



City of New Prague Historic Context Study

Prepared for the
City of New Prague, MN

By
Patrick Smith
SMITH & MAIN, llc
December, 2013



“We live not alone in the present, but also in the past and future. We can never look out thoughtfully at our own immediate surroundings but a course of reasoning will start up, leading us to inquire into the causes that produced the development around us, and at the same time we are led to conjecture the results to follow causes now in operation. We are thus linked indissolubly with the past and the future.

If, then, the past is not simply a stepping-stone to the future, but a part of our very selves, we cannot afford to ignore, or separate it from ourselves as a member might be lopped off from our bodies; for though the body thus maimed, might perform many and perhaps most of its functions, still it could never again be called complete.”

- Charles S. Bryant

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	iv
City of New Prague’s Historic Context Study.....	v
Timeline.....	vii
Map of New Prague	viii
Brief History of New Prague.....	1
Context 1 - Early History	4
Context 2 - Agriculture and Agribusiness	11
Context 3 - Transportation	23
Context 4 – Commerce	31
Context 5 – Religion.....	47
Context 6 – Civic Life	54
Context 7 – Residential.....	72
Preservation Planning Recommendations.....	82
References	84
Appendix.....	87

Acknowledgments

This project has been made possible by the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund, approved by Minnesota voters in 2008, administered by the Minnesota Historical Society. The contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Minnesota Historical Society, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial projects constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Minnesota Historical Society.

Sources of valuable information and assistance include Minnesota Historical Society staff; City of New Prague's Community Development Director Ken Ondich; Mark Zimitsch, ConAgra Foods; Tom Kajer; the New Prague Planning Commission; and Bob Mack at MacDonald & Mack Architects. A special thanks goes to Dennis Dvorak, New Prague's local historian and a member of the New Prague Historical Society, who provided invaluable historic information and guidance throughout this process.



City of New Prague's Historic Context Study

Purpose of the Historic Context Study

The City of New Prague commissioned this study in 2013. It was completed under contract by Smith & Main, a planning firm that specializes in historic preservation and economic development.

The City of New Prague recognizes that the well-being of its downtown, the heart of the community, is paramount to the economic success of the city. To that end, the city is planning on completing a historic survey of the downtown and completing a historic walking tour map to promote the downtown and the history of New Prague.

However, the first step is to complete this Historic Context Study. As recommended in the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Preservation Planning, any decisions regarding a Historic Preservation Plan are best made when the relationship of individual properties to other properties within the City are understood through a historic context study.

The Importance of Historic Context

A historic context is information about historic trends and properties grouped by an important theme in the prehistory or history of a community, state, or the nation during a particular period of time. Because historic contexts are organized by theme, place, and time, they link historic properties to important historic trends. In this way, they provide a framework for determining the significance of a property and its eligibility for a designated resource. Knowledge of historic contexts allows individuals to understand a historic property as a product of its time and as an illustration of aspects of heritage that may be unique, representative, or pivotal.

Themes often relate to the historic development of a community, such as commercial or industrial activities. They may relate to the occupation of a prehistoric group, the rise of an architectural movement, the work of a master architect, specific events or activities, or a pattern of physical development that influenced the character of a place at a particular time in history. It is within the larger picture of a community's history that local significance becomes apparent. Similarly, state and national significance becomes clear only when the property is seen in relationship to trends and patterns of prehistory or history statewide or nationally.

The purpose of this historic context study is to describe New Prague's historic development through several major historic themes. These themes help explain the economic, social and political influences that have shaped New Prague's development and construction of the city's historic buildings.

As a planning document, the context study is intended to be a dynamic document. It will evolve as community needs and desires change. The context study is based primarily on historical research and has not involved a comprehensive inventory of buildings, structures, and landscapes. Future inventory and evaluation will further assist in determining which properties relate to specific themes, possess historical significance, and retain historic integrity.

Preservation planning, as developed by the National Park Service for preserving historic resources, is based on the following principles:

- Significant historic properties are unique and irreplaceable.
- Preservation must often go forward, even without complete information.
- Planning can be applied at any scale.
- History belongs to everyone.

The themes developed for New Prague reflect certain statewide historic contexts developed by the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office. These statewide contexts include:

- Indian Communities and Reservations, 1837-1934
- Railroads and Agricultural Development, 1870-1940
- Urban Centers, 1870-1940
- Minnesota Farms, 1820-1960

The geographical limits of the study go beyond New Prague's city limits into the surrounding countryside, since farming and tourism both have played a significant role in the development of the community. The time period analyzed in this historic context study is between prehistory and 1963.

Preservation Planning Projects to Date

National Register of Historic Places – Church of St. Wenceslaus complex (August, 1980)

National Register of Historic Places – First National Bank of New Prague (August, 1980)

National Register of Historic Places – Hotel Broz (August, 1980)

New Prague

Scott and Le Sueur Counties created by Territory lawmakers - 1853
 Philipps buys 160 acres which would develop into New Prague - 1856
 First Czech families to arrive – Sept 1856

Praha is incorporated as a Village – March 1, 1877
 Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway reaches New Prague – July 27, 1877

First flour mill and grain elevator completed - 1881
 Le Sueur County side of New Prague surveyed and platted – 1883
 Village’s name changes from Prague to New Prague – Feb. 25, 1884

Village of New Prague becomes a City – April 4, 1891
 First City Hall completed – 1891
 New Prague Flour Milling Company completed – 1895
 New Prague Foundry installs first electric lighting system in city – 1895
 Telephone lines are installed in the city - 1898

Existing St. Wenceslaus Church completed - 1907

Streets renamed - 1922

The paving of Main Street is completed – July 1931
 New Prague Golf Club was organized - 1931

M. & St. L. Railroad discontinues passenger service – April 1959

Timeline

1820

1830

1840

1850

1860

Civil War
1861-65

1870

1880

1890

Recession
1893-98

1900

1910

1920

Great
Depression
1929-40

1940

US in WWII
1941-45

1950

U.S./Minnesota

1825 – Fort Snelling is completed

1837 – Treaty with the Ojibwa opens lands east of the Mississippi for settlement
 1843 – Stillwater settled

1847 – St. Paul surveyed and platted
 1849 – Congress establishes the Minnesota Territory
 1850 – 6,077 white settlers living in Minnesota
 1851 and 1855 – treaties of Traverse des Sioux allows settlement in certain areas west of Mississippi
 1857 – SS Central America, carrying gold, crashes, contributing to Panic of 1857, drying up credit for new arrivals to MN
 1858 – MN becomes 32nd State
 1860 – MN population shows 172,023
 1862 – First train arrives in St. Anthony (Minneapolis)
 1862 – U.S./Dakota War
 1862 – Homestead Act becomes law

1873-1879 Recession - (caused by Jay Cook failure in 1873 and five seasons of grasshopper raids)
 1876 – First appearance of the “four new wonders of the world” - the electric light, the phonograph and the microphone invented by Thomas Edison, and telephone developed by Alexander Graham Bell.

1889 – Electric street cars began running in the Twice Cities
 1890 – MN population shows 1,301,826
 1893 – Cleveland Recession

1900 – MN population shows 1,751,394
 1901 – In the Pan-American Exposition, at Buffalo NY, the superior exhibits of wheat, flour, and dairy products of MN caused her to be called “the Bread and Butter State.”
 1908 – Model – T Ford automobile introduced
 1910 – MN population shows 2,075,708

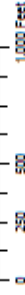
1917 – Ford Motor Co. introduces the Fordson tractor, the first mass produced tractor
 1920 – Census shows for the first time most Americans live in urban, not rural areas
 1920 – Babcock Amendment creates MN’s trunk highway system
 1924 – The Farmall tractor introduced; widespread tractor use begins

1940 – MN population shows 2,792,300



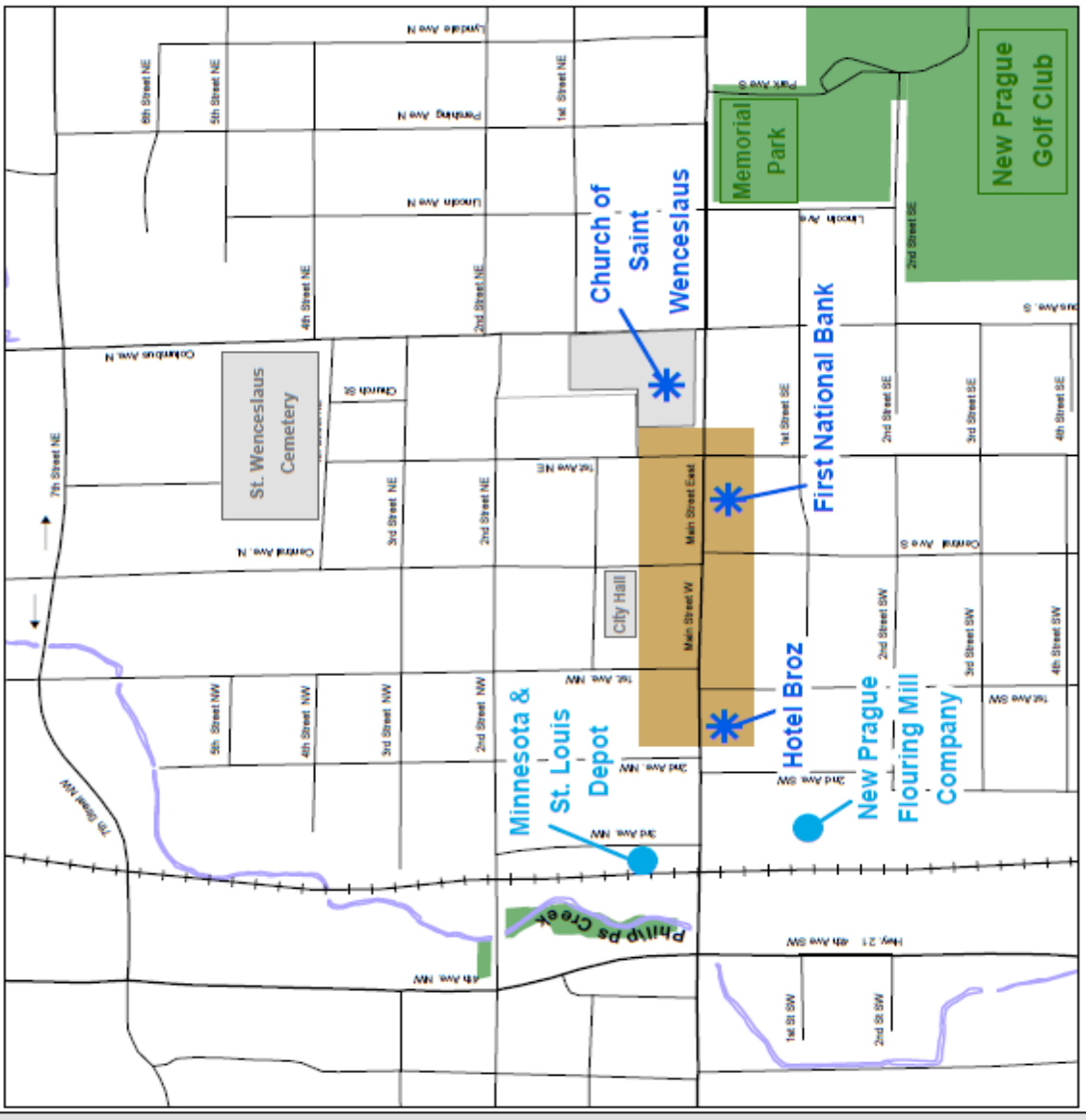
City of New Prague Historic Locations

- Historic Downtown
- Historic Properties of Interest
- * Properties Listed on the National Register of Historic Places



Copyright: September 2013
 Prepared by: New Prague Planning Department
 File: W:\Documents\CDR\MAP_HISTORIC_PRAHGE.DWG

Disclaimer: This map was prepared using the City GIS and is based on the County and City Street Data maintained by the County and City. While the City believes that the data is accurate, the City does not warrant the data to the user and the user shall be responsible for any other purposes requiring the exact measurement of distance and/or direction of the precise location of geographic features. This disclosure is deemed to constitute a release of liability for any damages that may arise from the use of the information contained herein.



Brief History of New Prague

At the advice of Catholic Bishop Rev. Joseph Cretin, Anton Philipp, a native German, first settled within the present limits of New Prague. In 1856 Philipp purchased 160 acres in Helena Township, Scott County. Philipp did not make an official plat of the town but began selling lots that same year, marking the beginning of New Prague. Several Bohemian families came to the area shortly after Philipp arrived.

New Prague's early development was not spectacular for a variety of reasons. First, during the Civil War years, 1861-1865, European immigration almost stopped as European immigrants were naturally wary of the U.S. Civil War. Second, located in the middle of the Big Woods, the enormous challenge of clearing fields proceeded at a slow pace.

The town was known as Praha from 1872 to 1879. On March 1, 1877, state of Minnesota approved the incorporation of Praha as a village. In 1879 the name was changed to Prague.

One of the most important developments in the new village occurred in 1877 when the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway (M & St. L) reaches New Prague. The arrival of the railroad era expedited agriculture as New Prague's most important industry. A link with the outside world enabled farmers to send their commodities to markets and created a conduit to bring inventory to the village's businesses. Just four years after the M & St. L reached New Prague, the first grain elevator and flour mill were completed, marking the beginning of New Prague earning its nickname, the "Flour City."



New Prague Postcard – ca. 1880s (City of New Prague)

Czech immigration to the United States (U.S.) reached its peak during the 1880s with 62,000 coming to the U. S. during this decade. Along with Montgomery, which is approximately eight miles south of New Prague, New Prague was becoming the center of "The Bohemian Triangle" of Minnesota covering parts of Scott, Le Sueur and Rice counties, which are neighboring counties. Through the decades since 1856, Le Sueur County has had more Bohemians than any other county in the state.

Construction was booming in the 1880s. The town's first bank opened in 1883, the Czech-Slovak Protective Society (C. S. P. S.) Opera Hall was built, the New Prague Foundry started business, the second public school was built, and two hotels were constructed.

The village's name was changed from Prague to New Prague on February 25, 1884.



Painting of St. Charles Bridge in Prague, Czech Republic, with the Prague Castle in the background

The 1890s were probably New Prague's heyday decade. The town was becoming a major market for farm produce and was providing goods and services for growing numbers of farmers and villagers for miles around. Streets were being graded and wooden sidewalks built along the streets. New Prague was incorporated as a city on April 4, 1891. New Prague Flouring Milling Company completed its mill in 1895. Electric lights were installed in the city in 1895, and telephone lines were installed in 1898.

Similar to the rest of the state, the 1880s and 1890s were two decades with the greatest growth in population. New Prague's population more than tripled during that 20-year period going from 384 residents to 1228, while the state's population more than doubled during that same period.

Original businesses outgrew their original log and wood-frame storefronts. A large commercial district filled with solid brick, stone, and wood-frame commercial structures developed along Main Street.



Main Street looking west – 1960 (MHS)

From 1910 to 1920 is the only 10 year period that New Prague lost population. In contrast the state had a population increase of 19% during that ten year period. The author of this study could not determine the reason for this discrepancy. Similar to the rest of the state, growth in New Prague slowed during the 1930s and 1940s as a result of the Great Depression and World War II. Population growth rebounded in the 1950s and 1960s as new businesses were locating in New Prague.

Year	New Prague	Lanesburgh Twsp	Helena Twsp	Montgomery	Wheatland Twsp	Minnesota
1850	Not Available	0	0	0	0	
1860	Not Available	299	104	201	192	
1870	Not Available	1123	1089	609	681	
1880	384	1637	1383	261	1464	780,000
1890	955 (+248%)	1374	1245	1089 (+316%)	1448	1.3M (+68%)
1900	1228 (+28%)	1189	1192	979 (-10%)	1082	1.7M (+34%)
1910	1554 (+26%)	1105	1180	1267 (+29%)	908	2.0M (+19%)
1920	1540 (-1%)	997	1106	1297 (+2%)	891	2.4M (+15%)
1930	1543 (0%)	887	1096	1570 (+21%)	1032	2.6M (+7%)
1940	1645 (+6%)	846	1059	1741 (+11%)	1030	2.8M (+9%)
1950	1915 (+16%)	772	942	1913 (+10%)	924	3.0M (+7%)
1960	2533 (+32%)	843	922	2118 (+11%)	1068	3.4M (+15%)

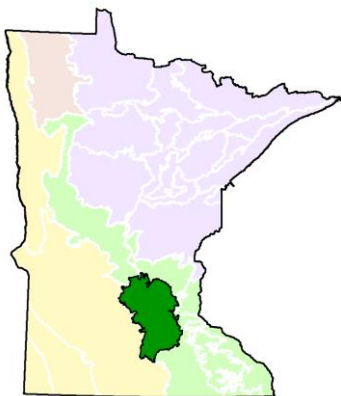
U.S. Census

Context 1 – Early History

Geography and Location

New Prague is located in south central Minnesota, 45 miles southwest from St. Paul and Minneapolis. The City of New Prague is divided by Scott (to the north) and Le Sueur Counties (to the south). Minnesota has over 800 cities but only 34 of those cities are divided between two counties. Both counties were created by lawmakers in the Minnesota Territory in 1853 (three years prior to Anton Philipp buying property that would ultimately become the City of New Prague) (Tikalsky, p. 7).

Le Sueur County was named for Charles Le Sueur, a French explorer who was involved in fur trading and was the first European to explore the Minnesota River valley. Le Sueur County includes the cities of Cleveland, Le Sueur, Heidelberg, Kilkenny, Lonsdale, Montgomery, and Waterville. The County Seat is Le Center, appropriately named because it is located in the center of Le Sueur County. Scott County was named for General Winfield Scott, a hero from the Mexican-American War. Scott County includes the cities of Belle Plaine, Elko New Market, Jordan, Prior Lake, Savage, and Shakopee, which is the County Seat.



*Map of the Big Woods
(DNR)*

New Prague is located in the center of what was called the “Big Woods,” a 40-mile-wide band of deciduous trees that started 100 miles northwest of the Twin Cities, near St. Cloud and continued south to Mankato. Prior to settlement, the most common tree species of the Big Woods were red oak, sugar maple and American elm (MN DNR). The Big Woods were so thick that the first pioneers traveling by foot would make a trail for themselves by tying a rope, or by making a hatchet notch on trees so they would not get lost (Tikalsky, p. 6). Most of this forest was removed by the settlers so they could farm the rich soil. In fact, only 4% of the original Big Woods area is covered with the original forest (MN DNR).

The Big Woods were interspersed with numerous lakes and marshes and some natural meadowlands along the Minnesota River. The forest provided an abundance of small game animal and cranberries, which grew in the marshes and were picked by the Indians to sell in St. Paul, long before the whites settled in the New Prague area.

The closest navigable river is the Minnesota River, which is 22 miles north of New Prague. The Minnesota River was an important tributary to the Mississippi River that formed the backbone of this area’s transportation network. Before European settlers arrived, the Dakota Indians named this river the “Minnesota,” which means the river of the bleary water. As early as 1700, French fur traders called it the St. Pierre or St. Peter River. In 1852 Martin McLeod asked the territorial legislature to change the name contending that, “Minnesota is the true name for this stream, as given to it in ages past, by the strong and powerful tribes of aborigines, the Dahkotahs, who dwelt upon its banks....” (Neill, p. 168).

Native American Settlement

The Dakota were the last Native Americans to control the area around New Prague. Originally from the Great Lakes region, the Dakota moved to western Minnesota after being pushed out by the Ojibwa. The Dakota lived in villages in the summer, and broke up into smaller groups in the winter to follow deer and other animals. The Dakota nation occupied most of present-day Minnesota, and parts of the current states of North and South Dakota.



Dakota camp near Shakopee – ca. 1890 (MHS)

Dakotah translates into “a union of friendly tribes” as there were originally seven tribal groups in the Dakota nation: Mdewakanton, Sisseton, Wahpeton, Wahpekute, Yankton, Yanktonais, and Teton. It is said that the Chippewa called the Indians they found here the “Na-dou-esse” which meant “snake in the grass.” The French made it plural “Nadousioux”, and the English shortened it to “Sioux” (Kajer, p. 55).

In 1851, the Dakota signed two treaties with the U.S. government: the Traverse des Sioux and Mendota treaties. The accumulative result of the two treaties was the relocation of the Dakota to two adjoining reservations stretching 150 miles along the Minnesota River. Encompassing a strip of land 10 miles wide on each side of the river, the original reservations reached from northwest of New Ulm to near the present-day border of South Dakota.

Under the terms of the two treaties the Dakota agreed to give up approximately 35 million acres of land in exchange for “perpetual peace,” \$1,665,000 to be paid out over 50 years and services that included blacksmiths, doctors, schools, carpenters and training on how to become farmers. Although the Dakota had been hunters for generations, the federal government pressured them into becoming farmers instead. Any Dakota that did not cooperate was denied food or money promised to them through the treaties.

The treaties required two Dakota Indian bands, the Sisseton and Wahpeton, to move from the area and in turn opened up 24 million acres of land for settlement as speculators and immigrants surged across Minnesota looking for investment opportunities and farm sites to call their own (Gardner, p. 2).

The last known battle between the Shakopee band of the Dakota and the Ojibwa occurred near Shakopee, just 20 miles from New Prague. The “Battle of Shakopee” took place on May 27, 1858, with about 150 warriors on each side. This is the same year that Minnesota became a state and there were

already a substantial number of European settlers that had established homes in this area. The fighting took place in “the narrows” between the two river bottom lakes opposite Shakopee (Rice Lake and Grass Lake). The battle only lasted one day but a number of warriors were killed (Folwell, p. 25.)

Early White Settlement

Although New Prague is considered to be the oldest Czech colony in Minnesota, it was actually a German named Anton Philipp who first located within the present limits of the city. Born in Bavaria, Philipp moved to Cincinnati, Ohio in 1850. After hearing about the fertile soil and good farming climate in the southern part of the newly created Minnesota Territory, Anton Philipp and his family headed to St. Paul, Minnesota. Unfamiliar with the new territory, Philip asked Catholic Bishop Rev. Joseph Cretin, who was in charge of an extensive frontier dioceses, for advice on where to stake a claim. Bishop Cretin was the first Roman Catholic Bishop of Saint Paul. Cretin Avenue in St. Paul, Cretin-Derham Hall High School, and Cretin Hall at the University of St. Thomas are named for him. Bishop Cretin directed Phillip to the region bordering the boundary line of Scott and Le Sueur counties, and in 1856 Philipp purchased 160 acres in section 34, Helena Township, Scott County on the southeast quarter of the southwest quarter of that section. Phillip did not make an official plat of the town but began selling lots that same year, marking the beginning of New Prague (*New Prague Times*, July 13, 2006, p. 6).

