2. Map of the City of St. Paul, Capitol of Minnesota. (G.C. Nichols, 1851)

the City of Saint Paul in 1892. Its small park was designed to front Wabasha Avenue. Following the construction of the new Ramsey County Courthouse and Saint Paul City Hall at Fifth and Wabasha, the building was demolished and was replaced by a parking garage. Rice Park, a small trapezoid between 4th, 5th, Washington and St. Peter streets was a focus for early residences as well civic buildings including the old St. Paul City Hall at 5th and Washington streets. Senator Henry M. Rice and John R. Irvine donated the 1.6-acre site to the city in 1849. Once known as City Park (Peabody 1915:611), it is mapped as Market Square in 1851 (Figure 2). In 1872 the Saint Paul Common Council purchased a fountain that was placed at the center of the square (Common Council 1872), but the park was apparently not subject to any ornamental landscape design prior to the organization of the Board of Park Commissioners in 1887. Later framed by the Federal Courts Building (1901), the St. Paul Hotel (1910), Minnesota Club (1915) and the Saint Paul Central Library (1917), by World War I the landscape around the park was entirely commercial and institutional. Under parks superintendent Frederick Nussbaumer, the park was filled and regraded, and acquired a more ornamental appearance by the time of its overhaul in 1898 (*Annual Report of the Board of Park Commissioners* [hereafter *Annual Report*], 1899:29-30). A mid-1960s redesign included a concrete fountain. The Ordway Theater (1985) now edges the park along its Washington Street frontage.

Irvine Park was designated as a public square in Rice and Irvine's Addition of 1849. The 3.58-acre parcel was intended as a neighborhood park and is now part of the Irvine Park Historic District, listed on the NRHP. Smith Park, located between 5th, 6th, Sibley and Wacouta streets, was part of Whitney and Smiths Addition (1849). Intended as a public square, the parcel was originally a 60-foot hill of glacial drift, and was graded to provide the park and surrounding building sites. It is part of the Lowertown Historic District (NRHP and locally designated).

Central Park was acquired in 1884 as a State Capitol approach. Part of the 2.35-acre property was donated by citizens, and the city acquired the rest. It was cited as “one of the earliest instances of the citizens of St. Paul making an effort to improve the appearance of the city by increasing its open spaces” (Peabody 1915:613). Lafayette Square was acquired by the city in 1884-86 (Peabody 1915:613). The 1.01-acre parcel was framed by Grove, Locust, Ninth, and Willius Streets. Although Henry S. Sibley and other prominent residents built expensive homes here, by 1900 the area was encroached by railroad and warehouse development.

3.3 Saint Paul City Council Committee on Parks, 1872

In 1872, the Saint Paul City Council created a committee on parks, headed by W. A. Van Slyke. The committee “had charge of the squares of the city, and renovated and improved them from time to time as the circumstances demanded and permitted” (Castle 1912:371).

In February 1872 the City of Saint Paul began an effort to acquire Como Lake along the Como Road (Castle 1912:371). Some of the property, largely upland prairie interrupted by oak savannah as well as marshland, was under cultivation. The park would become a central feature of the city’s northern parkway development, and was also a primary focus for public recreation through much of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Schmidt 2002:44-45). The Panic of 1873 interrupted efforts to improve the park, and the delay would extend more than 15 years until after the creation of the Saint Paul Board of Park Commissioners.

3.4 The North Loop Parkway System and the Early History of Saint Paul Parks



Figure 3. *Map of Ramsey County Minn., 1874.*
(A.T. Andreas)

When H.W.S. Cleveland arrived in Saint Paul in February 1872 to deliver an address to the Chamber of Commerce, and visited again on June 24, 1872 to address the Common Council, he would have observed two decades’ worth of development that supported a population of about 20,000 (Figure 4). As shown on the A. T. Andreas *Map of Ramsey County* (1874), development

was gathered around the downtown river levee and along the Trout Brook Valley (Figure 3). The river and valley, cutting through oak-studded upland prairie broken with small creeks, provided routes for several railroad lines that were gradually edging out the steamboat hub at the foot of Jackson and Chestnut streets. Central downtown Saint Paul was a mix of business blocks, dwellings, civic buildings, and churches, as well as the warehouses and factories that would comprise most of Lowertown during the late nineteenth century. The city's few park squares were barely improved. Later, in spring 1872, Cleveland toured the river gorge upriver to the Falls of St. Anthony in Minneapolis, and saw the lakes and creeks of both cities. These natural features, and especially the river gorge opposite Minnehaha Falls, provided the armature for his writings, lectures and park plans during the next twenty years.



Figure 4. Looking downriver from downtown St. Paul, ca. 1865.



W. Third Street, ca. 1872.

3.5 National Precedents

Saint Paul and Minneapolis leaders were well aware of the role of landscape architecture and park making in the progress of other American cities in the post-Civil War period. In various incarnations, improved public health and belief in the moral benefit of exposure to nature were at the foundation of the effort. The belief that nature uplifted public morality, especially for the newly arrived immigrant and working poor, fueled early park development in densely populated cities; the success of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux with New York's Central Park and the postwar development of their designs for Prospect Park and the Brooklyn system headlined efforts nationally. Olmsted was also retained for work with Vaux in Chicago for the South Park System (1870) and in Boston to design the Back Bay Fens Park and Parkway (1873), the first extension of what would become the Emerald Necklace. His work in Buffalo (1879) would be among the first extensive park and boulevard systems completed in the United States.

3.6 Horace William Shaler Cleveland (1814-1900)

H.W.S. Cleveland was raised in the circle of Ralph Waldo Emerson and the New England Transcendentalists. The Lancaster, Massachusetts native had a deep background in farming, horticulture and civil engineering, and was an expert hunter and Civil War rifleman (Neckar 1995; Nadencik 2001). His father, Richard J. Cleveland (1773-1860) was an internationally known ship captain and maritime expert.

Cleveland located in Chicago in 1869 and established one of the first landscape architectural practices in the Midwest. William Merchant French (1843-1914), became Cleveland's partner in the firm of Cleveland and French in 1871. Cleveland and French were retained to implement

Olmsted's designs for the South Park district including Drexel Boulevard and what would become Washington Park. Through this work he met William Morse Berry, whom he would later bring to Minneapolis as park superintendent. One of the planting techniques that Cleveland and Berry used in the cash-strapped, post-fire city was to salvage as many existing trees as possible. This meant minimal topographic modification and a resulting rough-and-ready picturesque aesthetic, one not common in parks in more developed cities of the East. Exotic plants described by Olmsted in the original documents to achieve subtropical effects were eschewed. Instead, ordinary, often native, plants from local nurseries were used. In Minneapolis this approach would also guide the approach to planting the early small parks (Neckar 1995).

Cleveland's previous accomplishments included the design of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord, Massachusetts (1855). In 1857, with his former partner Robert Morris Copeland (1830-1874), he unsuccessfully competed for the design of New York's Central Park (Neckar 1995). In the 1860s he worked with Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903) and Calvert Vaux (1824-1895) on the design and construction of Brooklyn's Prospect Park and on its connecting parkways and small parks. Other commissions, in Massachusetts, New York and New Jersey included cemeteries and estates. In the shadow of the Olmsted and Vaux firm's work in Chicago, in 1871 Cleveland wrote his own advertising pamphlet, *A Few Hints on Landscape Gardening as Applied to the Wants of the West.* As the title suggests, he was already prospecting for work in the new railroad, lumber and grain cities in the Midwest and the Great Plains (Neckar 1995). Another promotional piece, the *Public Grounds of Chicago: How to Give them Character and Expression* (1869) offered direction on the planting of boulevards as arboreta, recommending that many species be artistically combined (Cleveland 1869:7-18).

3.6.1 Cleveland and Saint Paul: 1872-1894

In February 1872 William Watts Folwell (1833-1929) invited Cleveland to speak at the "People's Course of Lectures" held at the Pence Opera House (Tishler 1985:282). Folwell, President of the University of Minnesota during 1869-1884, was Cleveland's first and constant correspondent over the next decades. Cleveland's address, "The Application of Landscape Architecture to the Wants of the West," was repeated the next night in Saint Paul for the Chamber of Commerce. According to newspaper accounts, he urged the immediate acquisition of valuable parklands, especially the bluffs along the Mississippi River gorge (*Minneapolis Daily Tribune*, February 11, 1872:1; *St. Paul Pioneer*, February 9, 13, 16, 17, 1872).

Cleveland was next invited by the Common Council to make a "general outline report, upon the proper location of Parks, Wide Avenues, Public Squares, and other improvements, on a scale suitable to the wants of a crowded city." "A Park System for the City of St. Paul," delivered on June 24, 1872, cited the success of older cities such as New York and Chicago in creating park systems (Cleveland 1872:14). He urged Saint Paul to preserve what "nature had furnished without cost." He noted:

The steep and densely wooded bluffs comprise one of the most important objects in the general outlook. They can possess but little intrinsic value, but if suffered to be marred by quarries, and their picturesque features destroyed, as they are liable to be if left in private hands, they will present a most unsightly aspect, in conspicuous view from all parts of the city . . . a park, or least a fine driveway along the bluff, should by all means be secured, and the bluffs themselves preserved from desecration.

H.W.S. Cleveland, *A Park System for the City of St. Paul*, June 24, 1872



**Figure 5. The scenery that inspired Cleveland:
Bridal Veil Falls at Franklin Avenue, Minneapolis, ca. 1860; Shadow Falls at the foot of
Summit Avenue, St. Paul, ca. 1890.**

The Mississippi River gorge between Minneapolis and Saint Paul provided the framework for his park-making ideas for both cities (Figure 5). He urged swift action to claim the riverbanks, and lamented the loss of bluff views from Summit Avenue because it had not been laid out along the bluff's edge. He singled out Carpenter Park (later Summit Overlook) at Ramsey Street as a remaining opportunity. He urged the preservation of hills and elevated points for public grounds, and preserving "breathing places" for the "toiling multitudes who have neither the time nor the means to visit the extensive pleasure grounds" (Cleveland 1872:7). He envisioned the opening of "spacious avenues radiating in such directions as will be most frequented by future travel." The City of Chicago was then engaged in laying out a boulevard system, which he observed "served in part to relieve the monotony of the interminable system of rectangles."

In *A Park System*, Cleveland defined the boulevard as

simply a grand avenue, of sufficient width to admit of two or three roads for different purposes; as, one for the heavy traffic of teams and business wagons, one for pleasure and driving, and one for equestrians, and also paths of sufficient width to accommodate throngs of pedestrians. The roadways are separated from each other by rows of trees with intervening grass plots, and sometimes by a broad central mall adorned with fountains, and the paths for pedestrians at the sides or between the roads, are like garden paths, the sides being ornamented with trees, grass, shrubbery and flowers (Cleveland 1872:11).

Such a boulevard provided fresh air, fire protection, and would be within easy access of "all classes of citizens." His scheme was envisioned to include creation of a Riverside Park and several linkages to Minneapolis, including the "Union Parkway" via Summit Avenue and 34th Avenue S. across the river; he observed, "St Paul and Minneapolis eventually, and at no distant day, will become virtually one city" (Cleveland 1872:13; 1885:27). He repeated this call to unite the cities with connecting parkways in another lecture thirteen years later (Cleveland 1885:28).

3.6.1.1 Como and Phalen Lakes and St. Anthony Park

In addition to the river, Saint Paul’s northern lakes were cited for their potential use as a water supply and their “aesthetic advantages” (Cleveland 1872:14). He recommended acquisition of Como and Phalen lakes, urging that the city connect them “with the city and with each other, by avenues befitting the wants of the time” (Cleveland 1872:15). In planning for future population growth, he urged not spending money on “artificial decorations beyond the wants of the present generation . . . you have yet too much work to do” (Cleveland 1872:16). He meant that money should be spent on land acquisition and basic improvements, and parks should not be embellished with unnecessarily ornamental structures or buildings.

Cleveland secured important work in both cities as a result of this introduction to Minneapolis and Saint Paul civic leaders, including commissions for grounds at the University of Minnesota, Oakland Cemetery, and designs for Summit Avenue and St. Anthony Park (Tishler 1985:283). His unrealized 1873 plan for St. Anthony Park, prepared with his Chicago partner William M. R. French for real estate developers as a residential district of small estates, connected to the city by passenger rail, and linked to both cities by Como Avenue, shown as a broad avenue from Lake Como to Minneapolis (Cleveland and French 1873; Figure 6).



Figure 6. Vignette showing interurban boulevard, St. Anthony Park Plan, 1873.



Inset showing Minneapolis and St. Paul parkway connections, St. Anthony Park Plan, 1873.

At the time of these early visits to Saint Paul, Cleveland was preparing *Landscape Architecture As Applied to the Wants of the West* (1873), his manifesto on the role he proposed for landscape architecture in shaping the country’s fast-growing new cities. Central to this approach would be the park and parkway system described in his lectures and the book. Cleveland drew on his reading of William Robinson, who described the Paris park system in *Parks, Promenades and of Paris* (1869), and on his own experience building the Brooklyn system. In both of these precedents, park systems were understood to have connective boulevards and larger parks, but also neighborhood parks. (It should be noted that despite his references to Parisian parks, there is no evidence that Cleveland ever traveled to Europe, nor is there evidence that, according to one account, he met the future park superintendent Frederick Nussbaumer in Paris.)

In May 1873 Cleveland & French Landscape Architects, based in Chicago, announced their office in Saint Paul’s Forepaugh Block, noting that Cleveland was “visiting Minnesota”

(*Minneapolis Tribune* May 15, 1873). Apart from projects such as St. Anthony Park and Oakland Cemetery, however, Cleveland's major municipal work would await the creation of the Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners in 1883. In 1883 he was hired by Minneapolis to produce *Suggestions for a System of Parks and Parkways for the City of Minneapolis*, which was published in the board's first annual report. His subsequent work for the board created the foundation for the city's system of parks and parkways.

3.6.1.2 “Preserve above all the wild and picturesque character of the river banks”

On June 19, 1885, Cleveland addressed the Saint Paul Common Council and Chamber of Commerce on “Park Ways and Ornamental Parks: the Best System for St. Paul.” This plan, printed and bound with his 1872 address as *Public Parks, Radial Avenues and Boulevards: Outline Plan for a Park System for the City of St. Paul*, was the framework for his remaining work with the city. Once again, he called for preservation of the city's natural gifts. He noted, “your opportunity today is to avail yourselves of the advantages which nature has provided to your hand, for the inauguration of such as system of improvements as shall be in keeping with the demands of the future populations.” As always, the river was his organizing principle for Saint Paul:

Preserve above all the wild and picturesque character of the river banks, and do not suffer them to be stripped of their foliage or scarred and seamed by excavations. The day is not distant when the thickly wooded banks, the deep and dark ravines, the rugged and precipitous rock, and the picturesque cascades which for the shore of the majestic river, will be regarded as your choicest possessions for the unique character they will confer upon the city. No money could purchase what nature has here provided, and its value when contrasted to the architectural display of the great metropolis, will be proportionate to the degree of wild grandeur and beauty they display, and which no art could imitate.

He reiterated his approval of broad ornamental avenues, “known as boulevards or park ways,” relieved at intervals by small parks. A boulevard was not a dreary roadway, 200 feet wide, he noted, “but an extended park, immediately accessible from the adjacent streets, enlivened by all the features of busy life which render the adjacent streets, enlivened by all the features of busy life which render the streets themselves attractive. Architectural features needed the graceful drapery of nature” (Cleveland 1885:25). He acknowledged that such boulevards would receive increasing amounts of traffic.

Cleveland did not revisit planning for Como or Phalen parks in the 1885 plan. Preserving the city's forest, and especially its bluffs, was his focus. He noted opportunities to reserve some areas that he had suggested in 1872 “are now beyond possibility of such development” (Cleveland 1885:29). He reiterated his preference for the landscape gardener's role to serve as the high priest of Nature: “to interpret her language and develop her suggestions . . . without ‘artificial decorations’.”

3.6.1.3 Cleveland and the Saint Paul Board of Park Commissioners

With the prospect of continuing work in Minneapolis and Saint Paul, Cleveland moved to Minneapolis with his wife and two grandchildren in 1886. In the same year, Cleveland contributed “The Selection of Sites for Parks and Parkways” to the *Annual Report of the Minnesota State Horticultural Society* (Minnesota State Horticultural Society [hereafter MSHS] 1886). He noted that the construction of fine roads and ornamental avenues to outlying parks, even when grading and draining is needed, would prove to confer great value upon the adjacent area, so that city would be “more than paid for the outlay by the addition” (MSHS 1886:345). He

encouraged acquisition of land that might be avoided by the “most desirable class of population” because they might be occupied for objectionable purposes and expend money to redeeming them and rendering them attractive (MSHS 1886:345-346). He was encouraged by the Minnesota State Legislature’s efforts to acquire Minnehaha Park at Minnehaha Falls in Minneapolis as a state park, noting that although it was no Niagara Falls, it “has been invested with such poetic associations as must forever hallow its precincts with a charm which all the world will recognize” (MSHS 1886:348).

The Saint Paul Board of Park Commissioners was organized in February 1887 (*First Annual Report* 1888:821-22). At this time, Saint Paul’s city limits extended at the north to Larpenteur Avenue (Murphy and Granger 1983:415; Figure 7). In addition to improvements to Como Park (acquired in 1873), the board’s initial focus was acquisition of the West St. Paul Park across the river; Carpenter (Summit Overlook) Park, at Summit Avenue and Ramsey Street; Indian Mounds Park on Dayton’s Bluff; the riverside Hiawatha Park, near Cleveland Avenue, and a survey of the east bank of the river from the CM&StP bridge to the Fort Snelling bridge (*First Annual Report* 1888:822-23). As shown on Rice’s Map of St. Paul (1887), real estate additions and subdivisions reached to the edges of the city limits as far as Lake Phalen (Figure 7). Much of the land, including the platted additions, would remain undeveloped for decades, however.

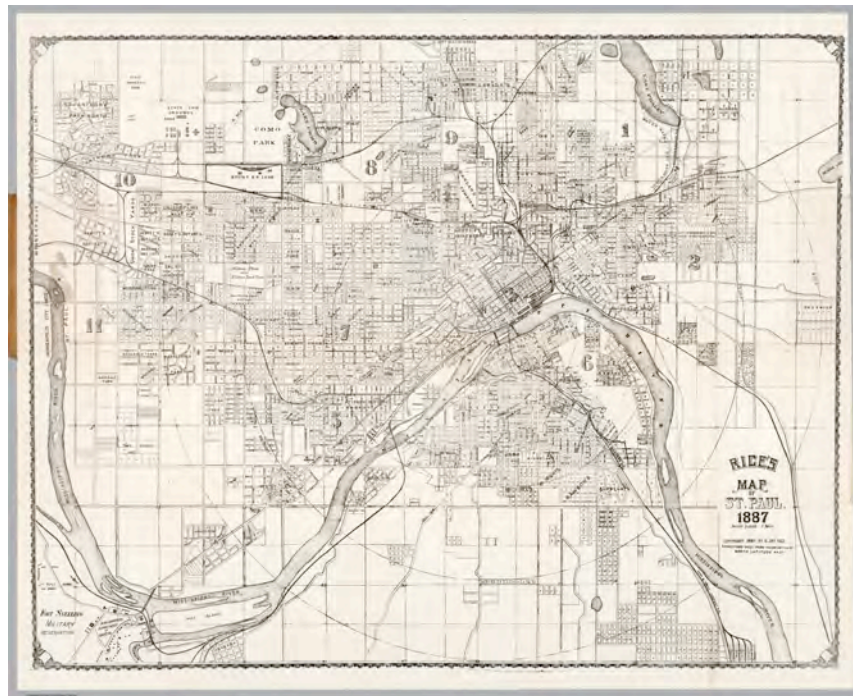


Figure 7. Rice’s Map of St. Paul, 1887, showing extent of platting.

3.6.1.4 Cleveland Finally Hired: 1888

In June 1887 the new St. Paul Board of Park Commissioners voted to hire Cleveland for work on the city’s parks, but this appointment does not appear to have become effective until 1888 (*Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, June 5, 1887:3). According to the *First Annual Report*, initial work on Como Park, including clearing and grubbing by Saint Paul Workhouse inmates, began in August 1887 (*First Annual Report* 1887-88:823). In 1888, the board, with William Van Slyke as president, appointed John D. Estabrook as Superintendent of Parks and hired Cleveland for \$1500 per year to “prepare designs and plans for the improvement of St. Paul parks and parkways” . . .

and to “supervise the execution of all work on parks and parkways” (*Second Annual Report* 1888-89:673). Only \$25,000 was provided for improvements to Como Park, out of \$225,000 appropriated for the city’s park fund (*Fourth Annual Report* 1895:5; Figure 8). Cleveland’s Como Park plans as printed in 1889 and 1890 showed curvilinear paths and roadways that edged the rolling hills west of the lake (Cleveland 1889, 1890; Figure 9). The plan did not rely on new ornamental plantings, but rather the existing stands of native oak and new trees, shrubs and vines. A parkway edged the lakeshore and connected to Como Avenue.

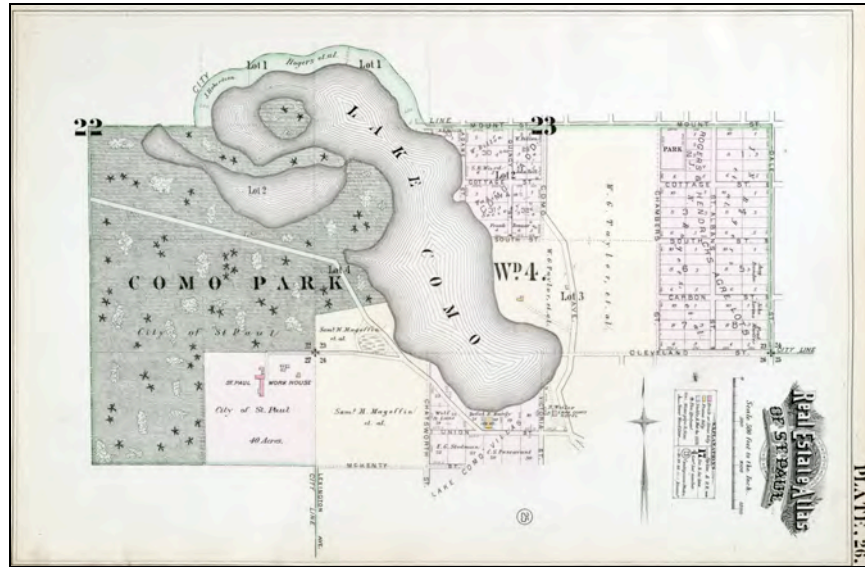


Figure 8. Pre-Cleveland: Como Park and unimproved Como Road in 1884.
(Hopkins Real Estate Atlas of St. Paul, 1884)

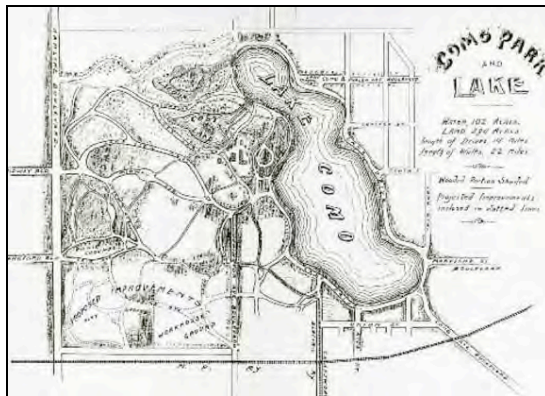


Figure 9. Como Park (ca. 1890; redrawn 1895)



Como Park drive and walkway, 1905.

In April 1888, Cleveland presented *The Aesthetic Development of the United Cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis* to the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts. This lecture was focused on acquisition of Minnehaha Falls as a state park, but emphasized the joint needs of two cities (Cleveland 1888). In October 1888, he delivered an address to the park board on the improvement of vacant squares in the city (*Appendix to Second Annual Report* 1889:690-92). He reprised his earlier messages about the necessity of preserving the Mississippi River bluffs in a January 12, 1889 address to the “Joint Committee of Minneapolis and St. Paul on Mississippi River Park” (*Appendix to Second Annual Report* 1888-89:693-98).

In 1889 the Minnesota State Legislature passed an act authorizing the City of Saint Paul to issue bonds for the acquisition, improvement and maintenance of public parks. Other acts authorized bonds for the improvement of Lake Como, and acquisition of the Indian Mounds on Dayton's Bluff for a public park (Castle 1912:372-3).