Anton and his wife, Clara, spent their first years in a log house on the bank of Sand Creek, east of New Prague. The cabin was 20’ x 10’, with two rooms, one window and a homemade door. The roof was made of straw placed on logs and dirt placed on top of the straw. Anton and his wife Clara had 12 children and eventually outgrew the cabin. The Philipp family then built and lived in the first brick home in the community, which was located west of the railroad depot (razed) (Tikalsky, p. 5).

The immigrants from Czechoslovakia arrived here almost by mistake. Just months after Philipp settled in the New Prague area, Czech immigrants Vrtis, Borak, Hanzel, Stepka, Bruzek and others came up from Dubuque, Iowa in search of homesteads. Like Philipp they went to St. Paul first seeking direction from Bishop Cretin. This time the bishop sent them westward along the Mississippi River toward St. Cloud, where a Catholic colony had been established. They started out but lost their way; instead of following the Mississippi they followed its tributary, the Minnesota. They arrived in Shakopee instead of St. Cloud. The Czech pioneers were told of a settlement started by Anton Philipp, so they headed towards the settlement and each decided to claim 160 acres around Philipp’s cabin. They later returned to Iowa for their families (Kajer, p. 27).

Bohemia is a country in central Europe that has been ruled over time by various sovereigns including the Holy Roman Empire and the Habsburg Empire. During the early part of the 20th Century, Bohemia was part of Czechoslovakia, and currently makes up two-thirds of the Czech Republic. The City of Prague has always been Bohemia’s capital.

The vast majority of the Czech who immigrated to the United States between 1850 and 1890 came to escape hunger, not political oppression. The economic conditions in Bohemia (and much of Europe) had been extremely difficult and oppressive for generations and were worsening for all but the rich and nobility. Men and women were forced to work for nobles and whatever money they made was heavily taxed. As the nobles controlled the forests, even hunting was forbidden to peasants, and violators were severely punished (Kajer, p. 7).

Being repressed in their homeland for so many years, the Czech pioneers looked for freedom and the opportunity to own their own land. It has been suggested that they, and many thousands of Bohemians that followed, were actually attracted to the timber-covered areas of southern Minnesota because the ownership of forest land was to them a symbol of lordship and power, for in Bohemia practically all the forests were owned by the nobility (Kajer, p. 7).

After 1865 and the Civil War, Bohemian immigrants came in large numbers to this area, and there was strength in numbers. They spoke the same language and shared common ethnic, social, and economic well-being. Food, music and faith were important to the Czech immigrants.

The pioneers had a difficult time being the first settlers in the area. Money was scarce, life-threatening diseases were common, and mysterious Indians and dangerous wild animals were always on the settlers' minds. Meager crops raised in tiny clearings supplemented by game and wild fruits were their first means of substance. Planting of crops was very difficult because of the stumps that the settlers had to remove in the first years with crude implements, mostly homemade (*New Prague Times*, July 13, 2006, p. 6). Clearing fields from the "Big Woods" was a slow process. Even after 25 years of settlement, Scott County still had less than one-fourth of its 235,899 acres under cultivation (Kajer, p. 102).

The first winter that the Bohemian pioneers experienced remains the fourth coldest winter in southern Minnesota history. The pioneers spent a great deal of time that first winter huddled together in smoke-filled, "dugout" cabins near the fire to keep warm. During the night they bundled close together under layers of blankets and extra clothing, having someone to get up every hour or two to re-stoke the fire (Kajer, p. 31).

Although the Dakota Indians living in the area had left by October, 1853, as agreed to in earlier treaties, many Indians came back to their traditional areas for the season or to stay. During the first years of pioneer settlement, Native Americans roamed the woods and were commonly seen by the settlers in the New Prague area. Mathias Philipp, son of the original founder, recalled in 1931, "The Indians greatly outnumbered the whites. There were Indians everywhere in the first years. They didn't cause the settlers any serious trouble, although they were continually begging for food. Father used to go hunting with them, and they would let him have all the meat he wanted, but never any of the skins, from deer, bears and other animals."

Joseph Iten, who was less than two years old when his parents settled west of Lexington in 1856, recalled over 70 years later in 1928:

Yes....The country was full of Indians when I was a boy. They were everywhere and we never knew when they would appear at our cabin. There was one large camp near St. Thomas and another on the shores of Rice Lake. The braves spent their time hunting and fishing or staging their tribal dances and other ceremonies. They did not molest the whites, however, and we got along nicely with them. In fact Indian boys were my playmates, and I had a great time with them. We used to shoot small game with bows and arrows (Kajer, p. 59).

Other settlers also recollect the general attitude that the Indians in the area were not threatening or troublesome, but were often a nuisance because they were entering cabins without warning or invitation begging for food or stealing it. However, the Indians would always return with deer meat or fish for the settlers, sometimes placing it on the table when no one was home

To survive the primitive conditions of the early settlement, some early pioneers went to St. Paul for weeks or months to work for additional cash. Some went in the winter to chop wood. Those with construction experience on the railroad had less trouble finding work in St. Paul. Because of the stresses that they faced, many settlers would have gone back to St. Paul or Dubuque if they had had any real choice (Kajer, p. 31).

A fortunate discovery for the settlers was the presence of wild ginseng in the forest, which became one of the first sources of cash in the area. The Chinese used this herb for medical purposes, and by 1856 the U.S. was exporting over 350,000 pounds of it annually, mainly to Asia. One day's labor could bring up to five dollars, which in those days was a considerable sum. With the much needed money, the settlers were able to pay old debts, clear up mortgages, and buy supplies. The wooded areas were soon cleared of the ginseng roots, however, and the ginseng bonanza that began in 1857 was almost ended by 1861 (Kajer, p. 33).

With most settlers starting from relatively equal social status, it was easy for neighbors to work together in constructing their first log homes, improving roads, building their first church, sharing implements, and especially participating in community celebrations and festivals. For example, one farmer would purchase their first breaking plow, while another farmer would buy the first cultivator pulled by oxen, and the farmers would share the use of these implements. This sharing was common among the pioneers to save money as they acquired more advanced equipment. The settlers would also alternate making trips to Shakopee, a distance of roughly 22 miles, which was the closest town to buy the necessities of life in the late 1850s (Kajer, p. 51).

In 1862 President Lincoln signed the Homestead Act into law, which resulted in a surge of immigrants claiming land and speculation of areas around New Prague that were not yet settled. The Act specified that anyone 21 years old or head of a family could "homestead" up to 160 acres free of charge if they cultivated the land for at least five years (Kajer, p. 80).

That same year, the U.S. – Dakota War of 1862 (also known as the Sioux Uprising) broke out in part as a reaction to events a thousand miles to the southeast. When the Civil War erupted in 1861, the federal government redirected funding and attention to troops fighting the Confederates. As a result, the Dakota Indian's promised supplies came months late. The Dakota War effectively ended after the Battle of Wood Lake in September 1862. Even though the Dakota War lasted only six weeks, the panic it caused among the white settlers took years to overcome.

At least 500 white settlers were killed during the conflict; it is unknown how many Dakota died. The Dakota paid dearly, though. As Little Crow, leader of the Dakota, had predicted, "Kill one, two, or ten, and ten times ten will come to kill you." Those Dakota Indians that were not killed, lost their land, forfeited all payments due to them, and were moved into camps and reservations far from Minnesota. The largest mass execution in U.S. history was a result of the Dakota War. Originally, over 300 Dakota men were sentenced to be hanged, but President Abraham Lincoln commuted most of their sentences to prison. On December 26, 1862, 38 Dakota men were hanged in Mankato. Little Crow finally said, "We are only little herds of buffalo. The great herds that covered the prairies are no more" (Minnesota Travel Companion, p. 125).

As word spread of the conflict, many settlers on farms near New Prague buried their tools and valuables and temporarily gathered together for protection. Fortunately for the New Prague area settlers, it was

soon apparent that local Indians were not at all involved in the uprising, and the New Prague area settlers that had left their homes soon returned to their farmsteads (Kajer, p. 68).

Early Townsite Development

The physical layout of Minnesota's towns and cities depicts the backgrounds and interests of those community's first settlers. Railroad communities in Minnesota like Crookston, Gaylord, Moorhead, Morris and Willmar were professionally platted by the railroad engineers. Lots and streets widths were standardized. Minnesota communities like Alexandria were founded by professional land speculators who platted the town for the sole purpose of selling lots and making a profit. Because of this, its original plat also had standard-sized lots and street widths. New Prague, on the other hand, was settled by German and Bohemian immigrants who lacked professional surveying experience and were more interested in farming and providing for their families than land speculation. Instead of platting the town, Philipp started subdividing his property in 1856 to the original Bohemian immigrants.

The dense forest of the Big Woods also made it difficult to complete accurate surveys. It is believed that if the early settlers had known exactly where the location of the county line was, it is likely the settlement would have been located north or south of the present city (*New Prague Times*, August 27, 1931, p. 1).

Progress in the new village was very slow at first and for the first 25 years, the New Prague settlers felt isolated and lonely, being far removed from a railroad or navigable river, and shut off from communication. In fact travel was limited to necessities only (flour, coffee, sugar). The dense forest of the Big Woods restricted travel to a very long walk by foot or harnessing a team of oxen and embarking on a two or three-day trip to Shakopee or Faribault. It was not until 1910 that roads through the Big Woods were passable for horse and carriages (*New Prague Times*, July 13, 2006, p. 7).

Without a saw mill nearby, the first buildings in New Prague were constructed of logs. The first four buildings in town were a log church (St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church), Bruzek cabin, the Vrtis building and the first Philipp home. The Vrtis building was the first store in New Prague and was housed in a double log house, just east of St. Wenceslaus church. The layout of this cabin, which was built in 1858 or 1859, was typical in early-settler days. It consisted of two small compartments separated by an alley way, with a single roof over the cabins and the alley way (razed).



During the next few years a number of business places sprang up, and a flourishing village was established long before the railroad came (*New Prague Times*, August 27, 1931, p. 1).

New Prague, however, was little more than a swamp in the 1860s. Not only did the huge stumps from the trees of the Big Woods that dotted Main Street cause problems for the settlers, but there was also a great deal of water in the lower areas. The creek that had its source in the "park" area (now Memorial Park) poured its waters into the Main Street swamp whenever there

was a heavy rain or when the snow melted in the spring. The creek, however, also acted as a sort of

sewer, carrying out some of the surplus water and without its presence, much of the original town would have been uninhabitable (*New Prague Times*, July 13, 2006, p. 7).

Settlers were obliged to build their homes and businesses high on high ground or raised above the ground to escape the floods. Earlier commercial buildings typically had as many as five steps to the entrance. But Main Street was gradually filled in until it had been raised as much as seven feet in some places (*New Prague Times*, August 27, 1931, p. 4).

The village initially grew to the north and south. There had been almost no growth east of St. Wenceslaus Church. Starting east from the Catholic school site, Albert Vrtis owned 100 acres on the north side of Main Street. Only a few houses had been built along the road to the east. Some referred to the northeast area as “Frogtown” because of the low ground around there. On the south side of Main Street, the Bruzeks owned over 112 acres, which would eventually become sites for a creamery, the city power plant, the water tower, a city park and southeast residences (Kajer, p. 79).

For settler families, along with meat and potatoes, flour was a crucial staple for day to day survival. Because of the dense forest of the Big Woods, settlers first carried their grain on their backs to the grist mill east of Shakopee for grinding, and then carried home the resulting flour. Then they carried their grain to the Vondrasek mill about two miles east of town. By 1875, however, the first steam-powered mill was built on the west end hill of New Prague by Suchomel and Bisek (Kajer, p. 79).

By 1880 (seven years before the railroad arrived and the town was incorporated) the newfound community had 384 residents.

Expected Property Types

Property types listed within these contexts will generally identify specific New Prague examples when possible. Unfortunately, few of these examples exist for the Early History context.

Gravesites/mounds
Other archaeological sites
House/cabin/farmstead sites

Context Recommendations

The recommendation for the Early History context is to identify sites, structures and objects associated with Native American and the early Euro-American settlers of New Prague.

Context 2 – Agriculture and Agribusiness

The agricultural industry has had the most significant impact on the physical and economic development of New Prague, some of which are still evident today from farm buildings to local roads. During the village's infancy (1860-1900) and well into the twentieth century, agriculture was the leading export industry, bringing the most wealth into the community. Local businesses like the blacksmiths, general stores, saloons, harness shops, hardware stores, banks and bakeries all initially relied on the success of the local farmers. The farmers and village residents made significant investments in mills, grain elevators, creameries and farms that helped shape the landscape of the village of New Prague and the surrounding country side.

Early Agriculture

In 1862, during the Civil War, President Lincoln signed the Homestead Act. To take advantage of the Homestead Act, settlers had to be over 21 and must never have borne arms against the U.S. (i.e. not fought for the Confederate Army during the Civil War.) The Act promised 160 acres of land, which would be owned outright by the settler after five years if he built a home, made improvements and farmed the land. The land could also be bought outright for \$1.25/acre.

Northern politicians supported the Homestead Act because they wanted the land west of the Mississippi be made available to independent farmers, rather than wealthy plantation owners who would develop it with slaves, and force yeomen farmers onto marginal lands. The Homestead Act was vital in allowing immigrants of modest means the opportunity to own a sizeable farm and use their financial resources to improve the land rather than paying a mortgage. But even with free land, a farmer often had to borrow money to get started (house, barn, fences, tools, animals, seed, etc.) (Gilman, p. 125).

Clearing the Big Woods of eastern Minnesota to farm was time consuming work, but early farmers were wary of land where trees did not grow because they thought the soil was not productive enough to grow trees let alone crops. However, they did not realize that it only took three years to prepare the prairie for farming compared to twenty years to prepare woodland of the Big Woods for crop production (Drache, p. 22). For subsistence, early settlers planted vegetables such as potatoes, carrots, corn, onions and cabbage in the small clearings that they created in the Big Woods.

After becoming established nearly all the pioneer farmers acquired a few hogs, sheep, beef cows, dairy cows, and a small flock of chickens. They could make milk, cream and butter from the dairy cows. Eggs and butter were traded for household needs. A trip to the village to exchange produce for supplies established the term "trade area" which is still used today.

"King Wheat"

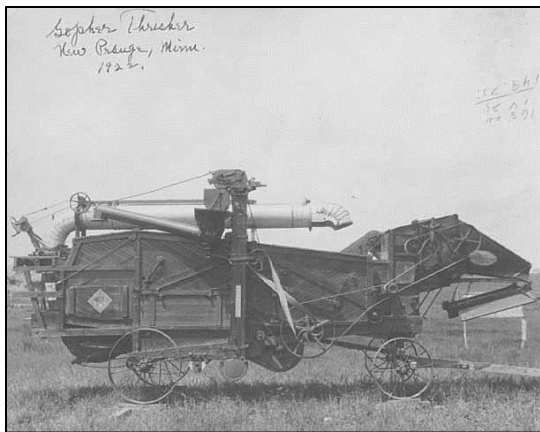
Market demand, population growth, technological innovation and transportation improvements all enabled farmers to move from subsistence farming to profitability for the first time during the 1870s and 1880s. Wheat was the first crop grown commercially on a large scale in Minnesota. Wheat was considered a frontier crop because it is dependent on abundant and inexpensive land. It had arrived in

Minnesota in 1859 after moving westward along the U.S. frontier. Wheat was “the premier lazy man’s crop, taking relatively little labor (and little expertise) to produce,” according to historian David Danborn (Danborn, p. 147).



Making hay stacks on Tickalsky farm - 1853 (MHS)

Not only was wheat easy to grow but it was also easily stored, transported and graded so as to become an article of trade earlier and for longer distances than more bulky and more perishable products. Grain could also be converted into money the same year it was grown (Larson, p. 25-26). The first farmers surrounding New Prague grew enough wheat to grind it into flour for their families. After the railroad arrived in 1877, wheat became the main crop. The majority of the wheat grown locally was sold to the local grain elevators, which stored the wheat before shipping it to more distant mills.



Gopher Threshing machine - 1922 (MHS)

The introduction of the threshing machines and mechanical reapers in the 1850s also assisted in moving farmers past the subsistence level of farming. An 1850 threshing machine could thresh 24 bushels an hour compared to six men who could manually thresh two bushels an hour. These were stationary engines which were pulled from farm to farm by horses. South of town, John Tuma bought his first steam engine and thresher. This began the practice of communal farming, when the Tuma, Zelenka, Dietz and other families would provide their steam engine threshers for up to 40-50 neighbors each harvest season because the large threshing machines and steam engines were too expensive for every farmer. Sometimes a threshing crew slept at the farm where they were working. A farmer’s wife was

expected to supply the meals; neighbor women exchanged help during each other’s threshing. And the end of the harvest celebration was one of the social highlights of the year (*New Prague Times*, July 13, 2006). Communal farming like this continued for the next 60 years (Kajer, p. 117).

Farming innovations were important to New Prague residents as much as they were to farmers. Not only were their livelihoods directly dependent on the agricultural economy, but many still owned land and farms in the surrounding countryside (Kajer, p. 98).

All of the grain that Minnesota farmers were growing could not be turned into flour as soon as it was harvested. Thus, the grain elevator was introduced to store all and sell all the grain streaming in from the Minnesota farms. Large grain elevators soon distinguished Minnesota's rural skylines as every railroad station had at least one grain elevator associated with it.

New machines and techniques that were introduced in the Minneapolis mills in the early 1870s made Minnesota wheat as viable for flour for bread as high-quality wheat grown elsewhere. Moreover, the railroads enabled farmers to ship their wheat to Minneapolis' Mills and Duluth's shipping ports (Larson, p. 118-119). This led to Minnesota moving from fifth to first rank in wheat producing states of the Union during the 1880s.

By the early 1900's Minnesota was no longer a state of subsistence farmers who struggled to put food on the table. A vast expansion of farmland and the application of modern technology had turned this state into one of the nation's leading producers of wheat, giving Minnesota the nickname, "King Wheat."

With farmers and businesses prospering, one of the first improvements they made to their farms was to replace the log cabins with wood-framed or brick farmhouses. Although of different sizes, most homes built just before and after the turn of the century followed a rather similar model, the Gabled-El. Similar two-story brick homes commonly used light-colored Chaska or Jordan brick. The bricks were hauled from Chaska in many horse team and wagon trips. A disappearing number of these solid brick homes still survive on area farms, in New Prague and neighboring City of Montgomery over 100 years later (Kajer, p. 142).

Diversification

Wheat was the major crop grown in this area until the 1920s. But soon farmers realized that it did not pay to put all their eggs into one basket, and the methods of farming started to gradually change between the 1900s and 1920s. The acreage of wheat gradually decreased while that of corn increased, and more and more attention was being given to dairying and stock raising (Larson, p. 199). This gradual change to a diversified farm practice can be attributed to a number of factors.

- Dr. E. E. Novak (a local leader described on pg. 68) is credited for advocating the need to diversify field crops and improve area herds using purebred stock. He was the first to begin raising corn and bought purebred hogs and cattle.
- In 1922, with the leadership of Novak, the Community Club organized a livestock show to develop interest in diversified farming, improve livestock quality, encourage 4-H club work, and provide educational opportunities in agriculture (*New Prague Times*, July 13, 2006).
- The settlement of the Dakotas and the consequent breaking up of the virgin land, after 1885, almost doubled the wheat yield of the northwestern states effectively reducing the prices Minnesota farmers could collect for their wheat (Larson, p. 199).
- Years of growing wheat exclusively and the associated deteriorating of soil quality prompted farmers to diversify their crops.

- The State Agricultural College introduced a number of varieties of white and yellow corn that were well adapted to the soil and weather conditions of the county (Larson, p. 199).

Diversification was beneficial to the farmers. It protected farmers from being completely wiped out by the failure of a single crop. Farmers could earn regular “egg money” and a “milk check” instead of relying on a single payment for the grain harvest in the fall. Livestock and poultry made better use of the family’s total labor pool, including children, and spread farm labor more evenly throughout the year. Diversification also made good use of farm by-products. Livestock could eat crop residue missed during harvest, and excess milk could be fed to young pigs and calves. Fields could be naturally fertilized with manure, and untillable land could be used for pasture (Granger, p. 3.29).

The effect of diversification on the built environment on farms surrounding New Prague was profound.



Albert Simon’s Farm – west of New Prague

Livestock farming, and especially dairying, required farmers to make significant capital investments for new buildings and equipment. Silos (air tight structures that preserved green fodder for the winter months) allowed farms to feed dairy cows nutritious green material year-round, which encouraged more milking through the winter. A silo alone could increase the livestock-carrying capacity of a farm by more than one-fourth (Wayne, p. 30-37). Two-story barns (usually housing animals below and feed such as hay above) and silos became a significant part of New Prague’s rural landscape.

Besides dairy barns and silos, a variety of smaller structures were required for the multiple farming tasks involved in a diverse farming operation. Smaller barns, such as granaries, were used to store small grain like wheat or oats. Machine sheds were used to store farm equipment and implements. Chicken barns housed the chickens that were taken care of by the lady of the farm for her egg money. Hog barns to keep pigs. Corn cribs were used to store ears of picked corn to dry and grind up for feed for the cows and pigs. They were open so that the ears of corn would dry naturally. Well houses were used to store the pump for pumping water.



Chicken Coop



Machine Shed



Smokehouse



Corn Crib



Granary

The first windmills were used for grinding grain, but by the 1870s many were pumping water for livestock. Soon almost every farm also had a windmill

It was the financial boom for farmers during the 1910s, however, that enabled many farmers to erect the big dairy barns, silos and secondary structures needed to diversify. Diversified farming dominated Minnesota agriculture until the late 1950s (Granger, p. 3.29).

Industrialization

It was during the first two decades of the 20th century that Minnesota farmers “began to shift to intensive production, employing technology and scientific methods to increase the output of their land and labor – a process some call industrialization” (Danbom, p. 142).

Gasoline tractors first appeared in about 1910. At that time, no one anticipated how they would transform the agricultural landscape. Tractors worked faster than horses, did not grow tired and did not eat. Fields once needed for hay and oats to feed horses could be used for other crops. However, most farmers kept a team of horses for certain jobs, even when they had a tractor (Gilman, p. 160).

About this time, Congress promoted the Agricultural Extension Service, which was a federal-state partnership with the federal government funding the placement of an extension agent in each county seat. Working through state colleges, the service agents told farmers how to make more money by using “scientific” methods. Among these were new kinds of crops, new fertilizers, chemicals to kill insects and plant diseases – and, of course, more machinery. To be successful, the agents told farmers, they had to produce more – just as other non-agricultural industries did (Gilman, p. 161).

World War I brought greater demand for food and high prices. The government urged farmers to help the country win the war by raising more food. Between 1917 and 1919 many farmers bought tractors to keep up with the demand. Gasoline tractors and efficient machinery, such as mechanical manure spreaders, corn binders, and hay loaders, made the farmer more proficient and self-reliant. More efficient machines enabled a farmer to plant and harvest his crops faster by himself without help of his neighbors as his father and grandfather did. This efficiency also allowed farmers the opportunity to buy and farm more land (Danborn, p. 142).

Eventually, farmers were caught in the tide of industrialism. After World War I, too much food was being raised causing crop prices to fall. To make money at the lower prices, each farmer had to grow even

more crops. Many small farmers gave up through hard times in the 1920s and 1930s. They could not afford the new machines and could not keep going without them. Their fields were taken over by others who could. So year after year, Minnesota counted fewer but larger farms, a trend also experienced in the New Prague area.

Electricity and the Rural Electrification Act brought about great modernization to farming. World War II increased the demand for power machinery as sons of farmers and hired men left the farms for the war. After the war, many veterans found a new way of life off the farm which began the exodus to cities and suburbs.

This period of industrialization of farming marked an unparalleled growth in agriculture, both locally and nationally.

Agribusiness

The farming community has historically been of utmost importance to the New Prague economy since many agricultural businesses have developed in New Prague as a direct result of the surrounding farming enterprises.

Flour Mills

Simmer Flour Mill

As flour was one of the staples for pioneers, it was common for entrepreneurs to construct a grist mill in practically every Minnesota town for local consumption. Right after the saw mill, a flour mill was typically the second commercial enterprise started. By 1870 there were 507 mills counted in the state (Danborn, p. 274).



Simmer Flour Mill – 1892 (MHS)

The first grist mill in New Prague was built in 1875 beside Sand Creek, west of the present ConAgra mill, by Thomas Suchomel and James Bisek. That mill was operated by steam and used millstones for grinding flour. Mr. Simmer's father purchased the mill in 1882 (*New Prague Times*, August 27, 1931, p. 1). The mill, however, had limited storage and no access to the railroad.

New Prague Flouring Mill Company (now ConAgra Foods)

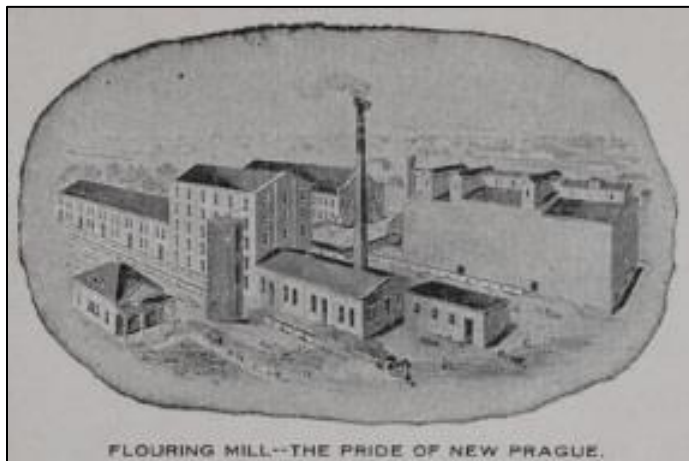
Francis Atherton Bean Sr. began his first milling business in nearby Faribault in 1872 when he took charge of the flour mill his father had purchased after the Civil War, the Polar Star Milling Company. The business prospered until about 1890, when plummeting flour prices and discriminatory railroad freight rates brought about the firm's collapse. Bean was \$100,000 in debt when Polar Star Milling ceased operations.

Heavily in debt and with no assets, at the age of 52, Bean decided to start over. In 1892, Bean and J. H. Mallery, Bean's brother-in-law, rented the vacant Simmer Eclipse Mill in New Prague. By 1894, the Eclipse Roller Mill of Mallery and Bean was a flourishing business. Eighty-five carloads of flour were shipped in August. By November the mill was running 24 hours a day and buying 7-8,000 bushels of wheat per day. It had 25 employees at \$1.25 or more per day (Kajer, p. 169).

After four years of profitable operation at the New Prague site, Bean lost the New Prague lease because the owner wanted to get into the milling business again. Forced to find new facilities, Bean decided to build a new mill complete with grain storage and railroad access.

The New Prague Flouring Mill Company was incorporated with directors Francis A. Bean, William L. Harvey, and John Proschek from New Prague, Luther R. Weld of Faribault and George Tennent of Minneapolis. Bean was president and general manager. The new company reflected the high moral beliefs of its founder, Bean, and employees were not permitted to smoke or drink; were required to attend church, and worked five and one-half days a week (Kajer, p. 182).

The new mill was completed and operations began in 1896. The A Mill building is constructed of cream colored Chaska brick and is five stories tall. Ground dimensions are 48'x70 feet. The engine and boiler



rooms are 38'x48'. The original office building was located left of the mill and has been razed. Bean was foresighted by designing the mill to be twice as large as its original output. By 1897, as much as \$30,000 had been paid out by the company for wheat in one week's time. "The mill is worth more to the community than all its other industries combined" (*The Northwest Magazine*, 1897). The "Seal of Minnesota" flour was originally marketed chiefly in Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin.

New Prague Flouring Mill – 1900 (MHS)

Soon thereafter the Simmer Mill had financial difficulties and Mr. Bean bought it. He salvaged what usable machinery could be used in the new mill and moved the Simmer mill's elevator down from the hill to the Flouring Mill Company site for additional storage capacity. For years the New Prague Flouring Mill Company expanded its operations each year.

While New Prague's nickname became "flour city," just 45 miles to the northeast, Minneapolis was known as the "Flour Milling Capital of the World" from 1880 to the 1930s. The milling industry transformed Minneapolis overnight into a great city that eclipsed its more established neighbor, St. Paul. Between 1880 and 1890 the city's population rose by 350 per cent. In 1884, Minneapolis surpassed Budapest as the world's leading flour miller. And in 1915-16 flour production peaked at 20,443,000 barrels—more than 100 times what it had been 45 years before (Kajer, p. 180 and Danborn, p. 272).

Competition in the flour milling industry was intense, often leaving the smaller mills out of business. Larger millers were better able to secure the capital that allowed innovation, and they had the resources to hire the best engineers, machinists, and employees. Their size allowed them to compete advantageously when buying, shipping, and storing grain, and when shipping flour out, they were able to negotiate the best rates with the railroads. Seeing the handwriting on the wall, most smaller millers either consolidated with or sold out to larger competitors (Danborn, p. 278).

Unlike the smaller mills in Minnesota, under the direction of Bean, the New Prague Flouring Mill Company competed with the large Minneapolis mills with its own expansion (Zimitsch). In 1902, ten years after its initial start-up, the New Prague Flouring Mill expanded by acquiring a mill in Wells, Minnesota, 70 miles south of New Prague. Four years later the company acquired a third operation in Davenport, Iowa. In 1908 the company purchased the Moose Jaw Milling Company in Saskatchewan, Canada and began marketing its Robin Hood brand of flours. In 1910, the New Prague Flouring Mill Company changed its name to International Milling Company in acknowledgement of its expansion into Canada. The company also expanded into the large eastern U.S. markets, now cheaply accessible via the Great Lakes. In 1926, the company began building its sixth and largest U.S. mill in Buffalo, N.Y.



1923 New Prague Flouring Mill Co. Postcard (MHS)

By 1913, International Milling became the largest industry in Le Sueur County. A quarter of a million dollars were paid to the farmers of the country surrounding New Prague and the company employed 250 men (Gresham, p. 414). In 1923, the International Milling Company had expanded to such a degree that the company's offices were moved to Minneapolis. Locally, the mill was the largest employer and market for local farmers' wheat (Kajer, p. 182).

At the time of Bean's death in 1930 the company was operating 9 mills, with a capacity of 25 million bushels, and assets exceeding \$13 million and was exporting flour to countries around the world. Robin Hood Flour became one of the top selling brands of family flour in the U.S.

Even the Minneapolis milling companies began to lose their dominant position in the flour milling industry, after reaching their peak in 1915–1916. The rise of steam power, and later electric power, eroded the advantage that St. Anthony Falls provided in water power. Farmers in the southern plains

developed hearty wheat. The wheat fields of the Dakotas and Minnesota's Red River Valley began suffering from soil exhaustion, and farmers started to raise corn and soybeans. Also, changes in rail shipping rates enabled millers in Buffalo, New York to ship their flour more competitively. In 1965, General Mills shut down the Washburn "A" Mill, along with several others of their oldest mills (Danborn, p. 283). Most recently (during the 1970s and 1980s) flour mills in the Midwest closed as the flouring business changed from Origination Mills, where mills were located near the wheat fields and the finished product was shipped to market, to Destination Mills, when mills followed the population centers along the east and west coasts and the wheat was shipped to these destination centers (Zimitsch).

International Milling Company, on the other hand, continued to expand operations throughout the remaining first half of the twentieth century, by acquiring or building additional mills in New York, Texas, Minnesota, Michigan, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Alberta, Ontario, and Quebec. Beginning in 1951, the company diversified through the purchase of the Eagle Roller Mill Company of New Ulm, Minnesota, manufacturers of rye flours and the super-sweet animal formula feeds. By the early 1960s the company had mills manufacturing feed products in Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, and Wisconsin.

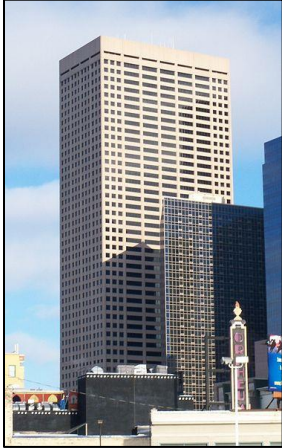
Robin Hood flour soon was distributed across Canada and would become Canada's leading brand. The Canadian business continued to grow, adding mills throughout Canada and erecting an ocean-shipping dock in Vancouver, B.C. Growth accelerated during and immediately following World War II. The company decided to replace its many regional brands of flour in the U.S. with the Robin Hood brand name used so successfully in Canada. Within four years Robin Hood became the third largest selling brand of family flour in the U.S. Fifteen mills and two more elevators were added in the U.S. (International Multifoods).



Canadian Family

In the 1950s, International Milling began exporting industrial flour to Venezuela and in 1958, opened the first of several flour mills in that country. By 1960s, International Milling had become one of the largest flour millers in the world.

Francis Atherton Bean, Jr., known as F. A. Bean and as Frank Bean, was the son of Francis Atherton Bean, worked for the family firm his entire career, beginning in 1900. In 1930 after the death of his father, Francis Atherton Bean, Jr., became the International Milling Company's vice president and its president in 1938. He became chairman of the board of directors in 1943, a position he held until January 1955. International Milling became a public corporation in 1964 when Atherton Bean, chairman of the board and grandson of the founder, hired William Phillips as the first non-Bean family member to lead the company. In 1968, the Company changed its name to International Multifoods Corp. as the company diversified its products, and in 1971 began listing its stock on the New York Stock Exchange ("A History of International Multifoods").



In 1983, the 50-story Multifoods Tower in the City Center development was completed in downtown Minneapolis. This served as the headquarters for International Multifoods Corporation until 1997. In 1988 International Multifoods sold its U. S. flour milling facilities to ConAgra, an Omaha, Nebraska, firm. The New Prague plant employed 135 at the time of the sale. ConAgra's mill in New Prague is still in the top 25% in output in the United States (Zimitsch).

Over the past 117 years, the New Prague Flouring Mill complex has changed to adapt to the demand for flour. The six-story A Mill is still standing and still operational. Three other mill buildings have been added to produce a variety of flour. Over its history the mill also included grain elevators, an electrical power plant, a coal-burning power plant, offices, cooper shop, storage sheds and other auxiliary buildings.

Elevators

By the mid-1880s, most of the major mills processing wheat were in Minneapolis and St. Paul. They also owned their own elevators in rural towns. However, New Prague was an exception with six independent elevators supporting local independent mills.

The first grain elevator in New Prague was F. Nicolin's elevator located on the east side of the M & St. L's switch line. By 1892, two more elevators were built also east of the M & St. L's switch line – Quirk & Carson's Elevator and G. Sunwalt's Elevator. In 1898, The Minnesota Western Grain Company opened by the depot and the Minnesota and Northwestern elevator opened (Kajer, p. 193).

The first grain elevators were typically made of wood and covered on the outside with sheets of iron to prevent fire. They later were often made of steel or concrete.

Creameries

The beginning of the dairying business in Minnesota started slowly. Housewives first started their butter-making with the few "scrub" cows found on the farm. Rewards, however, were pitiful. Early farmers were fortunate that the early merchants accepted butter and eggs in trade. The local merchants were performing a service to the settlers by providing a market for butter that could not have been disposed of otherwise, as the older communities in the East and Midwest supplied most of the country's butter. The early merchants were performing an early form of the "buy local" program.

As the decades passed, however, changes came. Enterprising dairymen in the East and in such states as Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, had evolved new theories and new methods. Wisconsin, too, was advancing steadily, with Iowa somewhat ahead of Southern Minnesota. By 1889, virtually every town in agricultural area in Minnesota boasted a small creamery, usually privately owned.

The first creamery in New Prague was F. J. Maertz who constructed a brick building on the east side of his store in 1891. Before long he was operating at capacity churning between 800 and 1,300 pounds of butter per day.

By 1895 Charles Mickus was operating the New Prague Creamery in a new building just west of the M. & St. L. tracks, across from the present mill. He sold New Prague Creamery Butter and was shipping up to 9,000 pounds of butter a month (Kajer, p. 172).

The task of organizing creamery co-ops began as conversation at community and church events. Farmers were impressed with the cooperative idea. Committees were soon appointed to secure pledges of milk, draft articles of incorporation, select a site, and raise capital for a building (Slettom). Minnesota soon had 555 co-op creameries by 1906 and an all-time high of 671 in 1930 (Slettom). Creameries were not considered monopolies, however, because Andrew Volstead, a U.S. Representative from Granite Falls, helped pass the Capper-Volstead Act in 1922, which exempted farm cooperatives from anti-trust laws. Early after the turn of the century, talk focused on forming a cooperative creamery in New Prague. The New Prague Cooperative Creamery would not be organized until 1912 with Dr. E. E. Novak president, with John Meyer, William Dietrich and M. J. Tikalsky as managers.

A new brick building was erected in June of 1912. It was located on East Main Street, just east of the municipal power plant. Total production in 1913 was 243,397 pounds of butter. By 1929, this had increased 450 percent to 1,135,000 pounds and it was decided a larger facility was needed. Later that year, six lots were purchased from F. A. Bean, owner of New Prague Flouring Milling Company, in the Philipp Addition. The new plant was opened for business in the first week of May 1930. The structure was of light-face brick and its ground dimensions were 90' x 74'. The creamery employed 17 people in 1931 (*New Prague Times*, August 27, 1931, p. 6). The building operated as a creamery until 2001 and was razed in January, 2008.



New Prague Creamery (MHS)

Expected Property Types

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

Houses of individuals associated with the context

Recommendations and Future actions

- Conduct a cultural resources survey to identify and evaluate all resources in the city relating to the agricultural and agribusiness context. Further specific recommendations should be based on the findings of the survey.
- Because of its historical significance to the local economy, the City should consider completing an eligibility report on the possibility of nominating the New Prague Flouring Mill to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Context 3 - Transportation

During the two decades after Minnesota became a state in 1858 development of the Big Woods in Minnesota was a slow process for two main reasons. First, during the years of the Civil War from 1861 to 1865, immigration from Europe to the United States almost stopped as European immigrants were naturally weary of the Civil War. The effect on Minnesota was profound as many European immigrants were farmers looking for cheap land on the frontier to start their lives (Larsen, p. 237). Second, and most importantly, was the lack of an efficient transportation system. Travel was extremely difficult because of poor roads and the thick woods.

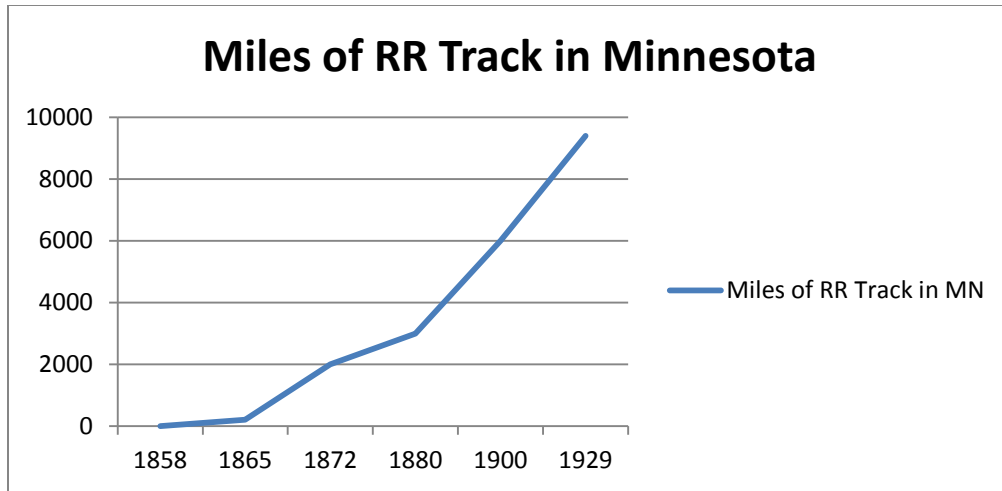
Towns founded along navigable rivers, such as the Minnesota River, had an advantage of allowing settlers to float their products to markets. In 1867 the Minnesota River saw the first big year of shipping with 13 boats making 292 trips. Wheat, lumber, livestock, some potatoes, furs and other produce were shipped out of Shakopee while settler supplies, mail and more immigrants were shipped in. However, even rivers were not reliable as they were usually icebound four or five months every winter, and were sometimes too low for navigation during the summers.

Primitive roads complemented transportation by river. By 1864 a road serving New Prague from the north, "the Bohemian-Jordan Road," was completed. This road was later officially titled "Woodrow Wilson Highway." The "Montgomery Road" started at the present *New Prague Times'* office, served New Prague from the south (Kajer, p. 76). Transportation by land, however, was expensive as the condition of the roads prohibited the amount of building supplies that could be carried to the settlers and, likewise, the amount of grain and other goods from the settlers that could be brought to market (Larsen, p. 237-38).

Until an efficient, and therefore economic, means of transportation of goods to market and building supplies to the frontier was developed, settlement of the frontier would continue to lag. "The frontier country was united in a desire to find a cure for the barrier of distance which discouraged settlement in the rich but isolated western lands. Without navigable rivers, the one practicable means of making such lands accessible was the construction of the railroads"(Larsen, p. 238).

Trains

Construction of the railway network through Minnesota was retarded first by financial panic in 1857, then the State foreclosing on all railroad properties in 1860, and the Civil War from 1861 to 1865. But once the railroads were underway, the system developed at a lively speed. The first tracks to be laid in Minnesota were between St. Paul and St. Anthony in 1862. Just three years later trains were operating on over 200 miles of tracks in the state. With the end of the Civil War, construction of the railroads began in earnest. By 1866, trains from the Twin Cities reached St. Cloud, a distance of 70 miles. By 1871 trains from Minneapolis reached the Red River Valley. By the end of the decade the railroad mileage had increased to more than 3000, and by the end of the century that figure had more than doubled. The mileage of railroad track peaked in 1929, when the automobile was becoming popular, at nearly 9,400 miles.



(Larsen)

Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad (M & St. L)

The Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway was created on May 26, 1870 by a group of Minnesota investors interested in establishing a railroad connection between Minneapolis and the agricultural regions to the south and circumventing the power of Milwaukee and Chicago and their railroads with a Minneapolis-based system of their own. There was not a railroader among those who joined in founding the M & St. L. They were lumbermen, flour millers, politicians, and bankers: John S. Pillsbury, Henry Titus Welles, and brothers William D. and Cadwallader C. Washburn (Hofsommer, p. 3).

On April 11, 1877, M & St. L started building its line from Merriam Junction, just south of Shakopee, to Albert Lea. The route selected passed through the small communities of Jordan, New Prague, Waterville, Waseca, Hartland and Manchester, and created new villages of Montgomery, Kilkenny, Palmer, Otisco, and New Richland. On July 27th, 1877, the first train of cars of the M & St. L railway arrived in New Prague. The railroad's main line was ultimately extended south from the Twin Cities into Iowa and then east to Peoria, Illinois (Hofsommer, p. 54).

The new M & St. L railway was a great benefit for business and pleasure. It was very common for New Prague residents to take the train to the city for a shopping spree for the day and return that evening. Local businessmen would take the 8:50 a.m. train to the Twin Cities, conduct their business, and return the same day by the 6:53 p.m. train (Kajer, p. 184). To encourage travel, the M & St. L Railroad company offered half price or three quarter price round trip tickets to special events such as the State Fair, World's Fair (Chicago), Minneapolis Expositions, Minnetonka Lake excursions, and political and society conventions.

The railroad mostly hauled wheat and flour from New Prague, but sugar beets, coal, and lumber were also hauled. Along with Waterville, New Prague was a major source of poultry being shipped to Minneapolis and St. Paul. Eggs, butter, lard, and dressed hogs were also important exports from the community. At this time most of the major mills processing wheat were in Minneapolis and St. Paul. These Twin Cities mills also owned their own elevators in rural towns. However, New Prague was an exception with six independent elevators supporting local independent mills. By the early 1900s, nearly 8,000 carloads of freight came into or were sent out from New Prague each year.



M & St L Depot with the Robin Hood Flour sign in background (MHS)

The trains also brought a regular flow of “commercial travelers” to the community. They would arrive with their trunks of wares for sale which they would set up in a “sample room” in one of the hotels. Here they displayed and promoted their products to locals, usually for one day, and then moved on to the next town. For decades, this was a regular activity in New Prague’s hotels (Kajer, p. 147).

In 1899, a new 22x26 depot with a 13x22 office and a 32x36 freight room was constructed, which is still standing.