Cleveland's concurrent Minneapolis work was accomplished with close collaboration with park board presidents William W. Folwell and Charles M. Loring, who shared his appreciation for naturalistic landscapes. During the 1906-1935 tenure of Minneapolis park superintendent Theodore Wirth, Cleveland's approach was modified to accommodate active recreation, automobiles, and increased leisure time, and a different park-making aesthetic that often emphasized the beautiful over the picturesque. In Saint Paul, Frederick Nussbaumer inherited the Cleveland legacy and similarly responded to these mandates.

In 1890 Cleveland and Superintendent Estabrook supervised improvement of Summit Avenue between Lexington and the Mississippi River, and extensive work on Como Park was also completed (*Fourth Annual Report* 1891:231). By 1891, Cleveland's role in Saint Paul had apparently ended. There may have been some discord; board member William Van Slyke stated in March 1890 that he did not "like the idea of employing a Minneapolis man to lay out St. Paul parks," and questioned Cleveland's \$125 monthly fee. According to the *Minneapolis Tribune*, Van Slyke thought Saint Paul parks should differ from Minneapolis and "should not be designed by the same hand" (*Minneapolis Tribune* March 29, 1890:8).

In his report for the year 1890-91, Estabrook specially recognized Nussbaumer, then the park gardener, for his efforts, but he did not make any note of Como Park's visionary landscape architect (*Fourth Annual Report* 1891:232, 236, 239). Although he continued to work in Minneapolis on plans for Powderhorn Park (with the assistance of his son, Ralph D. Cleveland, 1851-1918), Cleveland moved back to Chicago in about 1894 (Tishler 1985:290).



Figure 10. Como Park entrance, 1905.

Como Park viaduct and planted beds, 1907.

3.7 The Superintendency of Frederick Nussbaumer: 1891-1922

George Frederick Nussbaumer (1850-1935) inherited Cleveland's general ideas for a park system that preserved the city's natural features, but at Como Park he particularly demonstrated his own interest in floral and decorative effects. A native of Baden, Germany, Nussbaumer was the son of a nurseryman. He studied mechanical and civil engineering as well as botany and landscape architecture at the University of Freiburg (Castle 1912:710). Well traveled in Europe, he worked in Paris and at Kew Gardens in London. Nussbaumer arrived in the United States in 1876 and in St. Paul in 1878. He worked as a florist prior to first being hired as a Como Park gardener in 1887. He filled Estabrook's term in 1891 and served as Superintendent in 1891 (Schmidt

2002:48). Like Theodore Wirth, a native of Switzerland who was hired as Minneapolis park superintendent in 1906, Nussbaumer was influenced by European training while also participating in the development of modern municipal park management; both, for example, had leadership roles in the American Association of Park Superintendents. The promoter and guardian of the early St. Paul parks was Joseph A. Wheelock (1831-1906). A native of Nova Scotia and a St. Paul pioneer, he co-founded the *St. Paul Daily Press* in 1861. He was President of the Saint Paul Board of Park Commissioners from 1893 until his death.

Development of Como Park was the primary early accomplishment of its new commission, and the infusion of \$25,000 in bonds in 1891 allowed Nussbaumer to complete Como Lake Drive (Schmidt 2002:48). Generally following Cleveland's 1890 plan, the superintendent also developed elaborate floral displays through the park, and added bridges and exotic plants including summertime palms, topiaries, and the popular "gates ajar." The lily pond and frog pond surrounded by a grotto were also popular features. Such features were anathema to Cleveland, who had urged restraint with such artificial effects. The completion of the Conservatory in 1915 would be a crowning achievement for Nussbaumer and the commission (Schmidt 2002:48).



Figure 11. Como Conservatory, 1915



Partial Lake Como Parkway aerial, 1921

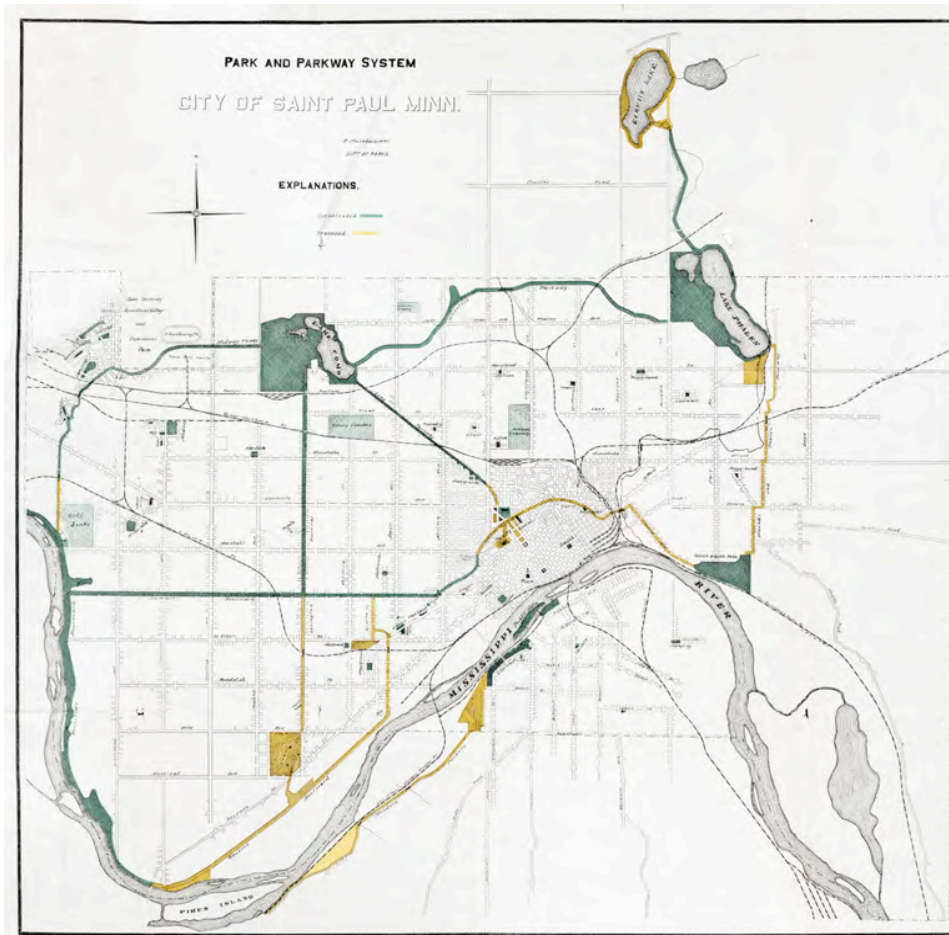
3.7.1 Como Park: A Parkway Hub

As recommended by Cleveland and developed by Nussbaumer, Como Park was the hub of a boulevard system connecting to Phalen Park and Indian Mounds Park to the east and south, and to the river via Midway Parkway or Como and Raymond Avenues. A regional scheme, extending north to White Bear and Bald Eagle Lakes, was also contemplated (*Fifth Annual Report* 1905:18).

During the 1890s, the creation of "broad driveways" or boulevards connecting Indian Mounds, Phalen, and Como Parks—as well as the State Fairgrounds and University of Minnesota Experimental Farm—were debated, with another fork extending south to the Mississippi River Boulevard. Earl Street, from Indian Mounds to Phalen Park, was examined as a possible connector, but a new course along Phalen Creek was regarded as more desirable (*Fifth Annual Report* 1896:472). Widening of Como and Phalen Avenues to boulevard scale was also considered, but Nussbaumer's proposal for a completely new boulevard, without conflict from railroad tracks and steep grades, prevailed. Plans to realize Cleveland's river bluff park and parkway schemes were well formed by 1895 (*Fifth Annual Report* 1896:473). Nussbaumer's tenure spanned the introduction of active recreation mandates in American urban parks, and St. Paul established a playground committee in 1904. By 1909, six playgrounds were installed in the city, and baseball fields and tennis courts were installed at Como.

Land acquisition to link the parks and parkways proceeded slowly. Condemnation for Indian Mounds Park, for example, began in 1888 and the park board began to make improvements to the initial 17 acres in 1896 following plans by Nussbaumer (*Fifth Annual Report* 1896:467). The park

benefitted from 1901 state legislation allowing park boards to contract for land purchases and the St. Paul board purchased more than 35 acres of lots and unplatted land adjacent to Mounds Park. Additional acquisitions brought the total to more than 80 acres (*Eleventh Annual Report 1902:7*).



**Figure 12. Park and Parkway System, City of St. Paul, Minn.
Frederick Nussbaumer, 1909.**

3.7.2 Early Branding: Commonwealth Parkway and the Outer Circle

Before there was the “Grand Round,” there was Commonwealth Parkway and the Outer Circle. By 1903, the continuing parkway effort, which could also link four of the city’s major institutions (the Capitol, University of Minnesota, State Fairgrounds and Experimental Farm) with the river was proposed as the Commonwealth Parkway (*Fifteenth Annual Report 1903:37*). Planning was slow and piecemeal and the *Annual Report* noted in 1905, “while St. Paul takes an just pride in its park system, it is yet lamentably deficient in parkways” (*Seventeenth Annual Report 1905:15*). The city’s 1,251 acres of parkland then included only 207 acres devoted to parkways.

Commonwealth Parkway was a part of what was later called the north loop of the “Outer Circle.” As Lloyd Peabody explained it in 1915, “the Mississippi river sweeps about the city in a semi - circle, from the city limits of Minneapolis on the west to the turn of the river at Indian Mounds Park. Lake Phalen and Como lie in the northerly half of the great circle of which the river makes the southerly portion” (Peabody 1915:623) He noted that “this is what is known to those

concerned in the development of the parks as the Outer Circle; far too much of it has been marred by the hand of man. Much of it remains to be acquired” (Peabody 1915:623).

3.7.3 St. Paul and the Bicycle

By the mid-1890s, bicycling enjoyed great popularity across the United States. Minneapolis and Saint Paul created a variety of clubs, and members lobbied municipalities for path construction. In Saint Paul, much of this effort was initially directed at routes reaching outside the city, with little mention of cooperation with the still organizing Saint Paul Park Commission. The City of Saint Paul created a bicycle ordinance in 1892, primarily intended to control speed and safety. The Twin Cities Cycle Association and St. Paul Cycle Path Association campaigned for bike paths, which were primarily sidepaths to existing roadways. Main arteries were the focus: Marshall Avenue was the first interurban route established Ramsey County created a Sidepath Commission in 1901. In the same year there were about 115 miles of paths within the county dedicated to cyclists (*St. Paul Globe*, June 8, 1902:12). The St. Paul park commissioners addressed the needs of the growing sport in 1896:

The extraordinary growth and rapid increase of bicycle riding makes necessary a revision of the ordinary system of road-making. These light, swift vehicles, driven by man power, are entitled to their right of way equally with the horse-driven carriage. Good, smooth, hard, paths for the former have become as indispensable as good roads for the latter, and should be carefully provided for in all boulevards and parkways. It furnishes a new reason for narrowing the roadways in such parkways and widening the lawn so as to admit of the establishment of bicycle paths through them. The bicycle path will form a feature of all boulevards of parkways which shall come under the jurisdiction of the board. It is now proposed to establish bicycle paths through the central lawn and roadways of Summit Avenue boulevard. In time these will be extended through the side lawns of Lexington avenue to Como park, when widened and improved as proposed, and through an extension of Summit avenue boulevard along the river bank to Minneapolis, which will probably be acquired and improved at an early period (*Fifth Annual Report* 1896:477).

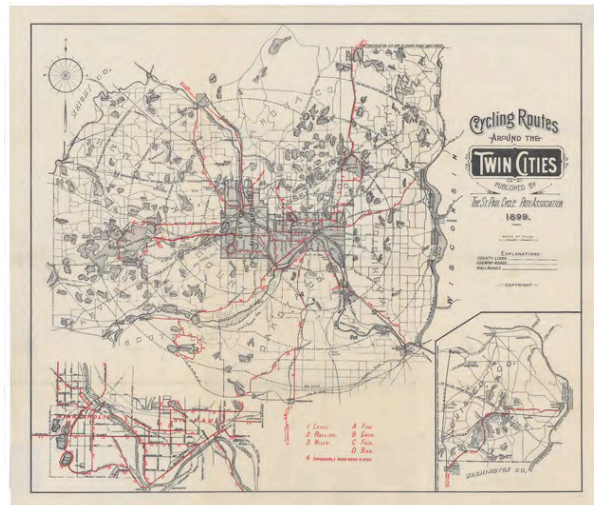


Figure 13. Cycling Routes Around the Twin Cities, 1899.
(St. Paul Cycle Path Association)

In 1898 it was noted that the park commissioners had not “been backward in recognizing the rapidly growing claims of the bicycle to liberal treatment and hospitable accommodation in our

system of parks and parkways” (*Seventh Annual Report* 1898:17). The number of riders, men and women, was a “large and rapidly increasing proportion of visitors to Como Park.” Bicycle paths set apart for the special or prior use of wheel riders was recommended (*Seventh Annual Report* 1898:17). A bicycle path was provided along the lake and along both sides of Como Avenue Parkway where 7-foot paths were built. In 1898, stands for 500 bicycles were placed around the park, at a cost of \$160 (*Seventh Annual Report* 1898:28).