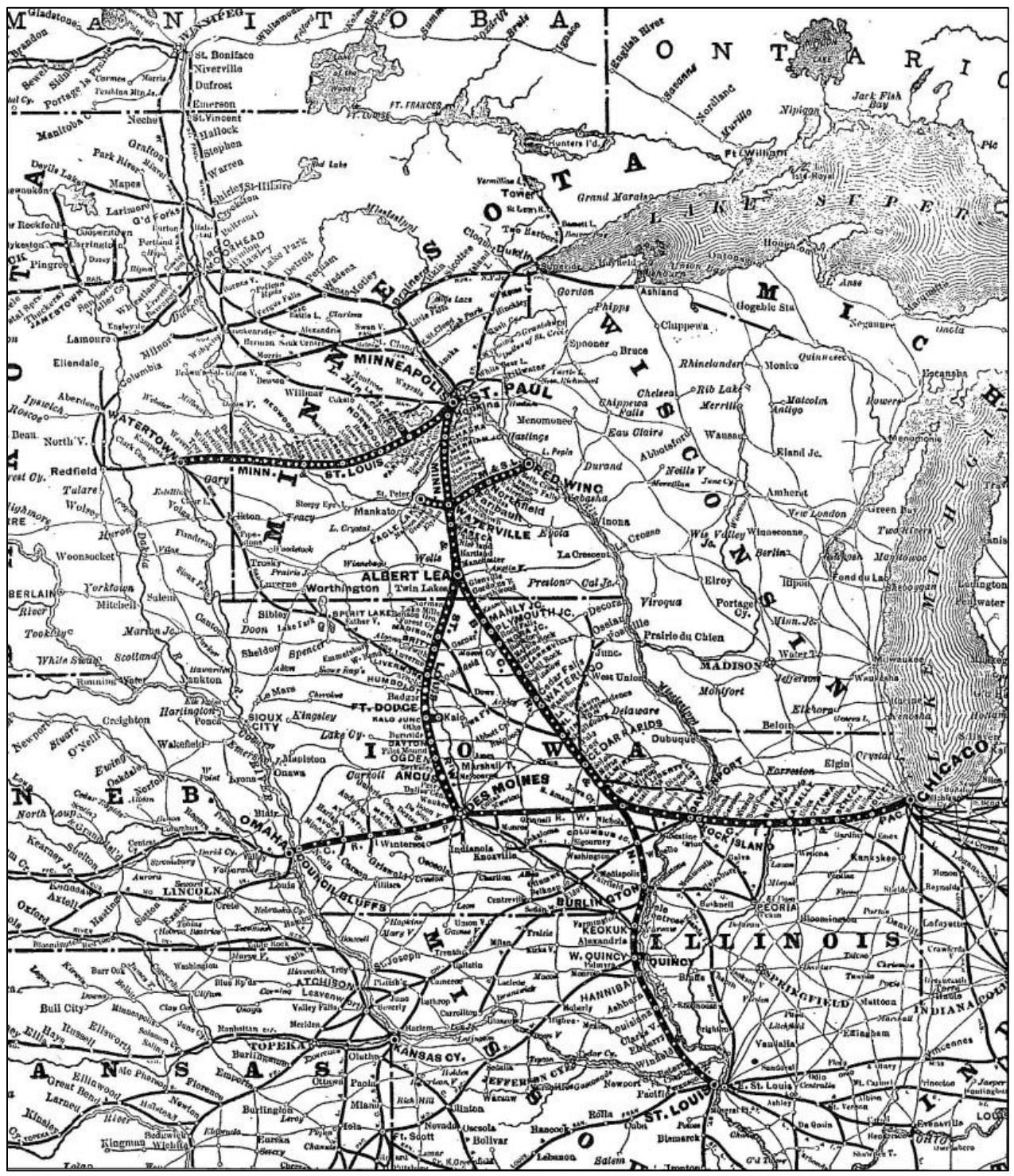
The beginning of the railroad era was critical for the long-term success and growth of New Prague, and the establishment of agriculture as New Prague’s most important industry. “The town flourished mightily after the railroad came in. Progress in the decade following 1877 marked a new chapter in the city’s life. A remarkable transformation had been wrought in the areas adjacent to the city, and business activities showed a steady advance and great increase in scope. The first period of the modern era had dawned” (*New Prague Times*, August 27, 1931, p. 12).

The extensive railroad system in the country made it possible to receive the monster steam traction engines from distant factories like the Aultman and Taylor Machinery Company, which was located in Mansfield, Ohio. By shipping these large farm implements, the M & St L enabled local farmers to be more productive and therefore increased profits.



M. & St. L. train hauling farm implements (MHS)

This new link with the outside world also allowed farmers to send their commodities to broader markets and created a method to bring inventory to the village’s businesses. New Prague soon became a major agricultural marketing and service center. The M & St. L’s depot and various warehouses and grain elevators which were built along the tracks, became the focus of daily commercial activity.



Map of the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway with M & St. L lines identified in bold (Hofsommer)

The arrival of the railroad also signified the permanence of the community and gave business owners and residents insurance that their investments were protected. Soon residents and business owners began building more permanent and elaborate stores and homes “definitely ending the frontier character of that community” (Gardner, p. 5).

In the 1850s and 1860s thousands of towns were platted in Minnesota by speculators hoping to become rich by selling plots as the speculators’ new towns grew. The importance of a railway servicing these towns is demonstrated by the number of these “paper” towns that never developed or disappeared after a railroad bypassed them.

Budajovic (called Lomnice by the first arrivals) was located two miles west of Montgomery and included a church, a cemetery, a post office and a general store. The town disappeared when the railroad passed two miles to the east where Montgomery (platted in 1877) soon developed (Kajer, p. 111).

Veseli was incorporated in 1869, and had seven saloons, three blacksmith shops, a general store, a restaurant, a drugstore, a dance hall, and a Catholic Church and school. Veseli, meaning merry-making or good cheer, was promoted as, “the only pure Bohemian settlement in the United States.” Veseli survived but began declining when Lonsdale (founded in 1903) developed due to the completion of the railroad through that townsite.

St. Lawrence was located on the Minnesota River, three miles west of Jordan. It was platted in 1858, with parts of the town on both sides of the river. The small settlement included a school, a saw-mill, a store, a post office (1857-1859), and a number of houses. The town’s founder, Samuel Strait built his home and a three-story hotel of native sandstone in 1857. It was on the stage road from Mankato to St. Paul and at the crossroads where travelers could cross the Minnesota River on Bristol’s Ferry. With a bar and kitchen, the hotel had three rooms on the first floor, six bedrooms on second floor, and a ballroom on the third floor. It served as a luxury oasis for stage passengers for 15 years. When the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha railroad ran a mile south of it in 1866, St. Lawrence was soon after abandoned. The town returned to farm land by the 1880s. By 1882, the hotel was being used as a barn, and it burned down in 1958 (Kajer, p. 113).

Even though the M & St. L discontinued its passenger service in 1959, New Prague is still served by cargo trains owned by Union Pacific, which now owns this segment of M & St. L’s railroad; however, the number of trains running through the community has decreased.

Automobile

If the railroads built and shaped the frontier towns in Minnesota, then the gasoline engine helped to change them. People were very intrigued by the horseless buggies. In the 1890’s people were trying to attach engines to bicycles, wagons, and buggies. By 1910 Minnesotans had more than 7,000 automobiles. The first automobiles in New Prague were owned by the Vanasek and Bean families (*New Prague Times*, July 13, 2006, p. 10).



Stuck in Mud Outside of New Prague – 1914 (MHS)

However, cars could not replace horses until better roads were built. There were no highways and many roads still had a grassy ridge in the center between two parallel paths. Local streets were not paved. Many New Prague residents referred to Main Street as “chocolate pudding.” It was so muddy and the mud was so deep that it would suck you right out of your boots (*New Prague Times*, July 13, 2006, p. 10). Travelers took the train if they were going more than a few miles.

Roads

As railroads were made possible by the American people giving land to the railroad companies, Americans made automobiles possible by paying taxes to build highways. Initially, road improvements and the taxes to pay for those improvements were established by local governments. The first such tax



Main Street on the west side – 1914 (City of New Prague)

was the poll tax system, whereby taxpayers “worked out” their poll tax on the roads. Townships elected “Path Masters” to supervise the haphazard programs during the late 1800s. Work was done only where the need was most imperative, and the sole aim was to make roads passable. Experimental highways were developed by townships. While these roads gave fairly satisfactory service, many lateral roads remained unchanged, with two deep ruts made by buggy and wagon wheels and a high ridge in the center (*New Prague Times*, August 27, 1931, p. 24).

At first farmers in the New Prague area were stoutly opposed to improving highways for automobiles, asserting that their tax money was being expended to build for the pleasure trips of the rich. But farmers had an especially difficult time getting their crops to shipping points, and were searching for any advantage they could get over what they saw as the evil, monopolistic business practices of the railroads. Farmers also found that an automobile was one of the best investments that could be made on the farm as they outperformed horses, cost less to maintain and required less maintenance. Soon the situation was better understood and there was less opposition to the new road programs. In fact, farmers became a significant force behind the “Good Roads Movement”. Farmers along with various organizations that sprouted up all over the nation combined into what would become the highway lobby, which was funded by bicycle, and later, automobile manufacturers. The “Good Roads Movement” focused on improving rural roads that connected cities, bringing the economic benefits of paved roads in

the cities to rural areas. The “Good Roads Movement” and increasing popularity of the automobile ushered in a new era of highway improvements.

Babcock Highway System

In 1916, the pressure from the automobile lobby resulted in the federal government passing the Federal Aid Road Act, a highway bill that provided funding to states to improve their roads, provided the states had some agency to provide control over the funding and development of the road network. In compliance with the federal highway act, the Minnesota legislature passed a highway bill in 1917 that established the Minnesota Department of Highways (MnDOH) and created the position of "Commissioner of Highways", which was filled by Charles Babcock, a merchant from Elk River. The organization of the Highway Department reflected the need for a roadway system able to handle the growing numbers of motor vehicles. There were 920 motor vehicles registered in 1903 and 324,166 in 1920 (“History of MnDOT”).

Babcock proved instrumental in securing legislative support and funding, and in constructing roads and highways in Minnesota. He authored the Babcock amendment (1920) to the state constitution, which funded road construction out of vehicle taxes. Later in the 1920s, Babcock fought for and won an amendment to the state constitution to use taxes on gasoline solely to build and maintain roads (“History of MnDOT”). Minnesota was one of the first states to tax gasoline and use the funds only to build roads. It was also at this time and under Babcock’s direction, the state started a system of numbered trunk highways that the whole country eventually followed (Gilman, p. 162).

Many miles of highway were constructed around the New Prague area because of Babcock and his system of state highways. The paving of New Prague’s Main Street is also linked to this highway pavement system (*New Prague Times*, August 27, 1931, p. 24).

Automobiles

The evolution of the primary mode of transportation moving from the railway to the automobile has had a dramatic impact on the built environment of New Prague in three significant ways:

First, the impact of the ever increasing use of automobiles and trucks and the development of the highways, especially after 1920, heightened the competition between towns. Residents and farmers were able to travel farther to shop, leading to the growth of larger trade centers as they absorbed services from small ones. The increase in the number of tractors on farms and the expansion of the average farm size shrank the trade area for towns, also contributing to the increased competition between rural towns (Gilman, p. 109).

Second, as the automobile became more attainable and popular during the 1920s, federal, state and the county road systems were expanded to keep up with the demand for better roads (Gebhard, p. 14). Increasingly one entered a town via the automobile, not the train. Investment followed the mode of transportation as new industrial and commercial businesses located on the outskirts of town where land was plentiful and inexpensive (regulation of development on the outskirts of New Prague did not occur until the City adopted its first Zoning Ordinance in 1970).



Eventually such activities created the familiar commercial strip similar to New Prague’s on the east side of town along Main Street.

Third, there was the removal of pedestrian-oriented buildings in the downtown in favor of developments more oriented to the automobile. Commercial buildings constructed prior to 1920 were designed for pedestrians (e.g. large display windows, buildings adjacent to the sidewalk, entrances facing the sidewalk, and potentially a new business every 25 feet making shopping easier). Typically, buildings developed after this period catered to the automobile with parking lots placed between the building and the sidewalk and the need to demolish several smaller businesses in order to provide off-street parking (e.g. Wells Fargo Bank at 217 W. Main St.)

Expected Property Types

Railroads

- Bridges
- Depots, passenger and freight
- Railcars
- Railroad offices
- Section Houses
- Shops and roundhouses
- Tracks

Roads and Bridges

- Bridges
- Roadbeds
- Highway signage
- Stop lights
- Traffic signs

Recommendations and Future actions

Conduct a cultural resources survey to identify and evaluate all resources in the city relating to the transportation context (foundations, moved buildings, etc.) The M & St. L railroad bed is still in use by trains, and the M & St. L depot is still standing and being used as an office for Union Pacific employees. The preservation and protection of the M & St. L depot should be a high priority for the City, including nominating the Depot to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Context 4 - Commerce

Original Plat

The commercial centers of Minnesota's towns typically are located near the earliest form of transportation (a river or railroad). However, New Prague is unique in that it was founded not because it provided ease of transportation but because a group of German and Bohemian immigrants wanted to create a community of their own. So instead of locating the commercial center at the edge of town, near a river or railway, New Prague's commercial center is at the heart of the community.

New Prague was not professionally platted at first. That is why the north half of the community is in Scott County while the southern half is in Le Sueur County. This is also why the street right-of-ways vary throughout the old part of town (e.g. 20', 33', 36', 50', 56', 60', and 66') and why N. Central and S. Central do not line up with each other.

All of the commercial lots also vary in size. The city did not regulate land use until 1970 when the first zoning ordinance and comprehensive plan were adopted. Therefore, it was typical for businesses such as cigar factories, liveries and blacksmiths to locate off of Main Street in the more residential areas. However, business entrepreneurs tended to establish their businesses along Main Street, between Grace (1st Ave East) and Marsh (2nd Ave West). Because of the lack of zoning, commercial, industry, agriculture and residential uses were intermingled. It was common to keep horses, pigs and cattle along with gardens in the backyards of early residences.

A common theme in the historic commercial development of New Prague is the constant changing of the location of businesses as they would seek larger spaces for their expanding businesses. There are only a few buildings that housed the same tenant for a long period of time. Most of the historic buildings in New Prague have served a variety of businesses over their 100 plus life span. This versatility and longevity demonstrates the importance of these historic buildings to New Prague.

Early Businesses

Early settlers had a strong entrepreneurial spirit to them. Because money was scarce on the frontier, pioneers of the village had to risk their own investments. Still, settlers were determined to start new businesses to make a living for their families.

The following quote from the "New Prague, Minnesota. Brief Sketches of its History, Resources Advantages and Business Men" in 1895 demonstrates the entrepreneurial spirit of the times.

Point out to us a young man who started out in Minnesota six, eight, or ten years ago with a determination to succeed and has since kept at it, and we will show you a young man who is getting on well in life, a young man with a paying property of his own, with his bank account, living in his home, and asking odds from no man. There are dozens of such examples that be pointed out in New Prague. There are also dozens of young men who started out in life in this country past the same time who are not worth five cents or never will be (p. 24).

By 1887, 10 years after New Prague was incorporated and the railroad arrived, New Prague had boasted a population of approximately 1000 and:

- 2 churches
- 2 hotels (Merchants and International)
- 1 bakery, 2 cigar factories, 1 pop factory
- 2 general stores, 3 drug stores
- 3 blacksmith shops, 2 implement dealers,
- 3 harness shops
- 1 shoe shop, 3 furniture/cabinet makers, 1 photo shop
- 13 saloons, 5 grocery stores, 1 billiards
- 3 lumberyards (including Vrtis and Bitcek lumberyards)
- Simmer Grain Warehouse
- 1 wagon shop, 1 cooper, 1 tailor
- 3 grain elevators (including Mertens Grain Elevator and Nicolin's Grain Elevator)
- 1 bank, 1 meat market, post office
- Simmer and Eclipse Rolling Mill
- 1 foundry (New Prague Manufacturing Company)
- 1 school

(Sanborn Map & Publishing Co. – 1887)



*Growth of Commerce along Main Street toward the M & St. L Depot-
ca. 1880s (Chameleon Coffee)*

Early businesses catered to the variety of needs of the pioneers purchasing lots in the new settlement or the earliest farmers establishing homesteads in the surrounding countryside. Typical businesses included:

Livery Stables

Before “Rent-A-Car” or gas stations, there was the town livery stable. The livery rented and sold teams of horses and wagons, as well as feed. Similar to gas stations today with mechanics, livery stables often had an attached blacksmith shop for the making of horseshoes and metal fittings for the wagons.

Kubes livery was located where the drive-up area of Wells Fargo is now located at 217 W. Main St.

Blacksmiths

In 1895, the three blacksmith shops were operated by Petr Votypka, by Frank Sticha and Frank Dvorak, and by John Rehor and Frank Maruska. Besides making and repairing wagons, buggies, sleighs, plows, etc. these were social centers in New Prague as they were always an interesting gathering spot for young and old. There were usually customers waiting for their jobs to be finished as well as old-timers from the neighborhood that would just stand around, entertained by the variety of tools and operations of the blacksmith. It was also a favorite diversion for students going home after school (Kajer, p. 175).

A mid-afternoon ritual with blacksmiths as well as some other proprietors was to send a youngster with a pail and some money to the nearest saloon for a “Mazak” (lubrication), actually a bucket a beer.

After the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway arrived in 1877, businesses started to locate near the depot, stretching the commercial center of the village toward Philipps Creek on the west side of the village. By 1887, two lumberyards, two elevators, a flour mill, a hotel (Merchant Hotel), and a general store established themselves near the M & St. L Depot, catering to passengers or taking advantage of the freight trains. The arrival of the M & St. L railway also signaled a permanency for the village, giving entrepreneurs more insurance in their investments.

Furthermore, the economic environment in the United States during the 1880s was one of great prosperity. “The prosperity of the country was so great – and importations from foreign countries were so large that the public monies derived from the duties accumulated in the treasury until the Government actually had more money than it knew what to do with” (Gaylord Hub p. 75). While in Minnesota, historian Constant Larson writes that between 1880 and 1890 there was a period of great activity in the railroad building, and 2,310 miles of road were put in operation. This alone gave great energy to the business of the state, and caused a large increase in the population of the cities, and gradually culminated in a most extravagant real estate boom, and an era of the wildest speculation (Larson p. 45). The culmination of these events encouraged commercial entrepreneurs to begin replacing their wood-framed shops with building of more permanent material of brick and stone, and creating a lasting streetscape that is still evident today.

The two pictures below reveal the drastic transformation of New Prague’s downtown from wood-framed buildings in 1876 to brick buildings built during the 1880s and 1890s. The picture on the left is Main Street in the 1870s, and the picture on the right is Main Street in 1910.



Main Street – ca. 1870 (Minnesota Reflections)



Main Street – 1910 (Minnesota Reflections)

New Prague experienced a construction boom in 1895. New business buildings included the J. Blaha block, the brick addition to Max Tix’s “Farmers Home” Hotel, and Joseph Topka’s brick block. Eight new homes were constructed. The construction boom in the area gave employment to local carpenters, masons, and other construction workers (Kajer, p. 171).

The 1890s were probably New Prague’s heyday. The city had become both the market center and the social center of the Bohemian triangle. By 1895, there were six cigar factories, three millinery shops, nine general merchandise stores, four hardware stores, a foundry, harness shops, machinery dealers, six elevators, two breweries, four undertakers, and 10 saloons (*New Prague Times*, July 13, 2006, p. 55).

Early New Prague business leaders practiced an early form of the “Shop Local” prevalent in today’s small business community. The quote below demonstrates this early marketing effort.

The purchaser going to larger cities is the loser, both in time and money. Common good judgment, to say nothing of public spirit, should prompt one to patronize an institution near at home especially where nothing is to be gained by doing otherwise. The expenses of trade are very much larger in large cities; rents are high, property dear, taxes heavy living expenses increased, and dealers must have larger profits to sustain themselves” (Wrabek Bros., p. 55).

Commerce

Banks

Local banks have always been important to the success of not only individual family-owned businesses, but to the collective betterment of the community, as banks provided the needed capital for businesses to open and expand. As mentioned in “New Prague, Minnesota. Brief Sketches of its History, Resources Advantages and Business Men”

No one element among all those vital to the business interests of the world is more important than that of banking....Our material interests has been largely aided by the steady, progressive financial support of this institution, always wisely exerted for the improvement of the city. And to its fostering care is due the success and prosperity of very many of our industrial institutions (p. 20).

State Bank of New Prague

The State Bank of New Prague, the oldest continuous business in New Prague, opened its doors on November 1, 1883. The bank was founded as the Bank of New Prague by bankers in Shakopee and outside interests, which was the usual practice back then. It was a private bank and its activities, such as providing loans, were closely restricted by the regulations of bank practices of the period. Local businessmen, Joseph Maertz, Sr. and L. Schneiderhan, bought out all of the original stockholders except Mr. Schreiner, who was the only original stockholder from New Prague.

The first Bank of New Prague building, a one-story structure, was located at 111W.Main Street. In 1904, the bank business had grown to the point that the institution was incorporated as the State Bank of New Prague and a two-story brick building was erected on the same site. This served until another bank building was erected in 1925, again on the same site. Progress in diversified farming, in dairying particularly, and industrial activity in the city kept the bank active. In 1973, a new bank building was built on the site of the Zapadni Cesko-Bratska Jednota (ZCBJ) Hall, which had been torn down. The 1925 bank building has been razed. The State Bank of New Prague has long been associated with the Maertz family of New Prague as there were three generations of Maertz family connected with the bank (*New Prague Times*, August 27, 1931, p. 28).

First National Bank

The First National Bank of New Prague was incorporated on December 8, 1903, and constructed a bank building on the site of the existing building. In 1922, the existing building was constructed. By making loans available, the bank played a pivotal role in the increased dairying and diversification of the farm operations surrounding the city. Joseph T. Topka became president of First National on January 12, 1921 and his son, W. J. Topka, became cashier (*New Prague Times*, August 27, 1931, p. 54). The First National Bank occupied the building at 112 E. Main until 1970, a total of 49 years. As a developer, Joseph Topka also erected the Topka Block building on East Main Street.



First National Bank – ca. 1920s (MN Reflections)

Drug Stores

Drug stores have been a uniquely American creation. Not only did drug stores provide drugs and other health-related items, but the drug store also was a social meeting spot commonly with a restaurant and/or soda fountain. Originally built as a general store, the building located at the northeast corner of 1st Ave NE and E. Main St. is best known as J. J. Remes Drug Store and Dr. E. E. Novak's offices. J. J. Remes opened his drugstore at this location on Nov. 1, 1893.



General Stores

Offering a large variety of goods, the general store was an important fixture in trade centers as New Prague. At one time there were 10 general stores in New Prague – Maertz, Soukup, Wrabek, H.C. Eilers, Mathias Rybak (who also had the largest dancing hall in the town upstairs), John Joach (with the Odd Fellows Hall upstairs), Thomas Topka (also with a “first class dancing hall”), Frank Simmer, Kokes and J. W. Mach. Most would regularly take farm produce in trade from cash-short farmers. As demonstrated in the following seven general stores, New Prague has retained its collection of general stores, which constitute some of the more significant historic structures in the city.