During the next decade, enthusiasm for bicycles waned with the introduction of the automobile, and road building for the needs of cars rather than carriages occupied the park superintendent and staff. When a road oiling plant to service parkways and park roads was established, it was noted, “Heavy motor cars, going at a high rate of speed, need a coarse stone cushion for the top surface” (*Nineteenth Annual Report* 1909, n.p.).

3.7.4 Lake Phalen

Following Cleveland’s general recommendations from 1872, various attempts were made to condemn parcels on the western shore of Lake Phalen (*Fifth Annual Report* 1896:466-67). By 1896, a 105-acre parcel was secured, including a boulevard bringing the total to 129.5 acres. Phalen was surrounded by native forest, which commissioners stated could be “maintained at little expense:” it differed in character and function from Como Park, forming “a needed compliment to that beautiful pleasure ground, while it serve to balance the distribution of park benefits between the eastern and western sections of the city” (*Fifth Annual Report* 1896:467).



Figure 14. Lake Phalen and early auto, ca. 1910.



Lake Phalen aerial, 1959.

Improvements were underway by 1900, including widening and deepening the creek linking the 317-acre lake with 217-acre Lake Gervais, which was also acquired. The waterways offered the potential for a nine-mile route, which Joseph A. Wheelock described as “magical.” When illuminated by electric lights at night he observed, “art can add but little to the natural beauty of the park proper” (*Tenth Annual Report* 1901:25).

3.7.5 River Boulevard

Under Wheelock’s leadership, improvement of the 200-foot wide, 3.51-mile Mississippi River Boulevard secured the crest and slope of the eastern side of the river gorge from the Minneapolis city limits to West Seventh Street at the Fort Snelling bridge. Acquired between 1901 and 1915, and remaining “practically in a state of primitive nature,” with the hardwood forest “for the most part unspoiled by the ax,” the improvements included bridges, culverts, and an oiled gravel drive popular with early motorists as well as cyclists. The economic depression of 1893 made land

prices favorable, and completion of the planning for the Meeker Lock and Dam discouraged industrial users. As reported in 1898, “its precipitous and wonderfully beautiful banks are being year after year shorn and despoiled of their natural features by stone quarries and wood choppers.” Echoing Cleveland’s admonitions of thirty years before, Wheelock warned that if not soon acquired by the city, “it will be but a few years before the city will have lost one of the most precious possessions in all its wide domain of natural beauties” (*Seventh Annual Report* 1898:13).



Figure 15. River Boulevard, 1918.

3.7.6 Midway Parkway

Midway Parkway was, remarkably, completed within a few years of its initial proposal and design. Located between Como Park and Hamline Avenue and the east gate of the Minnesota State Fair grounds on Snelling Avenue, it was proposed by 1896 as a 200-foot-wide parkway that crossed the park and then meandered through the fair grounds and the Experimental Farm. The opportunity to show “model country roads” was the objective of the route across the farm (*Seventh Annual Report* 1897:8). The board thought the road could next extend westerly through St. Anthony Park neighborhood to Minneapolis and southward to the Mississippi River Boulevard.

Como Avenue (Langford Avenue) had previously provided the main approach from the west, and its use as a streetcar route encouraged an alternative between the park and Snelling Avenue and the St. Paul gate of the fairgrounds (*Seventh Annual Report* 1897:7). The stretch of former farmland was described in 1898 as “an elevated although naked plateau, commanding a fine view of the rural landscape around it. Its width will afford a fine opportunity for decorative treatment” (*Seventh Annual Report* 1897:8). Six lines of elm, white ash, box elder, Carolina poplars, and sugar maples were planted along Midway Parkway by 1899 (*Ninth Annual Report* 1899/1900:17, 21).



Figure 16. Midway Parkway and Como Park, 1916. (Hopkins)

Midway Parkway was thus intended to “form the central section of a metropolitan driveway,” extending from the capitol grounds in St. Paul, along Park Avenue to Como Avenue and the experimental farm, then forking along Como Avenue to Minneapolis “where it would connect with the boulevard system of our sister city,” a second fork would follow Raymond Avenue to Mississippi Boulevard (*Seventh Annual Report 1897:8*). Land acquisition for a parkway along the Raymond-to-University corridor did not proceed however, and Raymond was developed with substantial houses by 1900.

3.7.7 Wheelock and Johnson Parkways

The symmetry of our park system, when completed as planned, owing to the diversified elements of natural beauty and of the topographical advantages offered within the city and its immediate environments, will be most unique in its detail. It can never be approached by any other city in its picturesque splendor.

Twenty-first Annual Report of the Board of Park Commissioners (1911:29)

Parkway acquisition and development progressed during 1909. The first section of Wheelock Parkway was graded in 1909 (*Nineteenth Annual Report 1909:n.p.*), and acquisition of property for Johnson Parkway between Phalen and Indian Mounds parks was pursued at the same time. Described as “denuded of its natural tree growth,” the Johnson Parkway route was praised for its elevation. It included the marshy end of Lake Phalen, and crossed under the Northern Pacific Railway en route to Mounds Park.



Figure 17. Johnson Parkway looking north to E. 7th Street, 1930



Arbor Day at Johnson Parkway Street and Burns Avenue, 1952

By 1909, completion of eleven miles of parkway between the River Boulevard, Como, Phalen and Indian Mounds parks was contemplated, “encircling the north half of the city.” The parkways ranged from 120 to 400 feet in width. “Ornamentation, seats and fountains” was recommended for intersections about one mile apart. Two were recommended for Wheelock Parkway, one at the intersection of Western Avenue and the other at Montana Avenue. Each offered “charming views of the city.” Many other projects beckoned in this period, including the capitol and union park approaches, creation of a parade ground, a golf course at Como Park, and improvement of neighborhood parks and playgrounds.

By 1910, the city had about 35 miles of parkways planned, with only thirteen and one-half miles constructed (*Twentieth Annual Report* 1911:7). A new board member apparently obstructed efforts to move ahead at this point, however. Four miles of Wheelock Parkway connecting Phalen and Como parks were graded in 1909-10, and awaited two bridges (*Twentieth Annual Report* 1911:9). One mile was planted with 404 elms (*Twentieth Annual Report* 1911:33).

3.7.7.1 Parkway Principles, 1911

Nussbaumer noted in the 1911 report, “Parkways, although having the character of a street, should be of extraordinary width. They should present verdant features and objects of interest. They should be laid out with an idea of convenience and to reach principal places of interest and the most frequented large parks and public buildings” (*Twentieth Annual Report* 1911:65)

He listed the principles and accomplishments of the Saint Paul park and parkway system, some echoing Cleveland’s recommendations in 1872 and 1885:

“the parkway system practically encircling the entire city;”

“the numerous small squares and street intersections”

“small inside parks adapted to serve the purpose of recreation for the people in the several neighborhoods;”

“one park where the enjoyment of floral beauty and plant beauty of a special character is liberally provided for;”

“one park with its main features consisting in its panoramic view and wide sweep of prospect and containing in its grounds five tumular monuments of a historic Indian race; another large park, the character of which is strictly and distinctively aquatic;”

“a large and extensive driveway of unequaled beauty, leading along the river bluff and commanding enchanting glimpses of river scenery through an old forest growth; a distance of over five miles long” (*Twentieth Annual Report* 1911:66).

The superintendent warned, however, that St Paul was falling behind other cities in meeting the demand for athletic exercise, and deplored the board’s desire to withhold funds. 1911 was another slow year, due to lack of budget (*Twenty-first Annual Report* 1912: n.p). He noted the “absurdly inadequate provisions of funds made by the City Council for the park and parkway system . . . has delayed so many important improvements” (*Twenty-first Annual Report* 1912: 23). The *Twenty-first Annual Report* for 1911-12, one of the last to be illustrated, included a set of drawings of park and parkway segments, perhaps to emphasize all the work done to date but awaiting funding.

3.7.8 Como and River Boulevard (Pelham Boulevard)

Acquisition of the Como and River Boulevard (Como-River Boulevard) was completed by 1911, and a “medium good driveway and side plantings” were contemplated (*Twenty-first Annual Report* 1912: 25). This segment offered connection to the Minneapolis Grand Rounds system via the river road. Later named Pelham Boulevard, the viewshed of its sloping approach to the river benefited by the bordering landscape of the private Town and Country golf club (1888).

During this period, the park board’s nursery furnished stock for parks and parkways as well as street tree plantings. In 1912, the plant list included more than 4,000 elm trees and seedlings (*Ulmus Americana*), Sugar and Red Maple (*Acer Sacharinum* and *Rubrum*) as well as natives such as white oak (*Quercus Alba*), Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus Hippocastanum*), Butternut (*Juglans Cinera*), Black Walnut (*Juglans Nigra*), Basswood (*Tilia Americana*), and Shellbark Hickory (*Caya Alba*). The Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus Glandulosa*) was also a favorite (*Twenty-third Annual Report* 1912:1913:32-35).

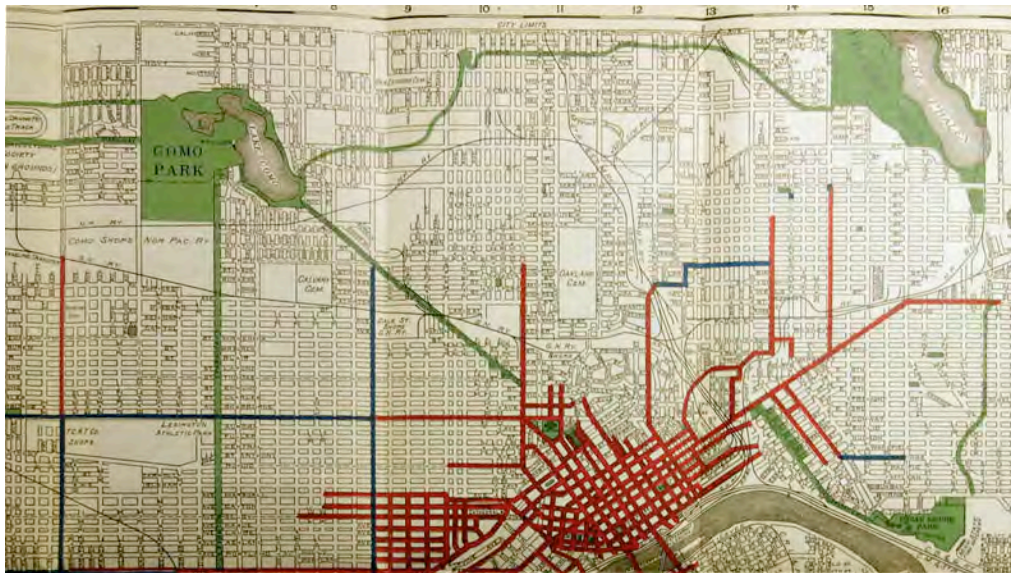


Figure 18. Progress of North Loop construction (in green), 1914. (City of Saint Paul).

3.7.9 After Nussbaumer: 1922-1932, and Beyond

Nussbaumer was succeeded by superintendents Earl L. Finney (1922-23), William T. March (1923-24), and George L. Nason (1924-32). Nason oversaw the acquisition and improvement of more than 30 playgrounds and athletic fields during the relatively prosperous years preceding the Depression. Como Park, which was improved with a Golf Course (1930) and expanded zoo (1930-) continued to be the central hub of the system. The Depression and World War II economies generally placed further parkway improvement on hold, but Works Progress Administration (WPA) funds would assist in some construction and maintenance, especially along the River Boulevard during the 1930s and early 1940s.

As described in Section 4.0, the completion of each parkway segment encouraged real estate and neighborhood development, depending on economic cycles. In some cases, particularly along segments of Wheelock Parkway, some incremental development occurred over many decades, ca. 1915-70. Examples of pre-existing dwellings edge the parkways along its course, including a few houses that may date to the post-Civil War agricultural period.

Most residences on Midway Parkway, however, were completed within about twenty years, ca. 1912-30, and Como Avenue east of Snelling had a similar compact development period. Across the length of the North Loop there was great variety of residential building styles and types, ranging from small frame bungalows to substantial Period Revival houses trimmed in brick and stone. Continuous bands of front lawn, generally uninterrupted by fences or garden beds, are ribboned along the parkway lots.

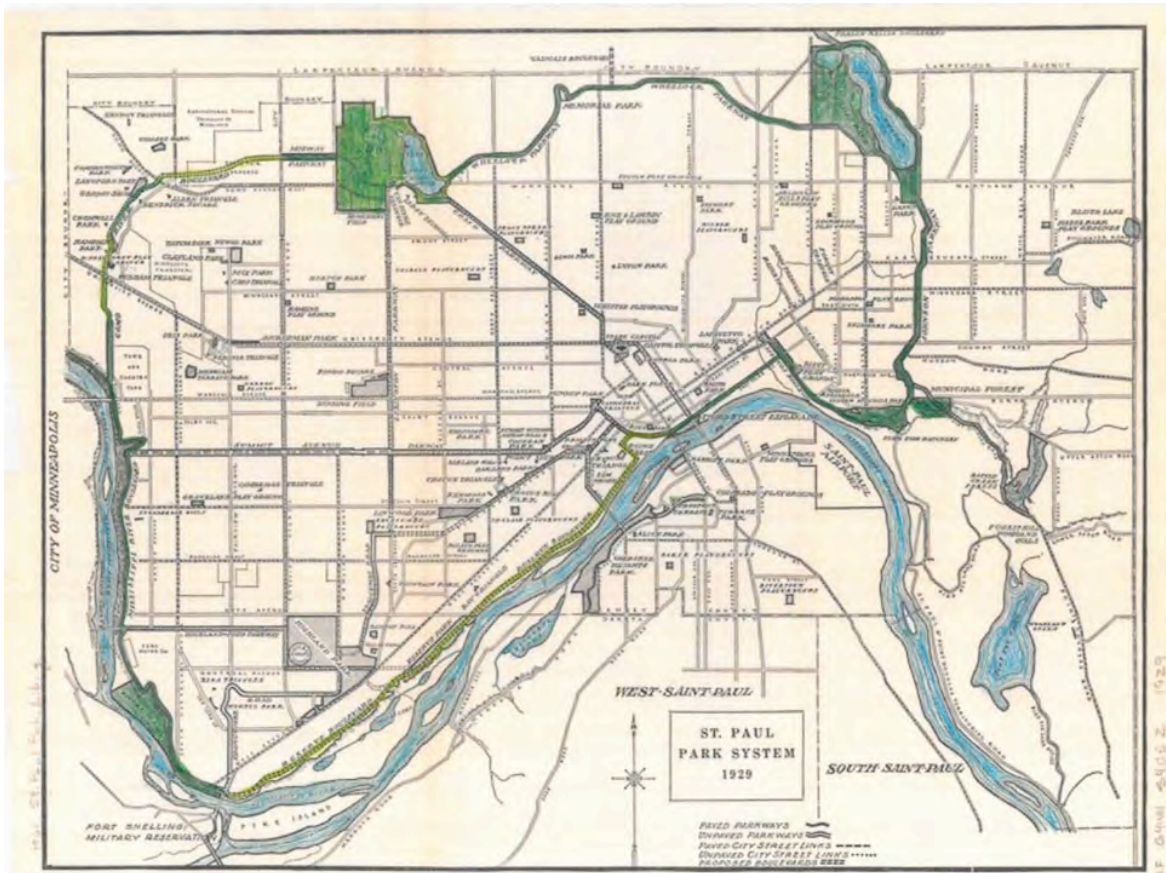


Figure 19. Saint Paul Park System, 1929.

4.0 GRAND ROUND PARKWAY HISTORIES AND HISTORIC FEATURES

The comprehensive parkway system contemplated and partially completed will link our large parks by broad circuits through natural scenery in the environs of the city.

Frederick Nussbaumer (*Annual Report* 1911:23)

4.1 Introduction

H.W.S. Cleveland envisioned a Saint Paul parkway system that linked the city's lakes and the Mississippi River and also neighboring Minneapolis. Hiawatha Park, which later became Hidden Falls Park, was at one time considered for its potential to be linked via a bridge spanning the Mississippi to Minnehaha Park. Como Park was the hub for the north loop of Saint Paul's system, which was almost entirely constructed during Frederick Nussbaumer's superintendency.

The historic character of the north loop is founded on its broad boulevarded parkways, sometimes supplied with a central landscaped median. Much of the parkway route, particularly along Johnson and Wheelock, has rolling topography, which the roadway and medians carefully accommodate. Only moderate grading and filling appears to have been required along much of the route, except in low-lying or exceptionally steep areas. Except at Phalen and Como, where roadway vistas continue into the park, and at smaller parks such as Hampden, the parkway primarily provides a spacious setting for house lots. The parkway width ranges from forty to more than two hundred feet.

Concrete curb and gutters line most parkway segments, and there are few other roadside details within the immediate viewshed. Kasota stone entry gates and limestone retaining walls at the west sides of Lakes Como and Phalen are among character defining features. These materials are also utilized at some railroad bridge abutments. No historic lighting or other hardware was noted along the route.

The consistent tree canopy is a key character-defining feature of the parkway. Ranging from very large oak and elm specimens that suggest native vegetation to plantations of spruce and fir and many types of young deciduous trees, the groupings within the medians and along the boulevards are distinctive for their abundance, natural distribution, and the expansive area that typically surrounds them. There is little record of the historic planting plan; planners apparently worked with existing, often native vegetation and added freely from the city's nursery stock. Construction dates and architectural character of the houses lining the parkways vary greatly. Parkway creation, or its prospect, encouraged real estate additions and subdivisions, although none bear picturesque names evoking the parkway landscape. Pre-existing houses, including those dating to the 1880s and before, were typically near main arterials—Rice and E. Third Streets, for example—that were part of small neighborhood enclaves close to railroad yards and factories.



Figure 20. Wheelock Parkway near Lake Phalen.

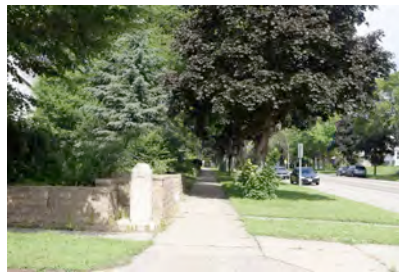


Figure 21. Como Avenue at Arona Street.

4.2 Johnson Parkway: Burns Avenue to Phalen Parkway

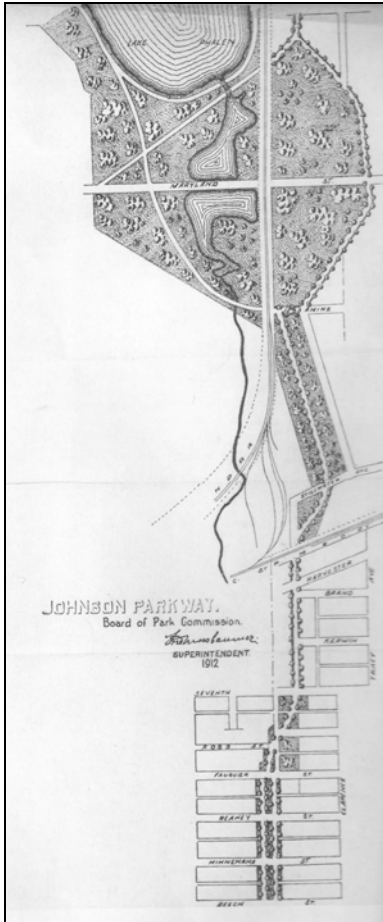


Figure 22. Johnson Parkway, 1912 (St. Paul Bd of Park Commissioners)



Figure 23. Johnson Parkway, 1916. (Hopkins)

4.2.1 Johnson Parkway History

Earl Street was considered by the park board as a potential route to link Mounds Park with Lake Phalen, but it was unsuitable because of its many railroad crossings and other land use conflicts. The board considered acquisition of the present Johnson Parkway route in 1909 and on December 6, 1909 the city council passed a resolution to begin survey and condemnation proceedings. Johnson Parkway was named in honor of John A. Johnson, Governor of Minnesota from 1904 to 1908 (106 Group 1996). Saint Paul Public Works developed a working plan in 1910 and the plan was included in the 1912 *St. Paul Board of Commissioners Annual Report*, but grading and paving did not begin until 1916. The first paved segment of Johnson Parkway, from Burns Street to E. 7th Street, was forty feet wide with two twenty-foot drive lanes (St. Paul Public Works). This segment was generally completed as proposed in the 1912 plan, with a varied center parkway and residential frontage roads paralleling the parkway.

The remainder of Johnson Parkway from E. 7th Street to the connection with Wheelock Parkway at Lake Phalen was not completed until land acquisition and railroad negotiations in the 1920s. The north connection between Jessamine and Maryland Avenues was completed in 1925 (St. Paul Public Works). Construction was coordinated with the location of the Belt Line Interceptor, a

tunnel that diverts Phalen Creek from Swede Hollow to its Mississippi River outlet near the former St. Paul Fish Hatchery. Interceptor construction was underway during the 1920s (Passi 2014).

Johnson Parkway was paved in the 1930s; the segment between E. 7th Street and Stillwater Avenue (near present-day Ames Avenue E.) was paved in 1931 and the segment from Stillwater Avenue and Maryland Avenue E. in 1932 (St. Paul Public Works). The parkway pinched under the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Railway Company Bridge (later Union Pacific; 1906). The four-track bridge was designed by the American Bridge Company of New York and has a plate girder with I-beam approaches. The St. Paul and Duluth Railroad (later Northern Pacific) originally paralleled Johnson Parkway at the west and crossed to the east side of Lake Phalen at the south end. Johnson Parkway crossed over the Northern Pacific Railroad tracks near Jessamine Street. The tracks have been removed.



Figure 24. Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Bridge over Johnson Parkway, north of Case Ave. E. (1906), facing north.

Alterations include a 1959 rerouting between Hudson Road and Wakefield Avenue. Prosperity Avenue at the west of Johnson Parkway was rebuilt in 1963. Johnson Parkway was further altered with the 1964 construction and subsequent widening of Interstate 94, which partially follows the route of the old Hastings Road. In 1999, Phalen Boulevard was completed to connect the east side of St. Paul to Interstate 35E, requiring a new interchange at Johnson Parkway south of Maryland Avenue. The new roadway was partially placed in the vacated Northern Pacific rail corridor (106 Group 1996).



Figure 25. Abandoned Northern Pacific rail corridor, looking north to Lake Phalen. Johnson Parkway is at right.

4.2.2 Johnson Parkway Character

The Johnson Parkway cross-section, as originally constructed with a center parkway flanked by parallel residential frontage streets, varies along its 2.1-mile length. The parkway narrows to forty feet under the railroad bridge to a 120-foot right-of-way with a three-road system separated by planted medians. The parkway remains moderately intact south of E. 7th Street until Interstate 94. Alterations include the apparent removal of the western frontage street, between Bush Avenue and E. Seventh Street. The west frontage street has curbs to halt crossing at E. 3rd Street. This southern portion has a variety of trees, some apparently from the original planting design, and concrete sidewalks and curbs. The parkway segment north of the (east-west) Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Railway Company right-of-way does not maintain the three-road system. Prosperity Avenue, north of the right-of-way, parallels the parkway between Ames and Magnolia Avenues and young trees line the parkway.



Figure 26. Johnson Parkway at Hudson Street, looking north.

The majority of residential development along Johnson Parkway postdates parkway development. Housing between Burns Avenue and Interstate 94 dates from the 1940s and 1950s and is predominately one-story, Ranch-style homes. Housing between 94W and E. 3rd Street includes one- or one- and one-half-story, Period Revival style houses dating from the late 1920s and

1930s. Houses between E. 3rd and E. 7th Streets face the parkway and most date from the 1930s and 1940s. Much of the residential fabric in the two-block area between E. 7th Street and the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Railway Company (later Union Pacific) right-of-way dates from the 1870s and 1880s and pre-dates the parkway. Many of these properties are likely associated with the area's early factories and railroad employment. Residential construction north of the railroad right-of-way dates from the 1940s and later.



Figure 27. Johnson Parkway (at right), and Prosperity Avenue (at left), looking south.



Fig. 28. Johnson Parkway (at left), frontage road (center), and Conway Street (angled at right), looking south.

4.3 Wheelock Parkway: Lake Phalen to Lake Como

4.3.1 Phalen Park

The acquisition of Phalen Park and boulevard is a necessity of the first order to the symmetrical completion of the park system of St. Paul.