Rybak General Store

Mathias Rybak constructed the Rybak building shortly after the M & St. L reached New Prague. Mathias Rybak operated a grocery store while T. F. Rybak conducted a clothing store in the building. Later a saloon was built on the west of the early store and still later a building was erected on the corner, occupying part of the Simon’s store site. Afterward the three buildings were remodeled and the hall, familiar as Rybak’s hall, was built above them. The first level was divided into three parts. The first part was used for sale and display of dry goods, millinery, groceries, crockery, etc. The second section was used for boots and shoes, furnishing goods, hats and caps, etc. The third portion sold wine, liquor and cigars (Kajer, p. 151 and Wrabek Bros., p. 50).



Rybak Store (City of New Prague)

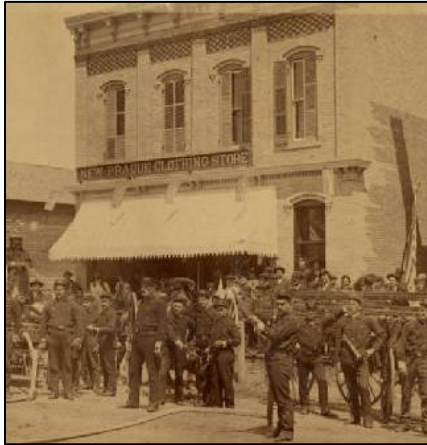
Maertz General Store

Joseph Maertz constructed the Maertz and Renner general store in 1892. Located at 408 W. Main St., this two-story brick building also has housed a saloon, bowling alley and barber shop. The second floor was the office of Dr. John Landenberger and the first home of the *Times*, when editor Taylor was in charge (*New Prague Times*, August 27, 1931, p. 12).

The Maertz and Renner store provided a general assortment of millinery, dry goods, groceries, hats and caps, boots and shoes, crockery, wines, liquors and cigars, produce and fresh beer on tap (Wrabek Bros., p. 51).



Joach General Store



Fourth of July parade in front of Joach General Store – 1883 (City of NP)

John Joach constructed a two-story brick building at 119 W. Main St. Joach operated a general store on the lower part. The second story was used as a lodge room, and was better known as the Odd Fellows Hall. Joach sold dry goods, boots, and shoes, groceries and also farm machinery and implements. The parapet has been removed and the brickwork above the windows filled in.

Topka General Store

Thomas Topka had the “Grand Opening” of his Topka Block in 1883. The hall located on the second floor was 40' x 70' and had a stage.



Topka Block – 1885 (MN Reflections)

Wrabek General Store



The Wrabek General store is located at 105 E. Main Street. Constructed in the 1880s, it is also known as the site of the Simmer Furniture Company in the 1910s and 1920s (Dvorak).

Kokes General Store

Located at 131 W. Main St. this building was originally built for the Kokes General store in the 1880s, and then was used as Emil Dvorak's Grocery store (Dvorak).



Valesh Grocery Store



Valesh Grocery 1967 (MHS)

The building located at 123 W. Main St. housed the Valesh grocery store. Constructed in the 1880s, this building has changed very little over the years.

Hardware

Believed to be the oldest brick building in New Prague is the Vanasek Hardware building (ca. 1885) located at 120 E. Main St. (Dvorak). The bricks were made at the Mikiska brickyard in New Prague. The building originally housed a saloon, operated by Thomas Zak, and afterwards, T. F. Vanasek operated a hardware store there. Vanasek equipped many of the local builders, carpenters, blacksmiths and farmers with tools, material and farm machinery and implements (Wrabek Bros., p. 58).





The building located at 102 W. Main St. was constructed in the 1890s. Sachs & Rynda Hardware and Implements started business in 1915. This building is unique to New Prague as it is faced with red brick. Most of the brick commercial buildings in New Prague are constructed with buff-colored brick from Chaska, Jordan or New Prague brickyards.

Hotels

In the early years, hotels were important in the development of frontier towns. Hotels typically presented the first impression of the town for traveling salesmen, entrepreneurs looking to establish a business, and immigrants looking for a community to raise their families. They were also symbols of a town's success. As such, communities took great pride in their hotels, and boasted whenever a new hotel was built in town. New Prague had four hotels during its heyday: Broz Hotel, Davenport Hotel, Klondike Hotel, and the International Hotel.

One of the earliest hotels in New Prague was the International Hotel built by John Proshek in 1881 and enlarged twice. The hotel included a parlor, dining room, writing room and a large "sample room" where commercial travelers displayed their wares. It was located on the south side of W. Main St., approximately where the parking lot is located between the current New Prague Gentle Dental Care and Snap Fitness.



Joseph Wrabek constructed his Klondike Hotel in the 1890s. Located across Syndicate St. (now 2nd Ave SW) from the New Prague Flour Mill, the hotel was a popular boarding house for mill the workers.

The Broz Hotel, named for its owner, Wenceslaus Broz, was built in 1898. Broz operated the hotel until 1920. Located at 212 West Main St., the hotel was designed by Cass Gilbert, the same man who designed the Minnesota state Capitol and the Supreme Court building in Washington, D.C. When the Broz Hotel was completed, New Prague had three other hotels. In addition to offering a place of rest for travelers, the Broz Hotel served as a boarding house for some of the New Prague Flouring Mill workers. The hotel also included a sample room. The building's Georgian Revival design contrasts with the more characteristic plain brick commercial buildings of the community and reflects a first class hotel as Gilbert and Broz intended (Tikalsky, p. 12 and Bloomberg).



Merchants Hotel – notice the hitching posts located on both sides of the hotel (City of New Prague)

Located near the railroad tracks, the Commercial Hotel was constructed in the first decade of the 1900s. By 1931, the name was changed to the Davenport Hotel (*New Prague Times*, July 13, 2006, p. 11). Prominently located on the northeast corner of Railroad and W. Main St. the hotel welcomed visitors entering town from the west (1910 and 1931 Sanborn maps). The building now houses the Flip Side Pub and Grill on the first level.

Meat Markets

The building located at 112 W. Main Street was constructed in 1880s is long associated with meat markets, housing six different meat companies through the years (e.g. George Ries Meat Market, E.F. Remes Meat Market, Kopet Meat Market, Mamer Meat Market, Economy Meat Market, Sanitary Meat Market). By purchasing livestock from local farmers, meat markets were important as they acted as a stimulus for the diversification of the farming industry (Dvorak).



Paint Stores



The Komarek Paint store was one of New Prague's longest running businesses. Located at 125 W. Main Street, the business was in operation from as early as 1919 until approximately 1985. Originally built as a grocery store, the building was then used as a bar and saloon. The building was built in the 1880s (Dvorak).

Saloons

Typical of Czech and German communities, liquor establishments were important and popular. In many ways they were the glue that held the community together. It was the place to catch the latest news and gossip, and it was the rare farmer who did not include a "mazak" (lubrication), at one of the saloons to complete each visit to town. An official of the Pilsner Urquell Brewery summed it up nicely. "In Czech culture, in Czech tradition, in Czech history, beer is much more than a beverage, a business product. Beer is a part of this country's everyday life, part of the tradition, part of the deep social debate (2004, Kajer, p. 174)."

Some of the early saloon proprietors in New Prague included Joseph Maertz, Frank Roemer, Frank Walsh, Mathias Rybak, Thomas Topka, Albert Chalupsky, Mathias Vopatek, Joseph Pany, George Sullivan, Joseph Luksik, and John Sery. The "Farmers' Home" under Joseph Pany and the Frank Roemer had a bowling alley connected with it. Most of the saloons had livery in town for customers' horses. There were also tying posts along the business streets of town, and the accumulation of built-up horse manure over the winter was always a problem to be dealt with in spring.



Located at 100 W. Main St., this building was originally constructed for a saloon. It also housed the Suchomel Dry Goods business, but is better known as a saloon (Krejce's Bar, Frank Barta Bar, California Wine House, and Corner Bar) (Dvorak). The building was constructed in 1897 and is most likely made of Chaska brick. The front façade has changed very little, however the east side of the building has been stuccoed.

Social Aspect of Downtown

Similar to other Minnesota towns, downtown New Prague has always been the heart and soul of the community. From the very beginning virtually all of the social events took place in the downtown. Many stores lined Main Street; there were five grocery stores at one time. There was always a dance somewhere – at the Park Ballroom, upstairs at Rybak’s Hall, upstairs at Nickolay’s Hall, and at the ZCBJ Hall where there were also plays, sometimes in Czechoslovakian.



Dožínky® (doe-shink'-key), a Czech Harvest Festival on New Prague's Main St.

All of the saloons were located downtown. Because farmers typically partook in a “mazak” after doing their business in town, the farming community was always current on news and upcoming events (Kajer, p. 147).

New Prague’s theater days date from the 1870s and 1880s, when one-night only shows, medicine shows and other entertainment organizations visited the city at intervals. About 1909 motion pictures were first shown here. First the shows were held in the Z. C. B. J. Hall, on Sunday nights. After about two years the movies were transferred to Rybak’s Hall.

Industry

Industry has been important in the success of New Prague. Industries like flour mills, foundries, creameries, and breweries brought wealth to New Prague with their exports. Industrial uses like lumberyards (e.g. F. Vrtis lumber yard on Grace Street) were regularly located among residences and other businesses before the turn of the century. However, once the M & St. L reached New Prague, industries tended to locate near the railroad depot (e.g. grain elevators, Zettel Bros. Creamery, New Prague Foundry, and Slvack’s lumber yard).

Breweries

The New Prague saloons were mainly supplied by the two local breweries, the New Prague Brewing Company, located three-quarters mile south of Main Street, and the Thomas Kokes Brewery, located on



Kokes Brewery – ca. 1890s (MN Reflections)

the northwest corner of 5th St. NW and Marsh Ave (now 2nd Ave NW). Kokes Brewery was the first brewery in New Prague, begun by Frank Radley in 1877. The breweries also delivered beer barrels to communities beyond New Prague, including Heidelberg. Not only did the breweries supply beer to saloons, but they also were a large employer for the community. By 1911, the New Prague Brewing Company was converted to E. F. Remmes and Co. Slaughter House. By 1931, the Kokes Brewery went out of business. The remnants of the brewery have been apartments for many years (Wrabek Bros., p. 28).

Brickyards

New Prague had two brickyards. The first brickyard was opened in time to furnish brick for the second St. Wenceslaus church in 1868 (razed). Brick from this yard was also used in the Mach building (razed). The yard faced First Ave. N. Thomas Zak opened the second yard in New Prague. Bricks from this brickyard were used in the Vanasek store (currently the oldest brick structure in New Prague). Neither yard was in operation long. The clay beds appear to have been too shallow or too difficult to work. Besides the three brick structures mentioned, the only others from these yards were two or three houses erected on farms in the neighborhood. Bricks for all of the other buildings were shipped in, mostly coming from the Chaska brickyards (*New Prague Times*, August 27, 1931, p. 1).

Foundries

One of New Prague's most important industries, the New Prague Manufacturing Company, began in 1885. Founded by F. J. Melounek, the foundry originally made iron windowsills and repaired threshing machines and engines. The business expanded over the years, manufacturing other products such as the Hand Cylinder Press on which the *New Prague Times* was printed for a number of years, and installing hot air furnaces and bridge building. The foundry constructed and installed the first electric lighting system in the city as a private enterprise in 1896 and also built the first telephone line in the community, from Veseli to Heidelberg and Union Hill, in 1897. The foundry was located on the northwest corner of W. Main and 4th Ave NW, and has been razed (Kajer, p. 117 and 127).

Lumberyards

With no navigable rivers nor railroads, pioneers who settled in Minnesota communities away from the Mississippi River were obliged to bring all building lumber over land by wagon. This was the case with

the earlier settlers of New Prague. Lumberyards were important in the growth of towns as they obviously provided the building materials but were also a symbol that a pioneer town had a positive future. Although lumberyards closed and locations changed, from 1887 to 1931 New Prague was always served by two lumberyards (Sanborn Maps).



One of the longest running businesses in New Prague is the New Prague Lumber Co. (now Mach Lumber Company), located on the southeast corner of 1st St. South and Syndicate Street (now 2nd Ave SW). John Proshek built the New Prague Lumber Co. in the first decade of the 1900s. John Proshek was the original manager and T. F. Vanasek was President. The lumberyard has been operating at its current location for over 100 years (*New Prague Times*, July 13, 2006, p. 9).

Sites Currently Designated

The following sites are currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places:

First National Bank (August 1980)
112 East Main Street

Hotel Broz (August 1980)
212 West Main Street

Expected Property Types

Retail

- Auto Dealerships
- Breweries
- Butchers
- Cigar
- Clothing and Shoes
- Drugs
- Dry good stores
- Feed stores
- Furniture
- Groceries
- Hardware
- Implement Dealers
- Jewelry
- Lumber
- Other commercial buildings

Service

Auto repair shops
Banks
Blacksmith shops
Bowling Alleys
Breweries
Builders and Contractors
Business offices
Carriage shops
Dance halls
Funeral homes
Gas stations
Hotels
Newspapers
Painters
Photographers
Plumbers
Restaurants
Saloons
Shoe Repair
Tailors
Theaters

Professional

Clinics
Offices of doctors, dentists, and lawyers

Industry

Blacksmiths
Brickyards
Cigar Factories
Factories
Furniture/Cabinet Makers
Foundries
Lumberyards
Livery Stables
Sawmills
Wagon makers

Recommendations and Future actions

New Prague's commercial boom period (1880-1920) is physically evident through the significant number of historic brick buildings located along Main Street constructed during this forty-year period. Moreover, it is to New Prague's benefit that the buildings along Main Street have remained relatively intact between 1st Ave W and 1st Ave E. City leaders should advocate preservation of these historic buildings along Main Street. As historian Thomas Harvey said, "the solid blocks of two-story brick buildings that are so much a part of Main Street imagery are rare and thus worthy of preservation where they are found. Years of neglect, alterations, and fires have left few commercial streets intact" (Clark p. 111).

- The City should complete a historic survey of all the buildings in the downtown area.
- The City should complete a Façade Improvement Study to demonstrate the results of some minor or major alterations to the fronts of the historic buildings.
- The City should consider requesting the downtown commercial core from Broz Hotel to 1st Ave NE, including Remes Pharmacy, be on the National Register of Historic place and place it on a newly created local register.
- The New Prague Historical Society has an excellent collection of information on individual businesses; however, businesses are constantly relocating, making researching those movements difficult. The Historical Society, or a Heritage Preservation Commission, should create a comprehensive database that cross-references past businesses and buildings in a systematic order.
- The City should consider establishing a Heritage Preservation Commission who would be responsible for promoting the City's historic resources, educating the community on New Prague's history, and assisting property owners in finding funding sources to help preserve their buildings.

Context 5 – Religion

Religion was very important to the pioneers for a variety of reasons. Spiritual faith lifted the spirits of the early settlers who faced difficult and uncertain lives. Churches also played a role in the acclimation of the pioneers, as early settlers found their own language and traditions. Churches also were significant in the social lives of New Prague's first residents, especially to the farmers who spent most of their waking hours working on their farms.

The development of religious organizations in New Prague is unique in Minnesota. Many newfound communities in Minnesota typically had several different churches even in the small towns (e.g. an Episcopal church, separate Methodist churches for the English and German immigrants; four Lutheran churches each for immigrant Norwegians, Swedes and Germans who wanted to worship in German and a church for Germans who wanted to worship in English, and others.) New Prague, however, was heavily populated with Bohemian immigrants who were Catholic. Hence, New Prague only had two church congregations (Catholic and Methodist) until a Lutheran church was established in 1947.

Unlike Methodist and Lutheran churches that typically had multiple churches in Minnesota towns for different nationalities, Minnesota towns normally had one Catholic Church for immigrants of all nationalities. John Ireland, who served as archbishop in Minnesota from 1875 until his death in 1918, insisted that the Catholic Church must become American and welcome people from all ethnic backgrounds with services spoken in English. Thus, New Prague's Catholic Church consisted of parishioners of all ethnicities, but mainly Bohemian and Germans.



Archbishop John Ireland - ca. 1892 (MHS)

Catholicism in New Prague

Even though the Catholic Church was perhaps the most unifying factor in the early decades of New Prague, there was also a very rocky relationship between the Catholic Church and the early settlers. This may be due to the experiences of the settlers when they lived in Bohemia (Kajer, p. 130).

Since the ninth century, the people of Bohemia had been Christians (Catholics). Originated with the Habsburg Castle in modern Switzerland, the Habsburg family came to rule Austria and tried to "Germanize" the Czechs during the 1800s. Anything written in Czech was destroyed, and German replaced the Czech language in education and government. However, the Czech language was kept alive in the rural areas, ironically, by Catholic priests. The Czechs were infuriated with the Catholic Church because they believed all things Czech were being destroyed by the Catholic Church as well and that the church was being oppressive. All Czech children were required by law to attend Catholic schools, generations of Czechs lost family members fighting religious wars, and most of the good land was not only owned by the Austrian nobility, but also by the Catholic Church. The church was led by German-

speaking clergy imposed from above, and it took a generous share of the peasants' earnings (Kajer, p 128-130).

Consequently many Czechs were either "luke-warm Catholics", or rejected the Roman Catholic Church as soon as they could. Those who rejected the church were called "Free-thinkers" and included fully 2/3 of the 100,000 Czechs that settled in Chicago. The free-thinking movement promoted absolute separation of church and state. Minnesota had a higher than average proportion that remained Catholic, probably because many came from southern Bohemia where the Catholic Church had been the most faithful.

An estimated 40 percent of the Czechs immigrants to the US who remained loyal to the Roman Catholic Church rejected clericalism (priests wielding authority in secular as well as spiritual matters) and believed the church should be stripped of the political power it exercised in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Most of the disputes between the church and Czech immigrants were therefore not over religious matters but rather over the amount of authority priests should have over their parishioners' lives.

Many New Prague settlers were still committed Catholics who wished to continue to practice their faith. For those who distrusted the Catholic Church because of their experience in Czechoslovakia, interest in the church and associated activities may have been influenced by their longing of their homeland.

The importance of the church in the lives of the immigrants can scarcely be overstated. In other relationships, they were forced to accommodate themselves to American life. But within their churches they could retain European ceremonies, traditions, and language. The church was their place of refuge in the midst of an alien environment, an undisturbed corner of the old country in the midst of the new (Kajer, p. 130).

For the early settlers (before the 1880s) Sunday mass and the hours spent together afterward became the only social activity of their otherwise isolated and laborious lives. Experiencing great deal of stress, the settlers found that the church and religion were the foundations that gave them a sense of security in the new world.

Priests from the old country found it difficult to transform to a much more democratic environment in America. In Austria the state paid the priests and because of that they did not need to get to know their parishioners. In the United States, however, the congregation paid the priests, which gave the priests an incentive to understand their parishioners better.

St. Wenceslaus' First Church Building

Most of the very first settlers in the area were Catholic and soon began holding services. It is believed that the first mass was said in Anton Phillip's house, probably as early as the spring of 1857. Worships were held in the Philipp house for the Germans and at the Albert Vrtis and Borak homes for the Bohemians, often without priests present.

Anton Philipp, Albert Vrtis, Frank Bruzek, and Jan Bernas each donated 10 acres to construct New Prague's first Catholic church, St. Wenceslaus, near the location of the present-day church. With only 21 or 22 adults as initial members, constructing the log structure with their own materials and labor was a

huge undertaking. By 1858 the walls were up with a truss, but not roof shingles. However, with more settlers arriving, they realized the frame of the unfinished church was already too small (Kajer, p. 44). They went ahead, however, with the construction of the edifice, which was not completed until 1859.

The church is named for Good King Wenceslaus, who ruled Bohemia from 924 to 929 (or 935) A.D. Wenceslaus' brother, Boleslaus, successor to the throne, became jealous of Wenceslaus' power and was angered by his friendship with Christian Germany. On his way to mass in Stara Boleslave on September 28 of 929 (or 935), Wenceslaus was murdered by his brother and a group of Bohemian nobles as he was reaching for the church door handle. He became a martyr for Christianity and is patron saint of Bohemians, who still celebrate his day on September 28 (Tikalsky, p. 23).

The construction of the first rectory, made of logs, began in the spring of 1862. In 1863 the church was destroyed by fire so mass was held in the rectory for several years until a new church edifice could be built.

Second Church Building – 215 E. Main St

A second church building was constructed in 1868. This edifice was built of brick from the town's first brickyard on 1st Avenue North. To pay for the new church building, parishioners either had to provide labor or be assessed based on land owned or size of business. Most chose to work as most settlers did not have any extra money. Phillip gave 30 acres more to the church when the second edifice was built.



1868 St. Wenceslaus Church (MN Reflections)

This new church was the largest structure in New Prague, measuring 128 feet long and 30 and 60 feet wide, with a seating capacity of over 500. The general style of architecture was Romanesque revival with many semi-circled elements, a common characteristic of Romanesque architecture (Wrabek Bros., p. 10).

The 1868 church was located just south east of the present-day church and served New Prague's Catholic community until the newest, and last, church was built and completed in 1907. The foundations of the 1868 church have been discovered, covered over by the lawn on the site.

In 1874, a two-story brick parish house was built, which served the priests until the present one was erected in 1908.

Father Francis Tichy arrived in New Prague in 1880 and during his tenure of 26 years would oversee many dramatic changes to the St. Wenceslaus campus.

In 1889 a Catholic meeting hall was constructed on Grace Street North, a block north of Main Street. The meeting hall was a wood-frame building with one room and had scenes on the walls for "literary purposes". The building measured 40'x80,' and served as a meeting place for a number of benevolent societies and a literary society associated with the Catholic Church. Many school children from St.

Wenceslaus held entertainments and presentations in this hall. The use of the meeting hall discontinued after the construction of the new school (1914), which contains a large auditorium.

The first convent (razed) was built by Anton Phillip who donated it to the parish.

Third Church Building

Discussion soon turned to building a new, larger church. Much like other congregations elsewhere, strong opinions developed on what action should be taken. One group thought they should enlarge the existing church. A larger group and Father Tichy favored building a new church. And a third group protested by threatening to build their own church on the west side of town. Most agreed that the building as initially proposed was too ambitious. By 1904, however, plans were underway for a larger, new church.