Seventh Annual Report of the Board of Park Commissioners, 1898:12

By 1896, a 105-acre parcel was secured for Phalen Parkway (present-day Phalen Drive). No construction occurred until after World War I; in 1923 the parkway along the west shores of the lake was paved from Arcade Street to the “junction” (as it was called in park board reports) and from Earl and Ivy Street to the “junction.” The next year, parkway paving was completed with the section from the Phalen Park bathhouse to Larpenteur Avenue, and the south end of the lake to Maryland Street (Johnson Parkway). Phalen Drive hugs the lakeshore at the west side of Lake Phalen while Johnson Parkway, connecting with Wheelock Parkway, runs along the west side of Phalen Park and connects to Lake Como and Como Avenue.

4.3.2 Wheelock Parkway History

Planning for Johnson and Wheelock Parkways was underway at approximately the same time. The City Council approved a resolution in 1907 to acquire 65.88 acres for Wheelock Parkway; plans for the route were developed by 1907 with a boulevard extending 4.25 miles between Lakes Como and Phalen. The first section of the parkway was graded in 1909 and the section from Rice to Edgerton Streets was graded in 1916. Wheelock Parkway and the adjoining drive around Lake Phalen remained unpaved into the 1920s. Paving was completed for most of Wheelock Parkway by 1924 and included a 30-foot-wide section between Como Avenue and Mackubin Street and two, twenty-foot wide roads between Payne Avenue and Arcade Street (St. Paul Public Works). The sections between Nebraska and Edgerton Streets and Edgerton and Payne Avenue have varied widths, but are predominately two, 20-foot-wide parkways.

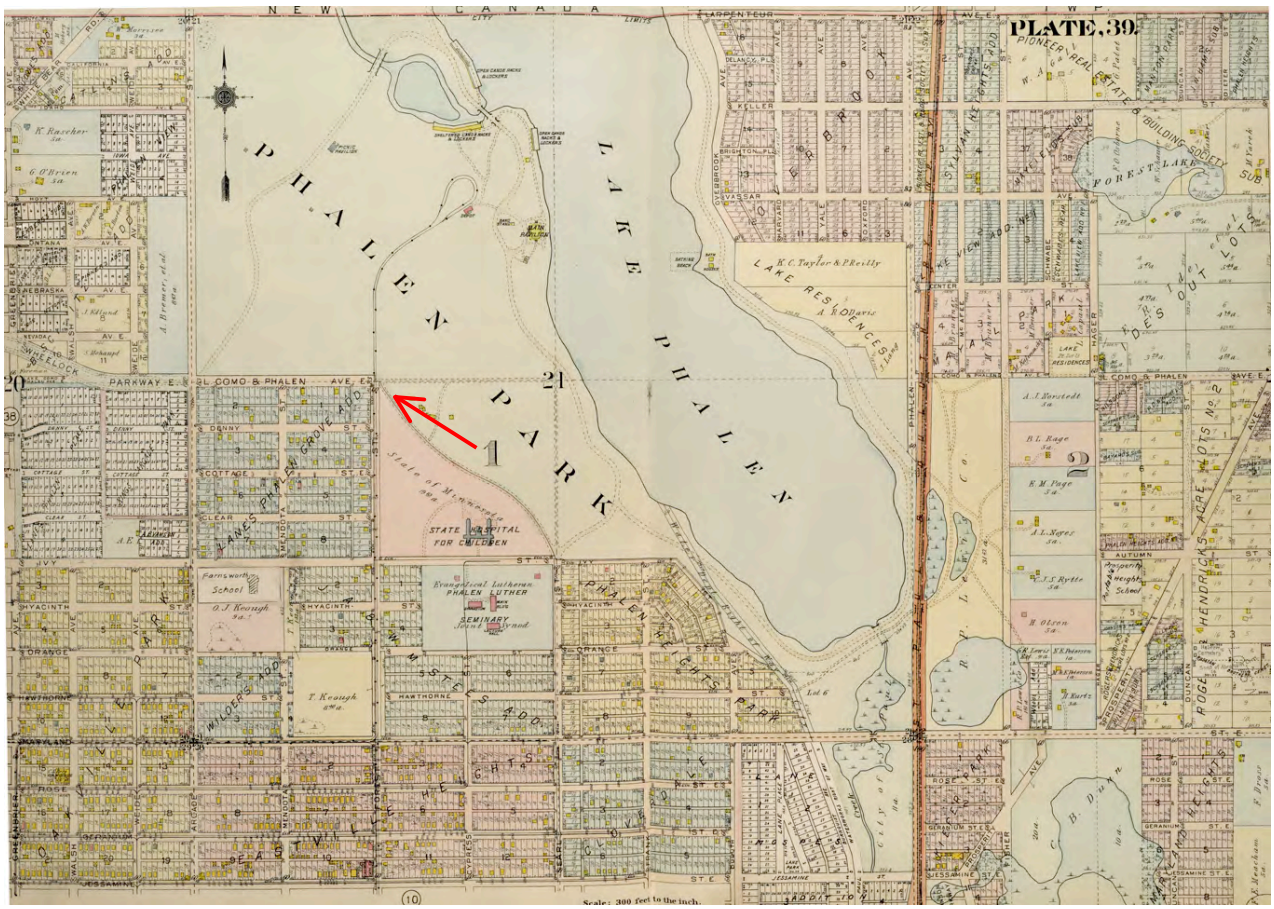


Figure 29. Phalen Parkway, 1916 (Hopkins).

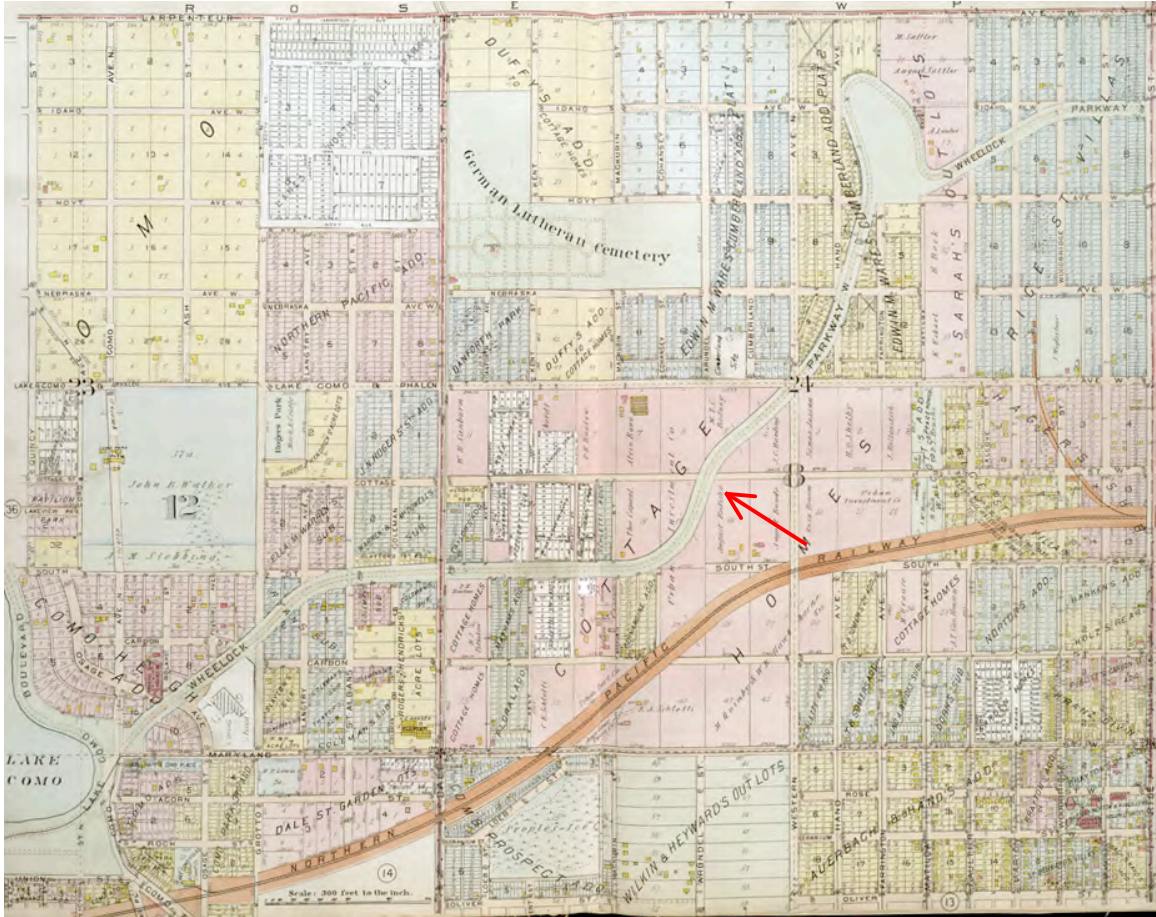


Figure 30. Wheelock Parkway, Rice Street to Como Boulevard (Hopkins 1916). The distinctive horseshoe bend is between Marion and Matilda streets.

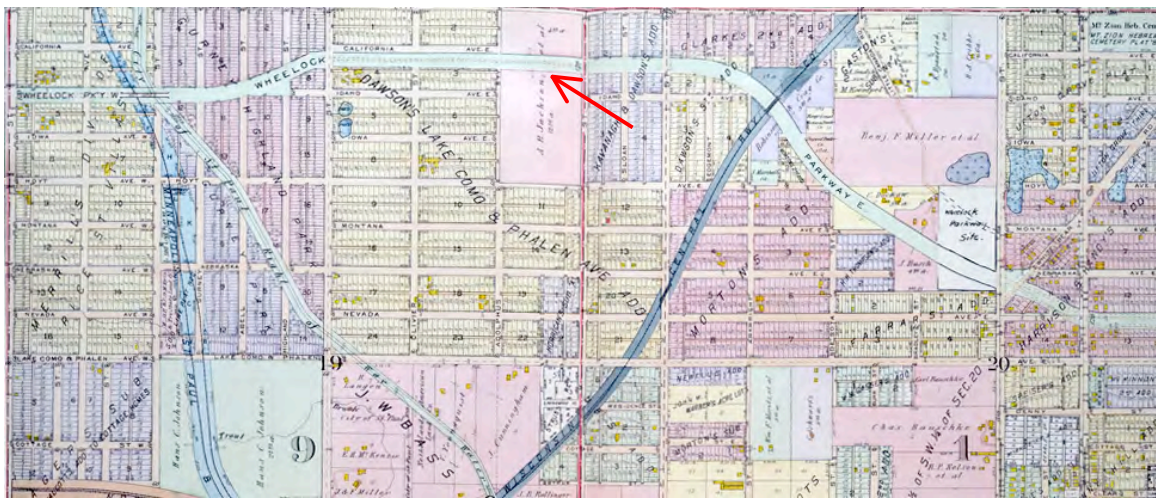
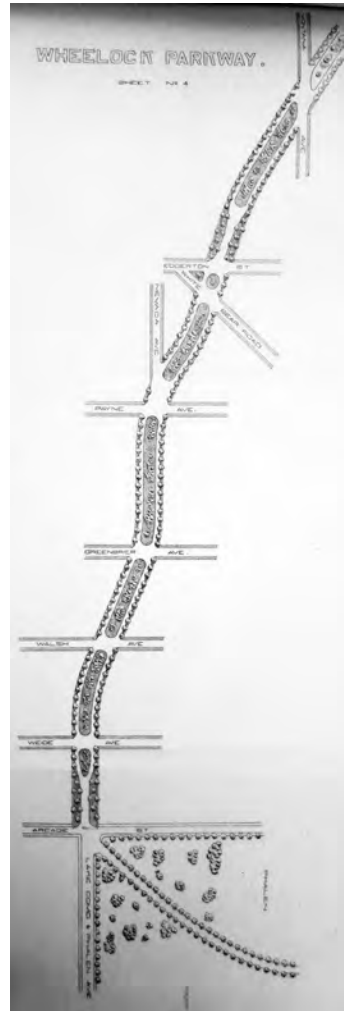
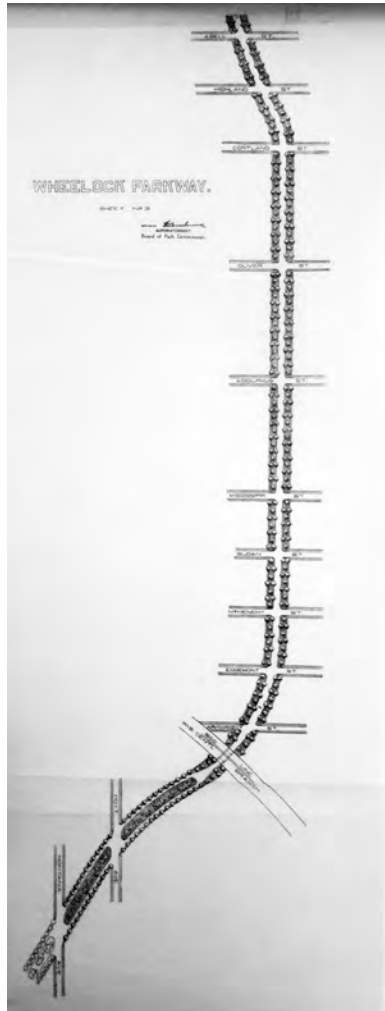
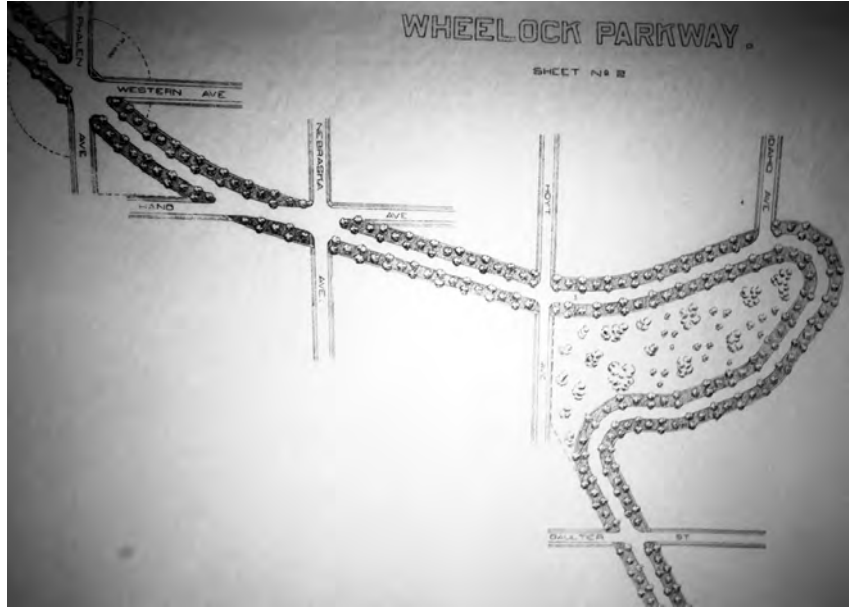


Figure 31. Wheelock Parkway, Greenbrier to Rice (Hopkins 1916).



**Figure 32. Wheelock Parkway, 1912
Sheets 2-4 (St. Paul Bd of Park Commissioners)**

4.3.3 Wheelock Parkway Character



Figure 33. Typical Wheelock Parkway section at west of Lake Phalen, facing north, with a variety of maple and elm.



Figure 34. Wheelock Parkway facing Phalen Drive gates, facing east.

Wheelock Parkway maintains a nearly continuous ribbon of turf-clad boulevard and linear as well as naturalistic plantings of young and mature trees. Wheelock is a split parkway at the west side of Lake Phalen near the Phalen Golf Course. Within the park, the parkway has concrete curbs, a narrow median between the paired streets and occasional Kasota stone retaining walls. There is a Kasota stone entrance gate at Wheelock Parkway and Phalen Drive. The two-road parkway continues between Arcade and Edgerton Streets and, in this section, there are concrete curbs and sidewalk at both sides of the parkway. The two-road parkway pinches into a single street at Arcade and Edgerton Street crossings and under the Wisconsin Central Railroad (later Soo Line) Bridge (1938). The steel stringer bridge is encased in concrete. The bridge now carries bicycle and pedestrian traffic as part of the Gateway State Trail system (MN Bridge #5592). Wheelock Parkway remains a single, two-way street from the Gateway State Trail Bridge to its terminus at Lake Como. The parkway lacks sidewalks between the Gateway State Trail Bridge and the I-35E Bridge (1960, 2014). A sidewalk begins at the south side of the parkway at the I-35E crossing and continues until Rice Street. The Minneapolis St. Paul & Sault St. Marie Railway Company (Soo Line) tracks at the east of Rice Street parallel Trout Brook; the first Wheelock Parkway Bridge, ca. 1916, was replaced with a concrete deck in 1954; the bridge was reconstructed in 2014 (Ramsey County Bridge #62641). The parkway lacks sidewalks between Rice and Mackubin Street; between Mackubin Street and E. Como Boulevard the sidewalks are located at both sides of the parkway and are inset deep into the front yards of the surrounding houses.



Figure 35. Wheelock Parkway at Greenbrier Street, facing east.



Figure 36. Wheelock Parkway at Edgerton Street, facing east.



Figure 37. Soo Line Bridge, 1938 (Gateway Trail) facing east.



Figure 38. Wheelock Parkway at Park Ave. with treeline delineating sidewalk removal, facing east.

Residential architectural character varies along the parkway and includes the occasional late nineteenth-century house predating parkway construction, many Period Revival style houses of various descriptions, and one-story, mid-twentieth century Ranch style dwellings. Houses between Arcade and Edgerton Streets were built in the 1920s and 1930s and many are of Period Revival style. Houses of other styles and construction dates face the parkway between Edgerton and the Gateway State Trail Bridge; most date primarily from the 1950s and 1960s. Houses between Rice and Mackubin Streets were primarily built in the 1950s and 1960s. The parkway between Mackubin and Lake Como features simple Period Revival designs dating from the 1920s and 1930s.

4.4 Como Avenue: Lake Como and Como Avenue to Raymond Avenue

W. Wheelock Parkway connects with E. Como Boulevard at the southeast corner of Lake Como. E. Como Boulevard continues at the south of Lake Como and the parkway continues through Kasota stone gates (1933) onto W. Como Boulevard (renamed Nagasaki Road in 2015). Como Avenue crosses through Warrendale, a 52-acre residential subdivision on the southwest side of the lake designed by landscape architect H.W.S. Cleveland in 1884.

4.4.1 Parkway History

By 1898 a portion of Como Avenue—the “Como Parkway” at the west of Lake Como that was planned to connect to the Minnesota State Capitol area—was graded across Como Park with bike paths flanking the boulevard. The parkway was designed with a “two-foot planting space on the property line along six-foot sidewalk, seven-foot planting space, seven-foot bicycle path, eight-foot planting space, and a forty-foot driveway” (*Annual Report 1898:26*). Paving proceeded incrementally over the next decades. The segment of early Como Avenue that led from the park



Figure 39. Salvation Army Women's Home (1912).

to Raymond Avenue was landscaped with a single line of trees and was paved in 1919 and from Snelling to Hamline in 1922 (St. Paul Public Works). From the west, Como Avenue provided an important streetcar link to the park. It skirts the south edge of the Minnesota State Fairgrounds. The current 320-acre fairgrounds site was established near Como Park in 1885, when the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners “donated their 210-acre poor farm to the State Agricultural Society, the governing body of the State Fair” (Minnesota State Fair).

Between Como Park and Raymond Avenue, Como was known as Langford Avenue prior to ca. 1910 (Upham 1920:633). The Salvation Army Booth Memorial Women’s Home and Hospital (1912-13; NRHP) built to serve unwed mothers, and the Linnea Home (2040 W. Como, 1917), built as a boarding house for Swedish immigrant women, are two historic institutional properties.

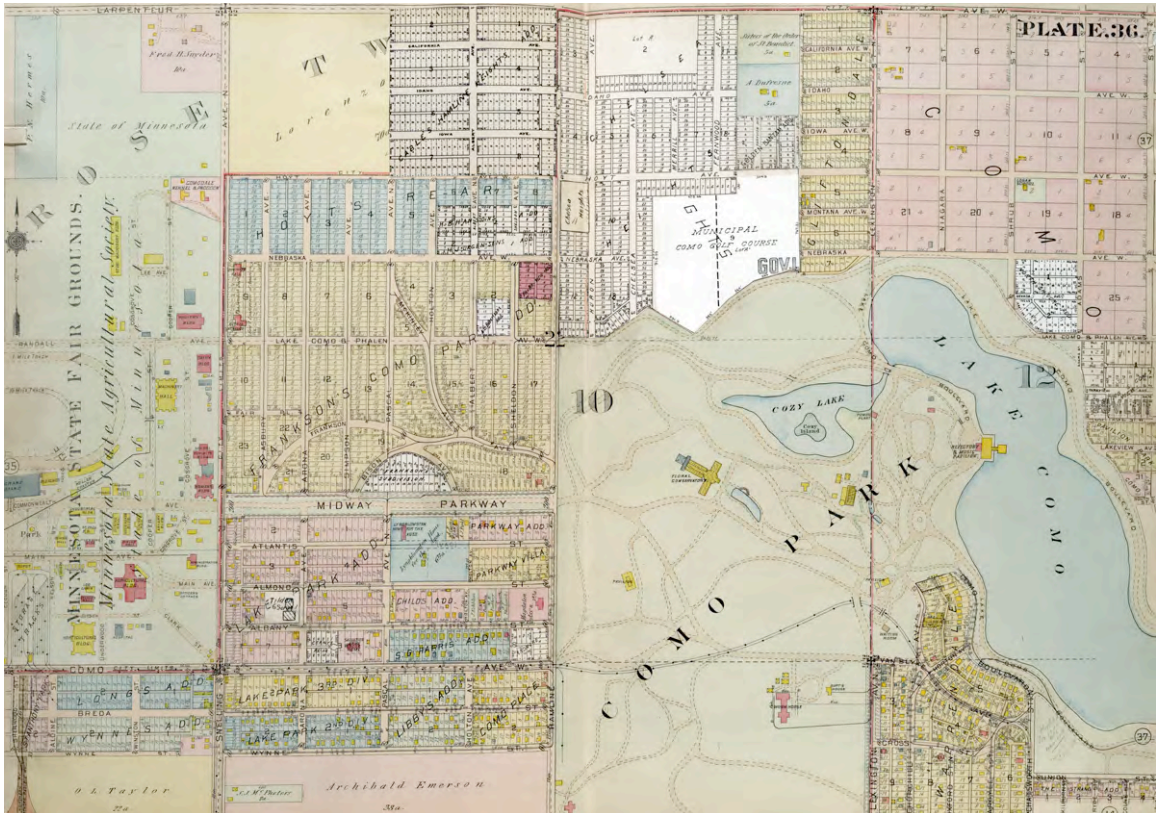


Figure 40. Como Park, Midway Parkway, and Como Avenue to Sherwood Street (Hopkins 1916).

4.4.2 Como Park and Como Avenue Character

Como Avenue traverses east-west across Como Park; this section has bituminous paths at each side and is lined intermittently with Kasota stone retaining walls. Between Hamline and Aurora Streets, Como Avenue is a 96-foot-wide, two-way street lined with Craftsman bungalows and Period Revival style houses constructed between 1900 and 1930. A unique concrete bollard is placed at the corner of Aurora and Como.



Figure 41. Kasota Stone retaining walls along Como Avenue (Nagasaki Rd), west of Lake Como.



Figure 42. Residential block overlooking west side of Lake Como.

There is a small commercial node, ca. 1915-1940, at Snelling and Como Avenues. Como crosses under the four-lane Snelling Avenue (TH 51) overpass and edges the south boundary of the Minnesota State Fairgrounds between Snelling and Raymond Avenues. The coliseum, animal barns, and other fair buildings are well set back from the corridor and the fairground perimeter is fenced with chain link. Between Snelling and Raymond Avenues the south side of the corridor is institutional, industrial, and commercial, with approximately one block of early twentieth-century houses east of the intersection. The Commonwealth Student Housing community is located at the northeast corner of the intersection.



Figure 43. Minnesota Fairgrounds sign, Como Avenue.