The construction of a new church was a huge undertaking by a parish with only 580 members. Raising the funds to build the church alienated even more parishioners and was a source of conflict throughout the New Prague community. Many families just could not afford donating additional money for the ambitious project. When families said they could not give any additional donations, Father Tichy told them they had to “find it somewhere.” Some women were also pressured to donate their jewelry to be sent to Europe to purchase fixtures for the new church. It has been noted that that Father Tichy said if families did not give the money requested, they need not come to church. Many families left the church during this time (Kajer, p. 138).

The actual construction of the church began in January 1906, and was awarded to A. Kropf who completed it in 1907. The building is 165 feet long and 67 feet wide, and has a seating capacity of about 1,000 persons, twice as many as the 1868 church. The architecture is a combination of Romanesque and Greek, and is patterned after a church in Czechoslovakia. The front façade of the central section features a gabled central entry portico sheltering three double doors, representing the holy trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. A statue of St. Wenceslaus is located in an arched niche above the portico. Height of the corner towers is 110 feet (the original stained glass in the towers has been replaced by glass block). Although the building was redecorated and remodeled in 1972, a concerted effort was made to preserve the old and incorporate the new (Bloomberg and *New Prague Times*, May 13, 1982).





St. Wenceslaus Church and School Campus (MHS)

The location of the church, occupying a city block near city center with the building facing Main Street, New Prague's major street, indicates the powerful influence the Catholic Church has historically played on the life of New Prague residents.

Rectory

The church rectory is located west of the 1907 church and also faces Main Street. The two story brick building was constructed in 1908 and features a three-bay symmetrical façade. Paired windows flank a central three-part window on the second floor. Bay windows are located on the east and west facades. The porch and front dormer have been removed (Bloomberg).



St. Wenceslaus Rectory- 1920 (MN Reflections)

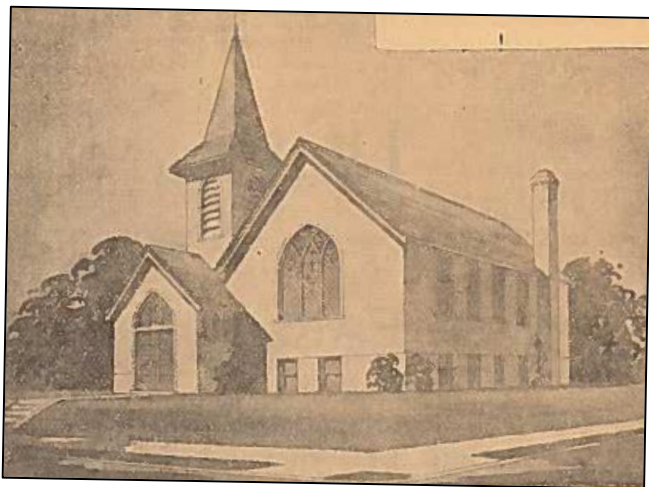
St. Wenceslaus Cemetery

St. Wenceslaus' original cemetery was located immediately north of the 1868 church building (underneath the present church building). In 1884, the existing cemetery was established northwest of the church property. Remains and monuments older than 1884 were moved to the existing cemetery prior to the 1907 church being built. The St. Wenceslaus Cemetery Chapel was built in 1899 and donated to the congregation by Father Tichy. Constructed by Theo Karp, owner of the New Prague Marble Works, the chapel has solid marble walls, four stained glass windows and a copper dome. Buried in the basement crypt are three priests: Reverends Augustin Hovorka, Francis Hovorka, and Robert Polasek (Kajer, p. 137).



St. Wenceslaus Cemetery Chapel (MN Reflections)

Presbyterian/Baptist Church



Presbyterian Church (New Prague Times, August 27, 1931)

Besides a small congregation of Methodists, the other early church in New Prague was the Presbyterian Church. Started by Miss Marie A. Novak, a Bohemian Presbyterian missionary, the small congregation built a modest church in 1900 on the southwest corner of 1st Ave. NW and 3rd St. NW. In 1922 the Presbyterian congregation merged with a Baptist group, which was new to New Prague. The Presbyterians formally disbanded and sold their property and edifice to the Minnesota Baptist convention in 1923 (*New Prague Times*, August 27, 1931, p. 52). In 1989, a new Baptist church was built on County Road 37, in the northeast corner of the city. The 1900 church building was razed in 1994.

Sites Currently Designated

The following site is currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places:

St. Wenceslaus Church Complex (August 1980)
215 East Main Street

Expected Property Types

Churches
Parsonages and rectories
Parish Halls
Cemeteries
Parochial schools

Recommendations and Future actions

Religion has historically been influential in the lives of New Prague residents. However, there is little preservation efforts to complete with the Religious context as the St. Wenceslaus complex has already been listed in the National Register of Historic Places and the only other historic church in New Prague has been razed.

Context 6 – Civic Life

Communication

Post Office

When settlement of New Prague began in 1856, the telegraph was not available and the telephone had not been invented. So, the first order of business for the fledgling village was to establish a post office to connect the community with the rest of the country.

The first post office in the vicinity was established in 1863 and was housed in the home of Joseph Wrabek (razed). This first post office was officially known as “Orel”, meaning “Eagle”. The first postmaster, Joseph Wrabek walked once a week to Shakopee (24 miles away) to deliver the small bundle of letters sent from the settlers of New Prague and to receive the incoming mail, most of it from relatives and friends in Bohemia.

In 1867, the post office was moved into the city limits. The name of the post office was unofficially known as “Praha” (the Czechoslovakian word for Prague, which is the capitol and largest city of the Czech Republic). The name Praha was used from 1876 until 1882. The office’s name changed to “Nova Praha” (the Czechoslovakian form of New Prague) for a short period. The first federally-recognized post office opened in New Prague on December 1, 1879. The name was finally changed to New Prague Post Office on February 25, 1884. On March 7, 1901, the post office was moved from Scott County to Le Sueur County (*New Prague Times*, July 13, 2006, p. 46).

Similar to other towns in rural Minnesota, New Prague changed some of its street names in 1922 when the postal service started delivering mail. Prior to this time residents came to the post office to pick up their mail. Street signs and house numbers were not used in New Prague until around the mid-1940s. Letters were simply addressed to the other person and the city.

Newspapers

Similar to the post office, it was important from the beginning for the new village to establish a newspaper.

The *New Prague Times* newspaper was founded in September 6, 1889 by 18-year-old W. H. Taylor from Webster City, Iowa. This was the sixth newspaper being published in Scott County, including the Jordan Independent, the Belle Plaine Harold, and the Shakopee Post. By 1896 there were 11 newspapers in Le Sueur County, 8 supported the Republican political party and 2 supported the Democratic political party.

In 1896 a second New Prague newspaper was started on the Scott County side of town by F. H. Arnold and John F. Bruzek. It was called the *Scott County Republican* (Kajer, p. 181).



John L. Suel became editor and publisher in 1912, and *The New Prague Times* has been in the Suel family since then. In 1916, the newspaper’s headquarters burned down, and the current building was built in 1917 (*New Prague Times*, August 27, 1931, p. 52).

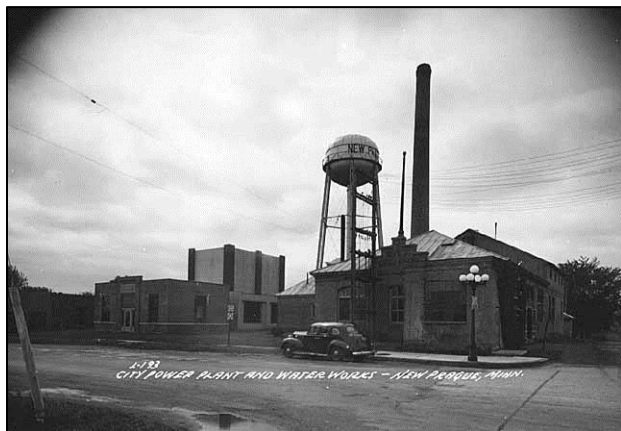
Telephone

The city was connected to the outside world via the telephone for the first time in 1891. Telephone connections were made to the foundry, the *Times* office, the International Hotel, the railroad depot, Dr. Landenberger's office and the Mikiska drug store. In 1900, the New Prague Telephone Company was formed with Mr. Vopatek as president and Mathias Rybak as vice-president. A short time after the first company was formed, another, called the Tri-County Telephone Company, was organized (Kajer, p. 151).

Public Utilities

Though less visible than the stores and businesses, public utilities were vital in establishing a town's image. Running water, gas lines, and sewers vastly improved the quality of life for those who could afford them. The settlers of New Prague supported these public improvements as a way to promote their new community and attract more businesses and residents. As soon as the village was incorporated as a city in 1891, the community completed a significant number of public improvement projects in the 1890s, which has been considered New Prague's heyday decade.

In 1896, the new city waterworks was completed on the southeast corner of S. Columbus and E. Main St., including water mains and a water tower.



City Power Plant and Water Works - 1950 (MHS)

Elias Bruzek donated land east of his residence for the water tower and well.

Also in 1896, a sewer line was laid between Grace and Narrow Streets on the south side of Main Street to drain the cellars and basements of the commercial buildings located in this area. When the pioneers first arrived, this was the path of a small creek coming from the city park area. Many of the buildings constructed on the south side of Main Street had flooded basements most years.

New sewer and water systems were hailed by New Prague citizens, but electricity was the ultimate symbol of urban success for early towns. A major milestone occurred for New Prague in 1897 with the installation of the city's first light system in May, 1897. The New Prague foundry and Machine Shop of F. J. Melounek and H. B. Engel set up the coal-operated power house near their foundry. Besides lights for the streets and most businesses, some private parties could have 16 candle-power lamps installed in their homes.

In 1897, a public drinking fountain was installed in the city for visitors (location was not found for this study).

Local Streets and Sidewalks

Early New Prague residents believed the condition of their streets reflected the health of the new community. They quickly made improvements to their streets and sidewalks. As early as 1886, New Prague was grading and adding gravel to Main and Grace (currently 1st Ave E) streets. Wooden sidewalks were constructed on both sides of Main Street, and Wesely Street (presently 1st Avenue NW) was widened leading to the foundry and factory. Grace Street was also widened as more farmers entered the town on Grace Street than on any other road (Kajer, p. 119).

During this growing period, most of the city funds went to maintenance and public improvement projects, and most of the city funds came from liquor licenses (Kajer, p. 165). With the haphazard settlement of the original town area, the city council needed to periodically order the removal of all buildings and fences from street right-of-ways when developing a street (Kajer, p. 125).

As soon as the city was incorporated in 1891, street improvements rapidly increased. The city contracted for 1,500 loads of gravel to be put on streets. North Simmer Street (presently Central Ave N) was graveled three blocks, from Main Street to the public school. Wesely Street N (presently 1st Ave NW), was graded up two feet. North Grace Street (presently 1st Ave) was also raised with gravel. Main Street on the west end of town was lowered past the Eclipse Roller Mill to improve the road for farmers coming from the west. Sidewalks of two-inch plank and five feet wide were installed on portions of Simmer Street (presently Central Ave N), Grace street (presently 1st Ave N) and 2nd Street N (presently 2nd Street NE) (Kajer, p. 143).

To fund the maintenance of the streets, the city council assessed two days of road labor to each adult male in the city and a road tax of 25 cents for each \$100 worth of real estate and personal property owned in the city.

Public Buildings

Public Library

The Memorial Library, located at 400 E Main St., was completed in 1963. Most of the \$123,000 to build the library was donated by the Western Foundation, an organization started by the Frank and Bertha Bean family. In 1964, the library won a Minnesota Society of Architects award as one of the state's top architectural designs. The Modern-style building has a floating roof supported on circular columns on the exterior of the building that resemble the existing trees of the adjacent park. Clerestory windows divide the roof and wall structure, with floor-to-ceiling glass at the street elevation (*New Prague Times*, September 24, 1964). (The library was remodeled in 2000, doubling its size) (Tikalsky, p. 16).

City Hall

New Prague's first city hall was built in 1891 on the corner of then Simmer and First Street N, a block north of Main Street. The two-story, Italianate-style building was constructed of Chaska brick. The first floor comprised of two jail cells and space for the fire department. The second floor included an elegant council chamber, court room, firemen's room, and one spare room (Wrabek Bros., p. 10).



New Prague City Hall – 1940 (MN Reflections)

The roof supported a ten foot bell tower with a large bell, which has been preserved and is located outside the current fire station.

In 1931 the first city hall building was razed, and the current city hall was constructed on the same site. The two-story building is now used for city administration and includes the council chambers. Built at a later date, an adjoining building houses the police and parks departments today.

Fire Department

For villages in the Midwest in the late 1800s, uncontrolled fires were recognized as an enemy of the entire settlement, especially since the early buildings were all constructed of wood, heat was provided by open fire places, and light was provided by kerosene lanterns. A common disaster in New Prague was the tragic loss of homes, farm buildings, livestock and equipment to fires (Kajer, p. 142). While larger eastern cities had organized fire companies, sponsored by insurance companies, the frontier towns had to protect themselves without much equipment and using volunteer manpower. As the village grew and development increased, the citizens knew that fire projection was a necessity.

New Prague's fire department was organized on April 26, 1884 with 27 members. In those days fire equipment was primitive, typically fighting fires with bucket brigades.



New Prague Fire Department (City of New Prague)

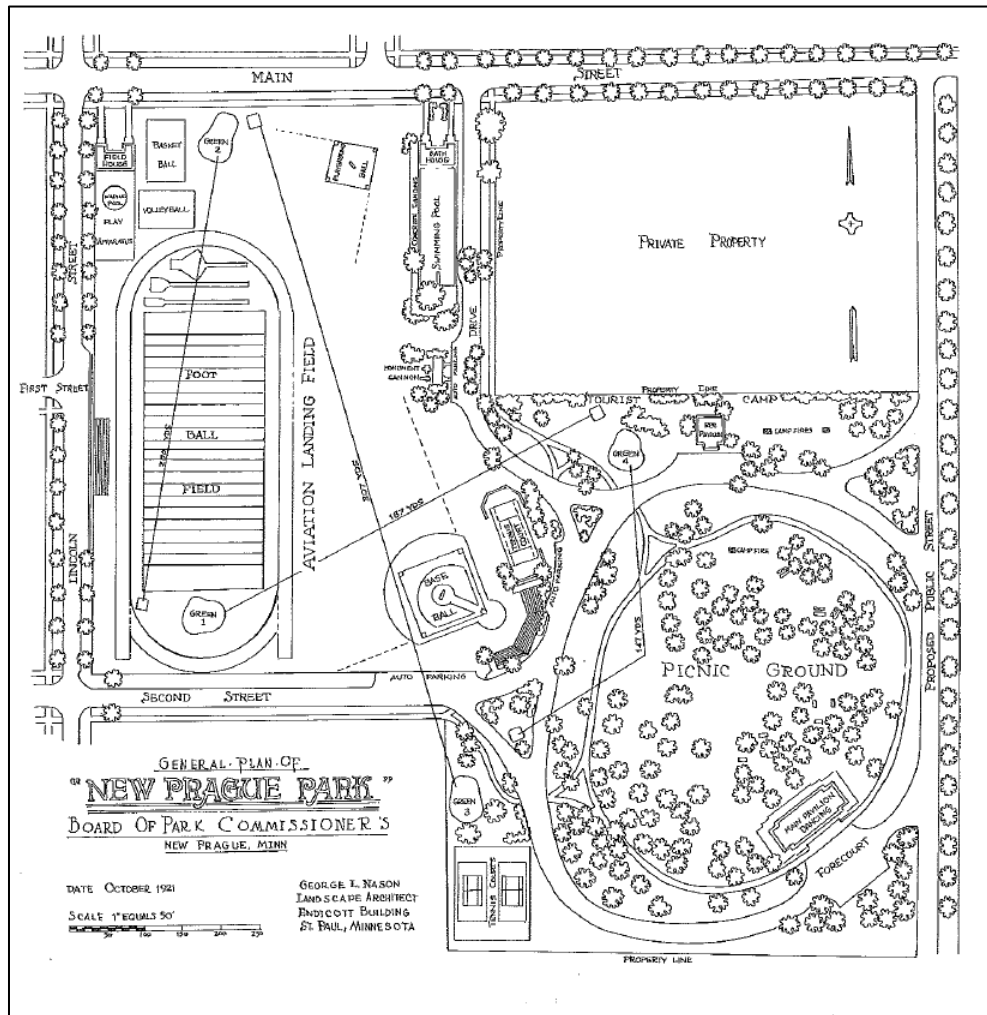
A rash of fires in town and in the surrounding country-side prompted the village council in 1894 to approve the digging of nine more cisterns around town to supply water for the fire department (Kajer, p. 142). Also in 1894, a forest fire in northern Minnesota wiped out 160,000 acres of timberland and destroyed the communities of Pokegama, Mission Creek, Miller, Hinckley, Sandstone, and Partridge. As a result of the Hinckley fire New Prague's city council in 1897 passed a milestone fire ordinance prohibiting further construction of wooded buildings in the business district (along Main Street and one

block in each direction from Main Street). This decision by the city council resulted in the construction of the many brick buildings along Main Street that exist today (Kajer, p. 195).

Parks and Recreation

Similar to other frontier towns in Minnesota, New Prague did not include any public parks in the original plat. This may be due to the dispersed development pattern of the early settlement already created a park-like feeling. In the early 1900's, residents of New Prague who wanted to escape the "city" went to Kabes's Grove, aptly named for the farmer who owned the land south of New Prague. Desiring to be like their neighbors to the north in Jordan, Chaska and Shakopee, an effort started to develop a city park.

It was not until Memorial Park was established in 1922 that New Prague had its first park. The Veterans of Foreign Wars and the members of the American Legion spearheaded the fundraising and in 1921 15 acres were purchased from Maertz and Nickolay in the Sunnyside Addition, on the south side of Main Street. The park property consisted of about 10 acres of level land for an athletic field and about 5 acres of natural grove (Tikalsky, p. 17).



The Proposed Plans for Memorial Park (New Prague Golf Club – Memories and Reflections)

New Prague Golf Course

Golf was a popular sport in Scotland for hundreds of years starting in the Middle Ages, but did not grow internationally, including the US, until the late 19th Century. Golf expanded in popularity in the US during the 1920s, around the time when Walter Hagen became the first American to win the British Open in 1922.

When Memorial Park was developed it did not include the four-hole golf course, or the airplane landing strip as proposed in the original park plan. A group from the International Milling Company asked Ben Novotny for permission to put golf holes (fairways and greens) in his pastureland northeast of the city, the city's first informal park. Novotny's grove never was designated as a golf course, but it gave New Prague residents a chance to try this up-and-coming sport.

A group of business men convinced John Nickolay to convert his farmland, which was located on the south edge of Memorial Park, into a golf course. In 1931 a nine-hole course was constructed on 50 acres of Nickolay and Maertz's farms. The course was surveyed and planned by Harold Lathrop of the Minneapolis Park Board and W. G. Swanson, manager of the Glenwood Golf Course in Minneapolis. Much of the construction of the original course was led by Nickolay.

From 1931 to 1937, the golf course was private and not affiliated with the city. Memberships struggled during the Depression years, as golf was seen as a rich man's sport. "Some of the old timers used to poke fun at people who went out on the golf course to chase that little white 'pill' around" (New Prague Golf Course – Memories and Reflections). During those first six years, Nickolay maintained the course, but also had a second job, as the fledging club could not support his family. Maintenance of the new course was a family affair for the Nickolays, frequently cutting the fairways, smoothing the sand greens at the start of each day and constantly battling the gophers in an attempt to keep the grounds free from holes.

In 1937, citizens encouraged the New Prague City Council to purchase the golf course. International Milling, State Bank of New Prague and private individuals donated more than half of the cost to purchase the property. Maintenance was turned over to the New Prague Park Board. During the summer of 1938, the course was given a facelift as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project paid for the labor to install trees along the fairways, as a way to help the unemployed in New Prague.



The first golf shack was 12 feet by 14 feet and was supplied with candy, pop, peanuts, cigarettes, some golf supplies and City Club beer, a New Prague brew. In 1938, the shack was expanded to approximately 22 feet by 24 feet, large enough for golfers to gather inside for cards, drinking or eating, becoming more of a clubhouse.

Membership and interest in the golf course increased dramatically after the introduction of Wednesday night suppers, in which women from golf families organized and prepared the food for the suppers. Now the golf course started to become a family affair.

During 1949, the New Prague Improvement Association began discussing improving the New Prague Park and Golf Club. The Association's plans included a bandstand, a wading pool, a lighted baseball park, a library, additional playground equipment and a golf clubhouse. Two benefactors, F. A. Bean and James M. Bruzek, both from International Milling Co., agreed to generous donations if additional funds could be raised locally. Since the headquarters of the mill moved to Minneapolis in 1923, both Bean and Bruzek were no longer residents of New Prague when they made this offer (New Prague Golf Course – Memories and Reflections).

A new club house was constructed in 1951 to replace the snack shack. The clubhouse building included a 24-foot by 40-foot main dining hall, a 12-foot wide screen porch extending the entire length of the building on the south side, a modern kitchen, a bar, a storeroom, a men's shower and restroom and a women's restroom. The clubhouse also provided the facilities for many special events – weddings, private parties, Christmas parties and organization meetings. Unfortunately, Mr. Bruzek did not live to see the completion of the facility that he contributed to. He died in January 1950, a year after his retirement.



In 1958, an addition to the clubhouse provided better facilities for parties and banquets. This 50-foot by 24-foot addition housed a bar and lounge, and shower and locker rooms. In 1972, a second level addition was added to the clubhouse. The new bar, lounge and deck provided larger entertainment space for weddings, parties, reunions and tournament groups.

The F. A. Bean Foundation and International Milling have been prominent in the growth of the golf course. The F. A. Bean Foundation paid for the installation of grass greens and improvements to the club house. International Milling supplied the piping for the water system and also sent a welder to help with installing the pipes. For many years, International Milling also helped the Club by printing the Club's scorecards at the Mill's print shop (New Prague Golf Course – Memories and Reflections).

Ownership of the golf course remains with the city. In 1969, the golf course expanded to 18 holes, making New Prague the smallest city in Minnesota to have an 18-hole golf course (New Prague Golf Course – Memories and Reflections).

Baseball

Writing about the role of baseball, Historian Ross Bernstein said, "In small-town America, being on a team was like being royalty. It gave communities a sense of pride and helped them to form a sense of identity. Summers were planned around the teams' schedules, and their games were front page news" (Bernstein, p. 74).



New Prague's Seal of Minnesota baseball team (MN Reflections)

Many of the surrounding communities had baseball clubs competing against each other. As early as 1897, New Prague had a club named the "Red Caps", and other clubs included the Cedar Lake Hard Workers, Heidelberg Hard Workers, Shakopee Browns, Jordan Greys, Veseli Picketts, Wheatland Rustics, Monty Alerts, Marysburg Diamond Stars, and Greenleaf Lake Fish Eaters. The name of New Prague's main team would soon be changed to "Seal of Minnesota" or "Seals" for short, named for the New Prague Flouring Mill Company's famous flour brand which sponsored the team (Kajer, p. 188).

Schools

Despite the fact that most Bohemian immigrants had come from relatively meager backgrounds, a very high percentage of them were literate as three years of schooling were mandatory in the Czech Kingdom. With this tradition of appreciation for education, as soon as settler children reached school age of five years, education became a priority in the New Prague community.

New Prague leaders believed that a strong educational system would benefit the community in the long run. "The immediate welfare of any city is determined by the character of its business and interest; its future, if that can be anticipated at all, is foretold by the way it provides for the training of its children and youth, those who are in time to assume the responsibilities of its welfare and shape its destiny" (Wrabek Bros., p. 13).

As with other communities, New Prague benefited from the state dedicating property for schools and providing financial assistance. As early as 1849, the Minnesota Territory passed a law providing that common schools be open to all persons between the ages of 4 and 21 years, free of charge. In 1861 the state Legislature passed the common school law which made each township a school district and began the policy of state funds assisting local school districts with the cost of public education based on attendance. For several decades, most schools operated only three months per year (Kajer, p. 76).

The first area community school was conducted in the log home of Anton Phillip for the few school-aged children there in the late 1850s and early 1860s. The first public school within the village limits was built in 1865. The one-room log structure was about 20 feet long and 12 feet wide. The school building looked more like a barn than a school.

With the growing pressure of the young community and the existence of the railroad, New Prague residents were compelled to build a new school even though it was costly for the small community. In 1884 a new public school was constructed on the corner of Barnes and First Street South. The school was a two-story structure and housed 120 to 140 students in four classrooms – two on the second floor and two on the first floor. Each room consisted of two grades. The wood frame structure was built in the fashion of the period with the usual cupola (Kajer, p. 114). The 1884 building has since been razed, with the lots being sold for single-family residences.

As the city grew in population and prosperity more ambitious educational aims developed and in the late 1890s the need of a new school was discussed. The State Department of Education had in the meantime become a modern, advanced system of educational supervision and strides made in educational matters had produced a significant change from the area's earlier schools and even since the building of the second school in 1884.



New Prague High School – 1900 (MHS)

New Prague constructed its third school building in 1900 facing 3rd St NW, between 1st Ave NW and N Central Ave. It was built of brick and contained 12 rooms. In 1905 it was placed on the state high school list and became an accredited state high school, receiving \$1500 per year in state aid. The advanced status also meant that graduates would be received at the state university as freshman.

The residents and business leaders of New Prague were proud of their schools and used them as a marketing point to attract settlers from the east to move to New Prague. "New Prague can proudly boast of as fine churches and school buildings as can be found in most places of double our population. Our magnificent school houses, rich and ornate in appearance and almost lavishly supplied with the most approved apparatus was also demanded" (Wrabek Bros., p. 15).

Because of growing number of school-aged children in New Prague, in 1924 the city built a new high school. The modern building was constructed directly west of the 1900 school building. In 1961 the New Prague High School (now the New Prague Intermediate School) was completed at the cost of \$1.5 million, and the 1924 building became the elementary school. In 1968, New Prague Elementary school was dedicated, and the 1924 building was used for district offices. The 1900 High School was razed in the mid-1970s (Dvorak).



Parochial Schools



St. Wenceslaus school – 1900 (MN Reflections)

In 1878 the St. Wenceslaus parish opened its first school. The Catholic school was built on the church property just northeast of the second church. The Italianate-style building was a white, two-story brick structure and had four classrooms, two on each floor. It had a shingled roof and hinged shutters on the windows. It was demolished in 1914 in order to build a new school building.

The zeal of the priest after the school was built resulted in proclamations that “anyone attending public schools would go to hell.” This became a regular theme over the years well into the 20th century. This public demeaning of public school children reinforced the position of their parents and others who objected to the clergy overreaching their authority (Kajer, p. 126).

The present school building was built in 1914, seven years after the present church edifice was constructed. The school consisted of eight rooms staffed with eight teachers. The Romanesque design of the school repeats the church’s scale, masonry construction, and use of semi-circular arches and contrasting banding. The school has a symmetrical façade featuring a central pavilion with large flared truncated hip roof. The two story structure is constructed of buff colored brick with a stone base. The main entrance is flanked by small arched windows set in a group of three stone arches, which represents the Trinity (God being all three, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit), a theme copied from the church building. A cross caps the central parapet.



A central octagonal bell tower has been removed, as well as dormer windows on the east, west, and south facades. The interior has been remodeled, but the basic floor plan is intact. A two-story brick addition located at the rear of the building was constructed in 1954 to enlarge the school facilities (Bloomberg).

Hospitals

Because of the rural nature of the time, medical care in the early-settler days was typically provided in the home; there were no hospitals in New Prague the first few decades. New Prague opened its first hospital in 1924. William Harvey and his wife Eleanor donated their house to the city after he moved to Minneapolis with the International Milling Company. The New Prague Community Hospital served a large area. Although Harvey's house served the community for more than 25 years, the need for a more modern facility became obvious. The hospital did not have an elevator, and patients had to be carried from delivery on the first floor up to their rooms or surgery on the second floor.



New Prague Community Hospital (Lau's Czech Bakery)

In the 1940s, discussions began about building a new hospital. After World War II ended, the federal government offered grants for the construction of small-town hospitals. New Prague took advantage of this federal money. City voters approved a \$175,000 municipal bond, federal grant money covered 45% of the costs, and St. Wenceslaus Parish donated the land. The 32-bed hospital opened on February 10, 1952 at 301 Second Street NE. When the new hospital was completed, it was named the Community Memorial Hospital, in honor of area soldiers. In 1952, eight Benedictine Sisters from St. Benedict's convent came to New Prague to oversee the operation, management and debt of the new hospital. The name was changed to Queen of Peace in the 1960s to reflect the hospital's Christian roots (Tikalsky, p. 21).

Social/Music

Bohemians have a passion for music. There is a saying when translated means, "Every Czech child is born with a violin under his chin." When people were stressed in their villages, they would sing or play instruments. New Prague residents have continued the traditions of the old country with its Philharmonic Orchestra, the Bohemian Brass Band, and many others. The local orchestra played for Easter and Christmas masses at St. Wenceslaus church. The Bohemian Brass Band played for funerals, escorting the body of the deceased from the church to the cemetery (Dvorak). The band also played for wedding dances and other celebrations at the four dance halls in town.

J. W. Komarek formed the Bohemian Brass Band in 1893 called the New Prague Cornet Band in 1893. A tribute to the members of his band from 1905 lives on in the mural on the west wall of the Edwardson's building on Main Street (below).



Dances were especially popular and frequent in New Prague. During the 1870s and 1880s young people traveled as far as 30 miles to attend dances in New Prague probably as it afforded a means of getting



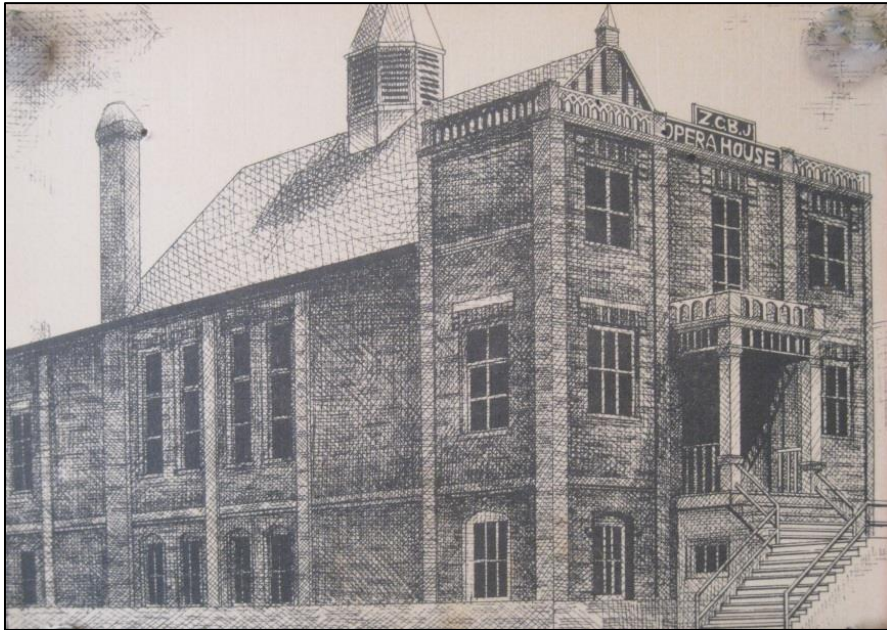
New Prague Orchestra ca. 1910, MN Reflections

together to visit and exchange experiences as well as proving opportunity to share in amusements they had known in their beloved homeland.

Dances were sponsored by one of the societies or the hall proprietors. There were often bands in three or four halls on the same night, and as many as several hundred couples attended. Polkas (“invented” in 1834 in Prague, Bohemia) were especially popular (Kajer, p. 147 and *New Prague Times*, August 27, 1931, p. 4).

Opera House

Also known as the ZCJ Hall, the Opera House was completed in 1887 and was located one block north of Main Street on Central Avenue and Second Street. For more than 80 years, the opera house was the social and cultural center of New Prague. The Opera House hosted dances, concerts and speakers, community meetings and Vaudeville acts. Many of these events were in the Czech language. The Opera House also served as the local movie theater and gymnasium. It had a library and held discussion groups on cultural topics too. The dimension of the hall was 48 feet by 90 feet and could seat 600 people. The local Sokol gymnastics society also used the building for training and shows. This gathering place was demolished in 1970, and the State Bank of New Prague was built on the site (Tikalsky, p. 38).



ZCJ Opera House (Lau's Czech Bakery)

Park Ballroom

In 1919, the Legion Pavilion Company, Inc. built a dance hall/ballroom in Memorial Park. The original building was added on to or remodeled in 1947, 1972, 1976 and 1990. It was quite small in comparison to the present building. Some of the music talents who have performed at the ballroom include Conway Twitty, Lawrence Welk, Chubby Checker, Whoopie John, Elmer Scheid, Frankie Yankovich, and many local bands.



The ballroom was a wooded building – like a barn – and the bar windows were operated with a pulley system. Benches were located alongside the dance floor. Dances were only held on Wednesday and Sundays each week – two date nights - many local couples met there. In 1946, after World War II, the American Legion Post 45 assumed operation of the ballroom and named the ballroom

after Charles Borak, who was killed in World War I (*New Prague Times*, July 13, 2006, p. 33).

Civic Organizations

New Prague is made up of social people, as is shown by the many popular and active societies, and school, church and charitable institutions organized in the community. These organizations provided opportunities to socialize and work for the common good. Through the years, New Prague and its residents have benefitted from the social, educational and philanthropic opportunities that these service organizations have provided (Wrabek Bros., p. 18). A partial list of these organizations includes:

- C. S. P. S. Lodge No. 30 (Czech-Slovak Protective Society)
- A. O. U. W. Lodge No. 77 (Ancient Order of United Workmen)
- C. S. D. P. J. Lodge No. 5
- The Young Men's Association
- The C. K. of A., Branch 383 – met at the Catholic Association Hall.
- Knights of St. Wenceslaus
- St. Wenceslaus Lodge No. 35
- Catholic Workmen Lodge No. 1
- D. R. K. U. V. Society – another beneficial order. Meetings were held at the Catholic Association Hall. Catholic Beseda – was another social society and was noted for its first-class entertainment
- St. Anna Society – was an organization composed of women
- J. C. D. Ladies Society, No. 36 – meetings were at the C. S. P. S. Was one of the best organized ladies societies. Very active and beneficial.
- I. O. O. F. (Independent Order of Odd Fellows), New Prague Lodge No. 46 – was organized in 1892 with prominent citizens John Landenberger, Joseph Wrabek, John Prosek, W. S. Broz, and T. F. Vanasek as members. The I. O. O. F. met at their hall in Joach's block (Kajer, p. 161).

The Cesko-Slovansky Podporujici Spolek (C.S.P.S.), Lodge was founded in New Prague in 1878. It was originally started in St. Louis in 1862 as an insurance society with sickness, burial, and widows' benefits for members. It soon expanded into cultural, entertainment, theater, and music activities, and became known as a freethinking organization. "Freethinkers" was a term given to those who had left the Catholic Church because they had formed their own opinions about the ways in which religion should be practiced. They tended to strongly support the principal of separation of church and state.

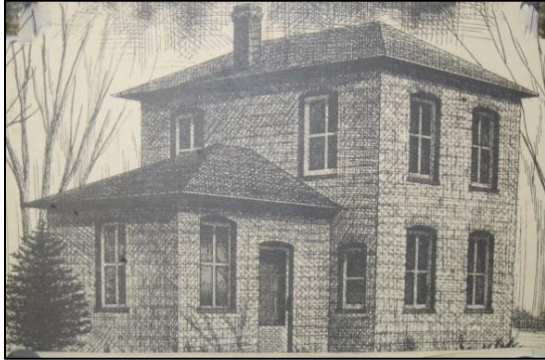
The C.S.P.S. New Prague Lodge was No. 30. The St. Paul C.S.P.S. Lodge was No. 12. Other lodges were established in Montgomery, Waterville, Hopkins, Owatonna, Hutchinson, Jordan, Glencoe, Minneapolis, and other Bohemian communities (Kajer, p. 134). The New Prague C.S.P.S. constructed its opera house in 1887 as previously discussed. In 1897, the C.S.P.S. Lodges of the western states separated from the eastern states due to differences in cost and other issues and formed their own organization, long after known as the Z.C.B.J. (Western Bohemian Fraternal Union). New Prague's C.S.P.S. Hall became the Z.C.B.J. Hall (Kajer, p. 192).

Civic Leaders

The physical development of any community is determined by the collective decisions of its citizens. Such is the case of New Prague, which has had its share of important figures during its history. Below are just a few of the individuals who have left a positive impression on the development of New Prague.

Anton Philipp

The first pioneer and founder of New Prague, Anton Philipp, was a generous supporter of the city and the church, donating land for the church, school, and convent. Philipp and his wife, Clara (Yackly), had 12 children. Three died in infancy, two others died at ages nine and eleven. Philipp donated \$6,000 to St. Wenceslaus, one of the Philipp's farms known as the "Hovorka Farm", the brick house north of town with surrounding buildings (where Mrs. Philipp still lived), a small residence building, and the large two-story brick building in town formerly occupied by the nuns of St. Wenceslaus (Kajer, p. 124).



Phillips' House – razed (Lau's Czech Bakery)

Father Francis Tichy

Father Francis Tichy was St. Wenceslaus' pastor for 26 years (1880-1906) during a period of significant capital improvements. During his tenure the convent was built, two wings were added to the St. Wenceslaus church in 1883, and he donated the marble chapel for the cemetery. However, Father Tichy is mostly known for having the vision to begin the process of constructing the impressive church the parish continues to enjoy over 100 years later.

The decision to build the new church and the fund raising for its construction, however, came at the cost of alienating large numbers of parish families. The construction of the new church was a huge undertaking for the small parish in 1890. Father Tichy coerced parish families into donating money for the church project by telling families that they had to donate or they should not attend church. Unfortunately the result of all the controversy was a large number of families leaving the church and the eventual "resignation" and transfer of Father Tichy to Silver Lake in 1906 (Kajer, p. 137).



Father Tichy (MN Reflections)

Father Cermak

Father Cermak replaced Father Tichy in 1906. Father Cermak played a pivotal role in supervising the greater part of the construction of the new church and also the razing of the old church. Father Cermak also supervised the erection of the new Catholic school building, directed the construction of an addition to the convent, and maybe most importantly, started to bring some of the disenfranchised families back to the church.

Dr. Edward Novak



Dr. Novak (MN Reflections)

Dr. Edward E. Novak graduated from the University of Iowa and came to New Prague in 1895 to begin his career as a family doctor. Ultimately, Dr. Novak would become New Prague's most renowned citizen. He served as the community doctor for nearly 70 years, was elected mayor for two terms, served on the local school board for 44 years (31 of those years as president), president of the state school board association, served on the University of Minnesota Board of Regents for 18 years, was the first president of the New Prague Cooperative Creamery and president of the Community Club, was active in developing the first telephone company in New Prague, and even ran for governor of MN in 1936 (Tikalsky, p. 9 and *New Prague Times*, August 27, 1931, p. 57).

Even though Dr. Novak was busy with his medical career and politics, he also had a passion for progressive agriculture and scientific cattle breeding. Dr. Novak raised and bred Red Poll cattle. Although the pasture is now a housing development, a street, Red Poll Avenue, is named for the cattle once raised there (Tikalsky, p. 9).

Dr. Novak's medical office was on the second floor of the Maertz block.



Novak's Residence at 305 Central Avenue

J. J. Remes

J. J. Remes' father, Mathias, came from Bohemia in 1860, when he was 28 years old. He settled in Lanesburg Township, a mile west of town, working as a shoemaker and opening a shop in his farm home. J. J. Remes was born on the farm in 1869, and five years later the family moved into town. The

elder Remes, Mathias, entered the mercantile field and we find that in 1882 he was operating a meat market, saloon and general store.



Remes' House located at 101 1st St SE

J. J. Remes served as mayor and city clerk of New Prague and held other public offices. In the early years he was a force in the city's metamorphous which converted it from a sprawling country town with a black ribbon of mud for its main street and business enterprise retarded by inaccessible roads. Remes led the grading and graveling of local roads in the village (*New Prague Times*, August 27, 1931, p. 16).

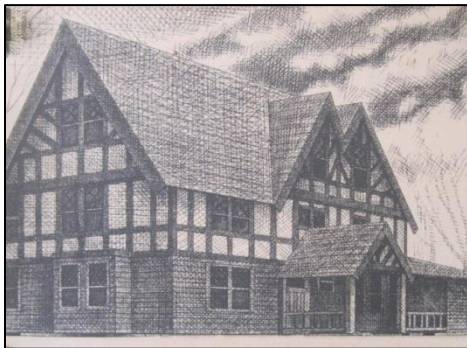
Frank Maertz

Frank Maertz, father of Joseph Maertz, Sr., immigrated from Bohemia in the 1850s and settled on a farm 3 ½ miles from the townsite in 1855, when Joseph Sr., who was born in Bohemia, was three years old. Joseph Maertz Sr. was an active leader in both industrial and civic affairs, building the first grain elevator in New Prague, founding the Bank of New Prague in 1883, serving as president of the Council and being postmaster for five years (*New Prague Times*, August 27, 1931, p. 20). Joseph Maertz Sr.'s house is still extant, second house from the southeast corner of Central Ave S and 1st Street SE (Dvorak).

Francis Atherton Bean Sr.

Francis Atherton Bean, Sr., was born in Watertown, Massachusetts, in 1840 and came to Minnesota with his parents in 1855. In about 1865 he traveled by covered wagon from Minnesota to Helena, Montana, returning to Minnesota in 1872. During his absence, his father purchased a small flour mill in Faribault, Minnesota. Francis Atherton Bean, Sr., operated the mill, rebuilding after a fire in the 1880s, until his debts forced him to sell the mill in 1891. Later that year, at the age of 51, he leased a mill in New Prague, Minnesota, and from it built the company that was to become International Multifoods Corporation (IMCO). IMCO was headed by three generations of the Bean family. Francis Atherton Bean, Sr., died on February 20, 1930. In that year his business partner, William L. Harvey, became president of

International Milling Company and his son, Francis Atherton Bean, Jr., became vice president.



*Beans' Residence located at 301 2nd Street NW
(Lau's Czech Bakery)*

Not only was New Prague Flour mill New Prague's largest employer for over 70 years, but the Beans donated their home to serve as a residence for the aged, contributed to the building and expansion of the New Prague library, and donated labor and money for improvements to the New Prague Country Club. Bean's mill that he founded is still in the top 25% in flour output in the U. S. (*New Prague Times*, July 23, 2006, p. 60 and Kajer, p. 182).

Expected Property Types

Government/Municipal Services

- City Halls
- Courthouses
- Fire stations
- Hospitals and clinics
- Jails
- Library
- Nursing Homes
- Police Stations
- Post Office
- Sewage treatment plants
- Social service buildings
- Utility plants
- Waterworks
- Water towers

Other Public Improvements

- Bandstands
- Bridges
- Parks
- Picnic Areas
- Playgrounds and sports facilities
- Prominent natural features
- Recreational structures
- Sidewalks
- Statuary and monuments

Education

- Public schools
- Parochial Schools (See also Religion context)

Homes of Civic Leaders

Recommendations and Future actions

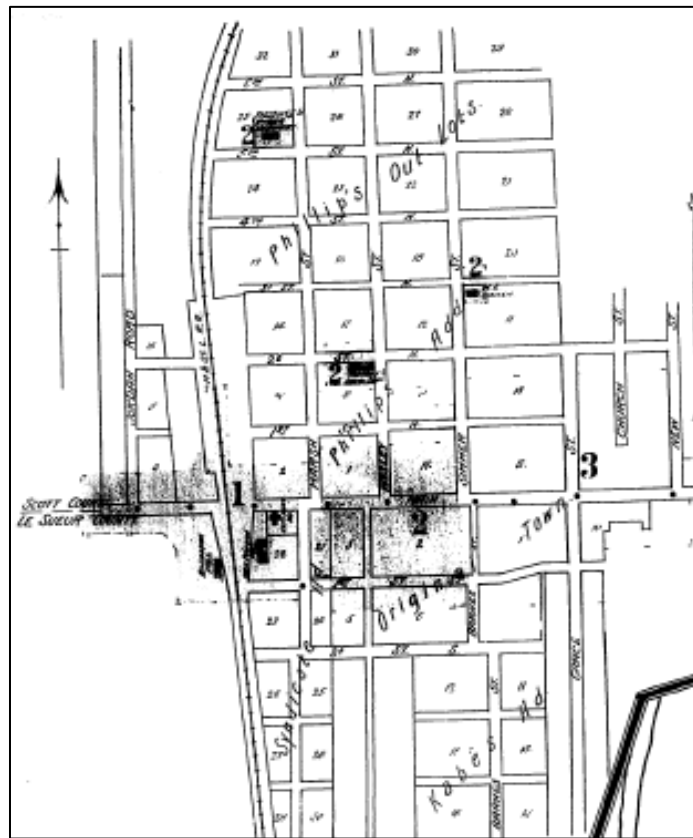
- Conduct a cultural resources survey to identify and evaluate all resources in the city relating to the public and civic life context. Base further specific recommendations on the findings of the survey.
- The City should work with the current property owner and recommend that the Francis Bean Sr. house, which has a high-level of integrity, be added to the National Register of Historic Places.