4.5 Raymond Avenue: Como Avenue to Pelham Boulevard

4.5.1 Raymond Avenue History



Figure 44. Raymond Avenue.
(*Rice's Map of St. Paul, 1887*)



Figure 45. Raymond Avenue, Como Avenue to Myrtle.
(*Hopkins 1916*)

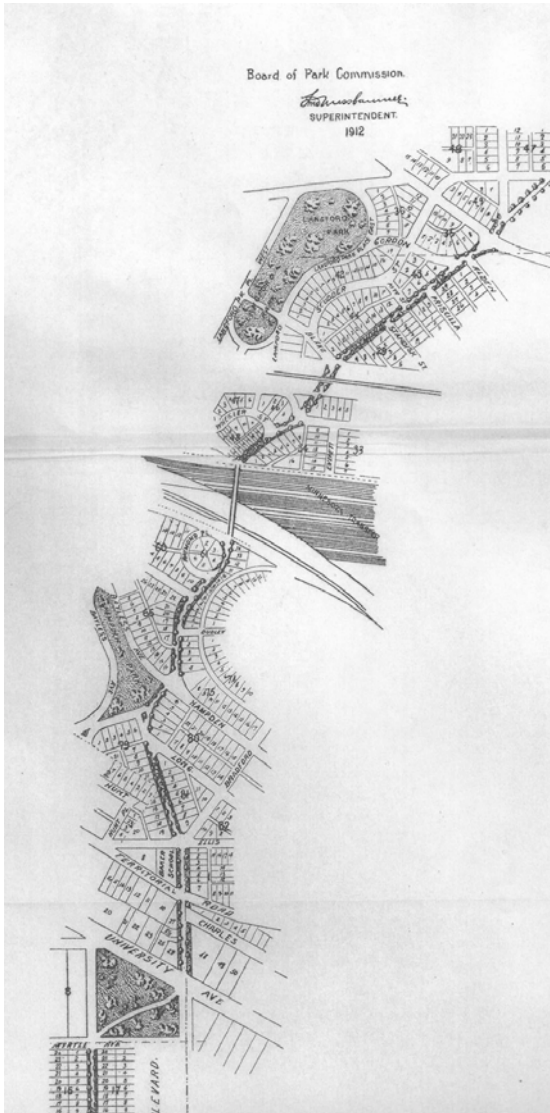
The circuitous route of Raymond Avenue appears on city maps after the annexation of St. Anthony Park to the City of Saint Paul in 1885-87. An important route because it offered the only crossing over the ever-expanding Midway Transfer Yard, it is framed by lots platted in the 1870s through ca. 1900. The avenue bisects the southern half of North St. Anthony Park north of Energy Park Boulevard. South of Energy Park Boulevard it winds through South St. Anthony Park. The northern half was paved in the 1920s; the section from Ellis to Hampden was paved in 1923 and the section from Hampden to Como the following year (St. Paul Public Works). Raymond crosses Territorial Road—an 1850s overland route between Point Douglas, the Falls of Saint Anthony, and Fort Ripley—before intersecting with University Avenue. It parallels the former Pelham Street south of University for several blocks. In 1911, the park board noted that the general plan for improvement of Raymond and Como Avenues to the north was simply to be “a medium good driveway and side plantings” (*Twenty-first Annual Report 1911:25*).



Figure 46. Raymond Avenue commercial node at Hampden Park, at left, looking north.



Figure 47. Raymond Avenue, looking south across University Avenue.



48. Raymond Avenue, Como Avenue to Pelham Avenue, 1912. (St. Paul Bd of Park Commissioners)

4.5.2 Raymond Avenue Character

North of the rail crossing at Energy Park Drive, Raymond Avenue winds through a mixed-use corridor framed by late nineteenth- and early-twentieth century houses, some testament to the area's early popularity as a small rail-commuter suburb. Commercial and industrial land uses dominate the area around the Minnesota Transfer Yards south of Energy Park Drive. The Baker School (1910); IOOF Hall (Hampden Co-op; ca. 1910), and the St. Paul Fire Station at 926 Hampden Park (ca. 1909) are among notable historic properties set among many late nineteenth-century dwellings. The Great Northern (BNSF) crosses Raymond across just north of Energy Park Drive. The concrete bridge crossing the Midway Transfer Yard dates from ca. 1990. Raymond Avenue has few designed historic landscape features, except at Hampden Park, where there has also been recent new streetscape construction.

Raymond crosses the University-Raymond Commercial Heritage Preservation District (locally designated and also NRHP-certified for historic tax credit purposes; Figure 52) south of Territorial Road. The district along University is comprised of a number of large warehouse and office structures, ca. 1900-1920. At this point, the historic character of the north side Raymond between Territorial Road and University includes an eclectic collection of one-story, flat-roofed mixed-use buildings, ca. 1915-1950 (St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission 2005).

4.6 Pelham Boulevard: University Avenue to Mississippi River Boulevard

4.6.1 Pelham Boulevard History

A portion of Pelham Boulevard generally follows the alignment of the former Pelham Street as labeled on the 1887 plat of Desnoyer Park by surveyors Hawley and Newell for the Union Land Company of St. Paul (Ramsey County Property Records 1887). As constructed, it was first named the Como and River Boulevard. Como and River Boulevard was renamed Pelham Boulevard on May 1, 1940. North of its crossing of I-94, Pelham bridges over the CM&StP Railroad Shortline (1889). South of I-94, Pelham crosses St. Anthony Avenue, a segment of the Red River oxcart trail that linked Pembina (now North Dakota) with St. Anthony Falls and St. Paul during the mid-nineteenth century (Vogt 1990:3-5).

Acquisition of land for Pelham Boulevard was in 1909-1911 (*Twenty-first Annual Report* 1911: 25; St. Paul Public Works). The first paved parkway section ascending the river terrace from the Mississippi River to Doane Avenue was completed in 1928 and the section connecting to University Avenue was completed in 1930 (St. Paul Public Works). Residential construction at the top of the hill, around Desnoyer Park, appears to date from ca. 1955, while earlier Period Revival style houses are concentrated near the river intersection.

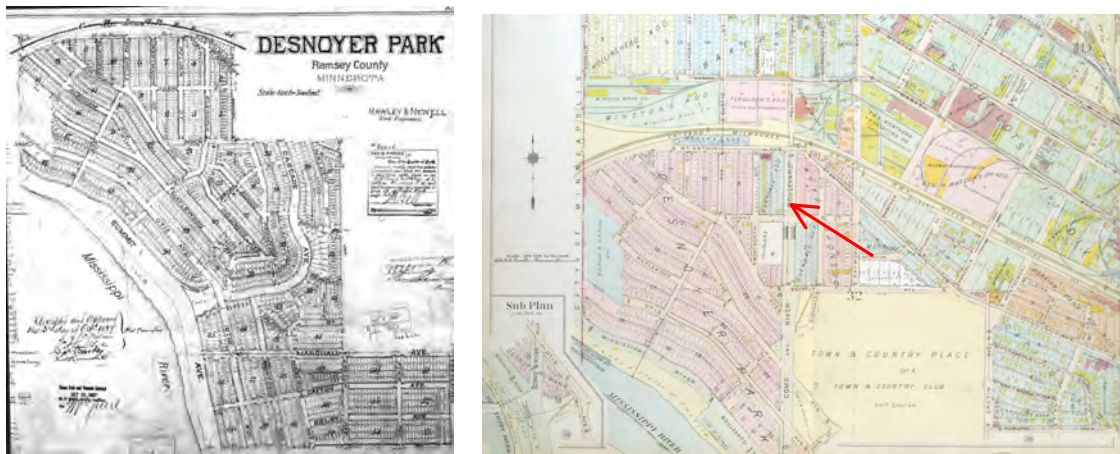


Figure 49. Left: Desnoyer Park, 1887; right: Phalen Boulevard, University to Mississippi River Boulevard (Hopkins 1916).

In 1911, the park board noted that Pelham had been widened and extended to St. Anthony Avenue, and that improvements were still needed from University to St. Anthony Avenues. Acquisition of the block bounded by Pelham, Raymond, University and Myrtle was recommended, “not only for the purpose of forming an harmonious connection with Raymond Avenue and Pelham Street, but for the more important necessity of establishing a park on the leading traffic street between the two cities” (*Twenty-first Annual Report* 1911:25).



Figure 50. Raymond Avenue and Pelham Boulevard in 1945. (UM Borchert)

4.6.2 Pelham Boulevard Character

At the north, Pelham Boulevard crosses an industrial area and various at-grade rail spurs between University and I-94. Further south, the west side is lined with ca. 1930s residences between Mississippi River Boulevard and St. Anthony Avenue, and is framed by sidewalks and mature trees. At the east there is no sidewalk along the Town and Country Golf Course. The Town and County Club was organized in 1888 (Vogt 1990:15).

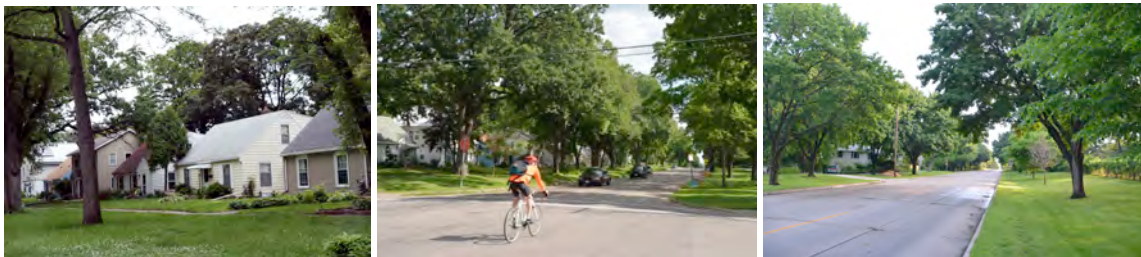


Figure 51. Pelham Boulevard residences, north of Beverly Road; center: looking south at Doane Ave; right: looking north, Town and Country Club at right.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

This study of the North Loop of St. Paul's Grand Round was conducted for the City of Saint Paul and SEH to provide a foundation for planning new cycling amenities along Pelham Boulevard, Raymond Avenue, Como Avenue and Wheelock and Johnson Parkways. The 12.3-mile route crosses many historic St. Paul neighborhoods that have been shaped by parkway development (Figure 1). The project will include new bike lanes as well as upgrades to existing lanes. The project may involve changes to existing roadways or boulevard width and the addition of wayfinding and other features.

This study supports the Grand Round project planning and design team with an historic landscape background for the parkways within the project area. It also reports on previous evaluations and findings of potential National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility of various route segments and properties. A preliminary survey of character-defining historic features, including boulevard and landscape features, planting design, structures, and related features identified along each parkway segment was also conducted.

This study suggests that the primary parkway segments (ca. 1900-1930) appear to be significant as major components of Saint Paul's historic park and parkway system. This system, proposed by landscape architect H.W.S. Cleveland and executed during the park superintendency of Frederick Nussbaumer (1891-1922), appears to retain good historic integrity. Further inventory and evaluation, including expanded historic contexts, will allow determination of eligibility for individual segments and the system as a whole. The proposed route also intersects the University-Raymond Commercial Historic District (Figure 52). It is recommended that the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission be consulted during future project planning that involves potential historic and cultural resources.

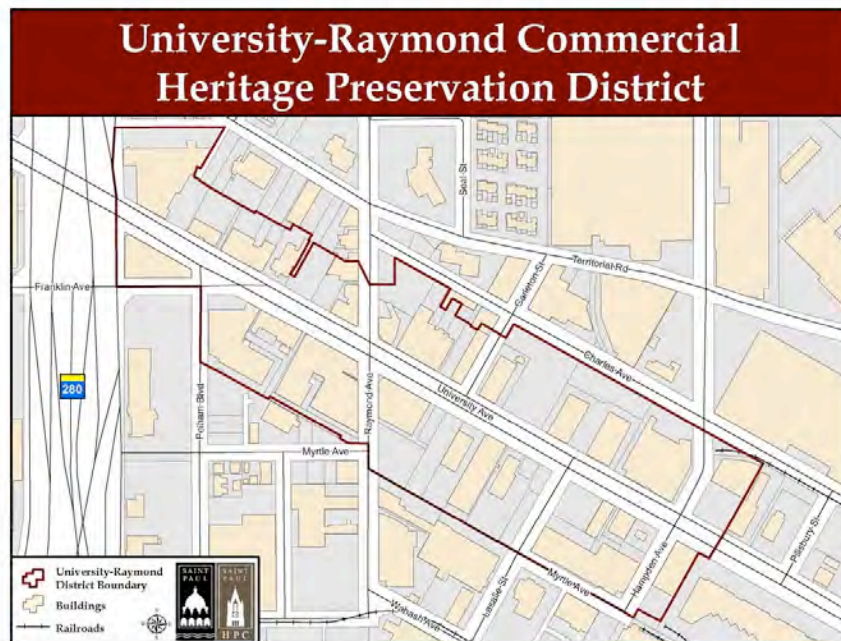


Figure 52. University-Raymond Commercial Heritage Preservation District (City of St. Paul)

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