Context 7 - Residential

Development Patterns

The housing development pattern in New Prague represents a synopsis of not only the rate of residential growth in New Prague but also the location of that growth. Residential blocks were not developed all at once. This sporadic development pattern gave the village a more open appearance in its infancy. As time passed the vacant residential lots of the original plat were ultimately developed at different times which resulted in a mixture of architectural styles from different time periods.

Early residential houses in New Prague were constructed near Main Street. As more families moved to the village, new blocks and lots were added to the north and south of Main Street as shown in the plat below. Original growth was contained by the M & St. L railroad on the west and the St. Wenceslaus Church property on the east.

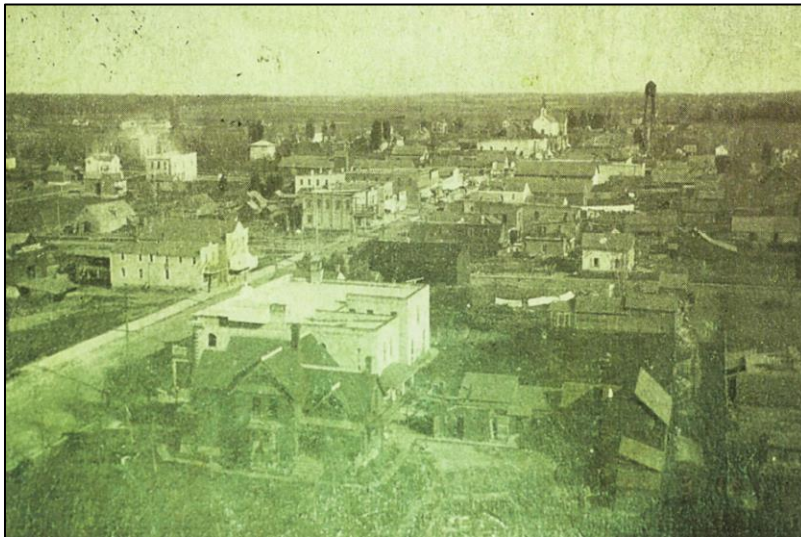


1899 Sanborn Map

The development of New Prague continued the Victorian era preference of having a single family home as the predominant residence. Contrary to the residence above a shop model, the detached single-family home offered more privacy and space, centered on the family nucleus, and separated work and residential space. The concept of a single house on a lot also enabled families to own outbuildings for raising animals. The detached, single-family home became attainable for early settlers as land was plentiful and inexpensive, and labor cheap. Instead of living above their businesses, New Prague

business owners normally lived in detached houses a block from their businesses (Dvorak). Unlike other communities that have high-end residential neighborhoods, New Prague's leading businessmen built their houses in the heart of the community on both the north and south sides of the village.

As in most nineteenth-century communities, early houses in New Prague were interspersed with commercial buildings and industrial sites. This is evident by the several dwellings located along Main Street amongst commercial buildings in the 1887 Sanborn map and the picture below with the Henry Heinen house in the foreground next to the Broz Hotel (Dvorak). As previously mentioned, the City did not adopt a zoning ordinance regulating the location of different land uses until 1971. Over time, commercial, industrial, and residential areas naturally became increasingly differentiated, as post WWII houses filled in the remaining vacant lots in the original plat. These post-WWII houses created their own neighborhoods east and west of the city.



Main Street - ca. 1900 (City of New Prague)

Layout

The original plat of New Prague used the similar grid plan that was nearly universally used in the construction of new communities in the westward development of the United States. The grid scheme was an advantageous one in many ways: it could be easily laid out by anyone who could work with survey equipment; since land was a major commodity, the grid pattern facilitated the ease of both sale and resale of land as well as the preparation of the necessary legal descriptions; and the right corners of the grid pattern created safe intersection for horse and buggies. In the United States, the grid system was widely used in most major cities and their suburbs until the 1960s.

Riverside, Illinois, west of Chicago, was planned by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. and Calvert Vaux in 1869. Olmsted and Vaux applied the principles of the English garden and produced a system of gently curving tree-lined streets and single-family detached houses with deep setbacks of lawn and shade trees. In order to develop affordable new houses for soldiers returning from the war and their families, Abraham Levitt took Olmsted's development concept a step further by mass-producing homes and placing them on the curvilinear streets. Levittown was constructed between 1947 and 1951 and was the first massed produced suburb in the country (So, p. 26). Soon this residential development style with curving streets in a park-like setting was replicated all throughout the country, including New Prague.

Similar to other Minnesota towns and suburbs, starting in 1960 residential developments in New Prague copied the Levittown development pattern. The curvilinear streets are located at the periphery of New Prague, east of the golf course and north and east of 7th Street NE. The larger lots enabled the wide rambler house style to be the dominant style during the 1960s.

Prior to World War II, contractors tended to build single-family houses one at a time on individual vacant lots. It was not until after World War II that Levitt and then other contractors started building multiple single-family homes in large groups. This is evident in the cluster of rambler homes located along Columbus Avenue and 5th St. SW.

The majority of the residential growth of New Prague has been to the east of town. For decades the M & St. L railroad has been a deterrent for growth to the west. Trains often stopped at the depot for passengers and to take on water or coal and stop at the New Prague Flouring Mill delivering grain or shipping flour. Thus, there would be long delays for anyone living west of the tracks and wanting to get to town.

Community Growth

New Prague experienced unprecedented growth after the arrival of the M & St. L Railroad. Between 1880 and 1900, New Prague grew 320%, from 384 residents to 1228 residents. There are a fair number of single family residences remaining in New Prague from these boom years prior to 1900.

The United States experience a recession during the first decade of the 1900s and residential growth in New Prague similarly came to a standstill with the only decline in population in the city’s history. New Prague’s population remained static until World War II ended in 1945. This lack of growth is evident in the small number of Craftsman and Tudor style housing in New Prague that was typical in Minnesota and the U.S. during the 1910s – 1930s.

Residential growth again mushroomed from 1944 to 1960, with the population of New Prague increasing 150% from 1645 to 2533 residents as soldiers originally from farms returned from the war and moved into the city. This population growth corresponded to 21% of all the housing in New Prague being constructed during the 1950s and 1960s.

Construction Year of Housing						
Period	1939 or earlier	1940-1949	1950-1959	1960-1969	1970-1979	1980-1989
Percent of Total Housing Units	15	2	10	11	5	6

New Prague Comprehensive Plan

Architectural Styles

It is important to understand the different architectural styles present in New Prague in order for the community to appreciate the rich diversity of housing styles in the community. Residents are more

likely to undertake preservation efforts individually if they first understand how their own houses play a part in defining New Prague’s historic context.

Folk houses are utilitarian in design because they are built by builders who lack specific architectural training, but instead follow designs and construction methods that have been handed down through the generations. In Folk houses, function often dictates the design. Academic architecture, on the other hand, describes buildings that are designed by trained professionals. Style and aesthetics are as important as function, with the goal as a balance of all elements. Because the emphasis on style and fashion is so great, architectural styles grow in popularity, evolve, and fade over time. Often, early examples of a style are quite different from late examples.

Most houses in New Prague are of the modest Folk form. Only a handful of houses are the more elaborate, academic architecture style. The City has an excellent sample of the popular architectural styles from 1880s – 1960s (Italianate, Gabled-Ell, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Dutch Colonial Revival, Craftsman, Tudor Revival, and Ranch style). While some pure styles exist, most houses in New Prague were designed with a blend of architectural styles.

The houses of New Prague were most likely constructed by one of the several independent contractors living in New Prague. The designs of the homes in New Prague were determined by the residential contractors rather than architects. Residential contractors most likely used “pattern-books” specifically aimed at the middle class.

Houses in New Prague were built almost exclusively of sawed lumber supplied from the two lumber yards in the village. A few houses were made of brick, most likely supplied by the Chaska brickyards.

Below is an overview of the architectural styles found in New Prague and examples of houses that best exhibit the characteristic features of the different styles of architecture.

Italianate

Predominant period ca. 1855 to late 1880s

Inspired by paintings of rural villas of Italy, the Italianate style was promoted as a romantic alternative to classical Greek and Roman architecture. Because the style was more easily adapted to narrow urban lots, it became the dominant style for residential and commercial architecture from 1855 to 1880. It continued as a popular style for commercial buildings to the turn of the century.



311 2nd Ave NW (1895)

Defining characteristics:

- Two or three stories (rarely one)
- Single or paired decorative brackets under wide cornices
- Balanced, symmetrical rectangular shape
- Tall, narrow windows, commonly arched or curved above
- Projecting door and window crowns/hood moldings
- Low-pitched roofs

Gabled-Ell

Predominant period 1865 - 1920

One of the most common architectural designs in New Prague is the Gable-Ell design. Gable-front houses descended from the Greek Revival style, placing an emphasis on the gabled end of the house reminiscent of a pediment. Gabled-Ell houses are a variation of the Gable-front houses by adding a side-gable wing at a right angle to form an L. With the coming of the railroad supplying abundant lumber and the introduction of balloon frame construction, Gabled-Ell houses first became popular in rural areas in the Northeast and Midwest. For the first time families were able to inexpensively build two-story dwellings. These prevalent rural homes became common for the urban working class for its simple and utilitarian design.



111 2nd Street SW (ca. 1880s)

Defining characteristics:

- Minimal architectural detailing
- Two stories with a wing of equal height added at a right angle creating an L.
- A shed-roofed porch placed within the L made by the two wings

Folk Victorian

Predominant period 1870-1910

Before the age of railroads, pioneers built no-fuss, square or L-shaped houses in the Greek Revival style like the Gable-Ell houses. But the rise of industrialization made it easier and more affordable to add decorative details to otherwise simple homes. Decorative architectural trim could now be massed produced, and as the railroads expanded, factory-made building parts could be sent to far corners of the continent.

Many Folk Victorian house were adorned with flat, jigsaw cut trim in a variety of patterns. Others had spindles, gingerbread and details borrowed from the Gothic Revival style. With their spindles and porches, some Folk Victorian homes may suggest Queen Anne architecture. But unlike Queen Anne houses, Folk Victorian house are orderly and symmetrical houses. They do not have towers, bay windows, or elaborate moldings like Queen Anne houses.

Defining characteristics:

- Porches with spindle work detailing
- Symmetrical façade (except gable-ell subtype)
- Brackets under eaves were common



200 1st Ave NE (1885)

Queen Anne

Predominant period 1880 – 1910

The elaborate style known as Queen Anne became an architectural fashion during the 1880s and 1890s. The industrial revolution during this period enabled ornate spindle work to be mass produced and the expanded railway network made the decorative trim easily available throughout the country.

Defining characteristics:

- Steep roof with a front-facing gable
- Complicated, asymmetrical shape with round or square towers
- One-story porch that extends across one or two sides of the house
- Differing wall surfaces textured with decorative singles, patterned masonry, or bay windows
- Ornamental spindles or brackets



501 Main St W (1887)



301 2nd St NW (1900)

Colonial Revival
Predominant period 1880 – 1955

As a clear reaction against excessively elaborate Queen Anne architecture, the Colonial Revival became a popular house style from 1880 to 1955. The Colonial Revival refers to the return of interest in the Federal and Georgian house styles found on the East Coast. Reflecting American patriotism and a desire for simplicity, the Colonial Revival house style was the most popular historic revival style between the World Wars.



200 1st Ave SE (ca. 1900s)

Defining characteristics:

- Symmetrical façade with central entrance
- Accentuated front door with decorative crown supported by pilasters
- Sometimes the entryway has a projected portico supported by slender columns
- Double-hung windows with multi-pane glazing

Craftsman
Predominant period 1905 – 1935

The Craftsman style was a product of the British Arts and Crafts movement. As a reaction to the industrial revolution and the excesses of the Victorian era, emphasis was placed on simple design, honesty in construction, and fine craftsmanship. Numerous house plan books, architectural magazines, popular magazines (e.g. *Good House Keeping*, *House Beautiful*, and *Ladies Home Journal*) and manufacturers of pre-fabricated "kit houses" such as Sears, Roebuck and Co. popularized the style.

Though Craftsman buildings and two-story houses are plentiful, the most common expression of the Craftsman style is the "bungalow." This term came from India (via England), and refers to a low house surrounded by porches or galleries. Bungalows are one or one-and-a-half story houses of modest size with low-gabled roofs and wide porches, which are often integrated into the structure.

Defining characteristics:

- Low-pitched gabled roof
- Deep eaves with exposed rafters
- Decorative beams or knee braces under gables
- 1 – 1 ½ stories
- Large, covered front porches, supported by square or battered columns



201 3rd St. NE (1918)

Tudor Revival

Predominant period 1920s – 1930s

The Tudor Revival style is based on a variety of late Medieval English influences. The earliest Tudor style houses date from the late 19th century and tended to be architect-designed landmarks. It was not until after World War I when masonry veneering techniques made brick and stone facades of English prototypes affordable. The style quickly faded from fashion in the late 1930s.

Defining characteristics:

- Steeply pitched roof, usually side-gabled
- Front façade dominated by one or more prominent
Cross gables
- Tall narrow windows with multi-pane glazing
- Massive chimneys
- Most made with brick, stucco and/or stone with decorative half-timbering
- Steeply pitched gable dormers



105 1st St SE (ca. 1930s)

Ranch

Predominant period 1935 – 1975

The most popular house style in New Prague is the Ranch style, which represents the community's greatest period of growth between 1940 and 1960 when the population of the city grew 55 percent. The Ranch style originated in California in the mid-1930's but did not gain in popularity elsewhere until the 1940's. The "rambling" Ranch style became the dominant style throughout the country during the 1950s and 1960s.

The popularity of this style was made possible by the country's switch in transportation preference from streetcars to the automobile. Houses built prior to WWII were relatively compact structures on narrow lots as people walked to places of employment or to streetcar lines. However, as the automobile replaced the streetcar and busses as the primary mode of transportation, sprawling houses could be built on wide residential lots, typically twice the size of lots platted prior to WWII.

The Split Level Ranch became popular during the 1950s as a multi-story variation to the Ranch house. The Split Level incorporated an additional story to split three family functions on three separate levels: the wing (quiet living area), the lower level (noisy living and garage), and upper level (sleeping areas.)

Defining characteristics:

- Single-story residence with a strong horizontal orientation
- Low pitched gable and hipped roofs
- Clad with wooded or brick exterior materials, sometimes in combination that would emphasize the horizontal design.
- Wide use of “picture windows” with or without flanking side windows



803 1st St NE (1962)



717 Highland Dr. (1975)

Sidewalks

Concrete sidewalks tended to be installed throughout the village prior to the emergence of the automobile when the majority of the people walked to their jobs (1880s – 1920s). Areas platted and developed after this period did not include sidewalks as increasing automobile ownership changed the primary mode of transportation and eliminating the apparent need for sidewalks.

Expected Property Types

Single family dwellings

Multi-family dwellings

 Duplexes

 Apartment Buildings

Garages

Gardens

Driveways

Fences

Outbuildings

Sidewalks

Recommendations and Future Actions

- The first step in any preservation effort should be to fully survey the entire residential housing stock of New Prague. Among other findings, the survey should determine if any catalog or Sears houses exist in New Prague.
- After establishing a Heritage Preservation Commission, the City should consider establishing historic conservation districts for the residential area of New Prague, or locally designating individual residences that would preserve the architectural variety found in New Prague.
- After establishing a Heritage Preservation Commission, the City should establish Design Guidelines for residences, describing the different architectural styles found in New Prague.
- The City should consider establishing a Paint-A-Thon or Rebuild Together, national efforts that assist low-income homeowners and seniors with maintaining their homes.

Preservation Planning Recommendations

Over the past 150 years, the City of New Prague has lost a few significant historic resources. However, a fair number of historic residential and commercial buildings remain that physically tell the story of the celebrated development of New Prague. In addition, these historic buildings have demonstrated their importance to the City in general and the downtown in particular, with their adaptability and durability over the past 150 years. Not only should New Prague explore future historic preservation activities for the sake of preserving these valuable resources but also because historic preservation has proven to have a positive economic impact on communities that undertake preservation efforts.

The primary purpose of historic contexts is to develop an understanding of New Prague's historic development in order to evaluate its historic resources and to determine which preservation efforts the City may want to evaluate further. Specific planning recommendations are listed in the individual context chapters. Below are the more general preservation activities that New Prague may want to explore implementing in the future.

- **Historic Preservation Plan** – is usually the first step in a city's preservation efforts. A historic preservation plan reviews all the preservation tools in more detail, provides a public forum to decide which preservation efforts should be used, explains historic preservation's terminology, outlines the legal basis for historic preservation, and prioritizes the community's preservation goals.
- **Survey**- examines in more detail all residential, commercial and industrial buildings to determine their historic significance.
- **Historic Preservation Ordinance** – should be tailored to the needs and desires of the particular community. They cover the spectrum from being lenient (providing only recommendations) to being stringent (determining paint colors). Just like any planning effort, the community determines where on the "regulation" spectrum they would prefer to be positioned. Preservation ordinances also establish nomination standards and procedures.
- **Heritage Preservation Commission** - The City should consider establishing a separate Heritage Preservation Commission to advocate for the preservation of New Prague's significant historic structures, educate the public on the architectural styles and importance of New Prague's historic structures, and help determine which historic resources are significant.
- **Nomination to National Register** – The National Register of Historic Places honors buildings and places that have a national historic significance. Buildings listed in the National Register are potentially eligible to receive a Federal and State tax-credit for major improvements.
- **Local Historic Register** – Resources that are of local importance should be listed on a Local Historic Register. Historic Preservation Ordinances only affect buildings on a Local Register, not the National Register.
- **Design guidelines** – Prepared by historic preservation architects, design guidelines give city officials and building owners ideas on the best preservation practices for building improvements.

- ***Certified Local Government*** –Being a CLG brings many benefits to a community such as preservation grants, technical resources, and networking opportunities. However, one of the requirements is that a separate Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) be established.
- ***Education*** – The City should use the Historic Context Study as an educational resource for all Planning Commission members.

References

Books

Bernstein, Ross. *Batter Up! Celebrating a Century of Minnesota Baseball*. New Brighton, MN: Printing Enterprises, 2003.

Blegen, Theodore, C. *A History of the State*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1975.

Clark, Clifford E. Jr. *Minnesota in a Century of Change: The State and Its People Since 1900*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1989.

Danborn, David B. *Born in the Country: A History of Rural America*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1995.

Drache, Hiram M. "Midwest Agriculture: Changing with Technology." *Agricultural History* 50 (1976): 290-302.

Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration. *The WPA Guide to Minnesota*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1938.

Folwell, William W. *A History of Minnesota Vol 2&4*. Minnesota Historical Society, 1921-30.

Gaylord – Hub of Sibley County. Gaylord, MN: Gaylord History Committee, 1982.

Gebhard, David and Tom Martinson. *A Guide to the Architecture of Minnesota*. St. Paul, the University of Minnesota Press, 1977.

Gilman, Rhonda R. *The Story of Minnesota's Past*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1989.

Gresham, William G. *History of Nicollet and Le Sueur Counties, Minnesota*. Indianapolis: B. F. Bowen & Company, Inc., 1916.

Hofsommer, Don L. *The Tootin' Louie – A History of the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

Hofsommer, Don L. *Minneapolis and the Age of Railways*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

Jarchow, Merrill E. *The Earth Brought Forth: A History of Minnesota Agriculture to 1885*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1949.

Kajer, Dr. Thomas O. *They Ate From One Bowl*. 2006.

Larsen, Arthur J. *The Development of the Minnesota Road System*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1966.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1984.

Neill, Edward D. *History of the Minnesota River Valley*. Minneapolis: North Star Publishing Company, 1882.

Olsenius, Richard. *Minnesota Travel Companion*. University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

So, Frank S. *The Practice of Local Government Planning*. Washington DC: International City/County Management Association, 1988.

Tikalsky, Greg and Tammi. *New Prague – A to Z*. Edina, Minnesota. Beaver's Pond Press, 2007.

Wrabek Bros. *New Prague, Minnesota. Brief Sketches of its History, Resources Advantages and Business Men*. New Prague, MN: *The New Prague Times*, 1895.

Articles/Other Written Work

"An American Dream Come True," *Industry* (April 1987).

Bloomberg, Britta. "Church of St. Wenceslaus." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office, August 1980.

Bloomberg, Britta. "Broz Hotel." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office, August 1980.

Bloomberg, Britta. "First National Bank." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office, August 1980.

Castle, Henry. Minnesota, its Story and Biography. Lewis Publishing Company, Chicago & New York, Vol. I, (1915) pp. 440-441

Danborn, David B. "Flour Power – The Significance of Flour Milling at the Falls" *Minnesota History* (2003): 270-285.

Francaviglia, Richard V. "The Historic and Geographic Importance of Railroads in Minnesota." *Minnesota History* 2 (1972): 58-62.

Granger, Susan and Scott Kelly. *Historic Context Study of Minnesota Farms, 1820-1960, Vol. 1*.

International Multifoods. "A History of International Multifoods," June 1991.

Larsen, Arthur J. "Roads and the Settlement of Minnesota" *Minnesota History* 21 (1940): 225-244.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, 2006. *Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare: An Action Plan for Minnesota Wildlife, Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy*. Division of Ecological Services, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Minnesota Department of Transportation. "History of MnDOT". www.dot.state.mn.us.

New Prague Times, September 24, 1964.

New Prague Times, August 27, 1931 (Diamond Jubilee Edition).

New Prague Times, May 13, 1982.

New Prague Times, July 13, 2006, "Portraits of Our Past."

"One of Minnesota's Model Flouring Mills," *The Northwest Magazine* (1897).

Sletton, Edward E., "A Century of Cooperative Development." *The Farmer*, May 1, 1982.

United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census

1880 *Eleventh Census of the United States: Population Schedules*

1900 *Twelfth Census of the United States: Population Schedules*

1910 *Thirteenth Census of the United States: Population Schedules*

1920 *Fourteenth Census of the United States: Population Schedules*

1930 *Fifteenth Census of the United States: Population Schedules*

1940 *Sixteenth Census of the United States: Population Schedules*

1950 *Seventeenth Census of the United States: Population Schedules*

1960 *Eighteenth Census of the United States: Population Schedules*

Wayne, Ralph W. *A Century of Minnesota Dairying and Registered Holsteins, 1876-1976*. Minnesota Holstein Breeders Association, 1977.

Personal Interviews

Dvorak, Dennis (June 5, 2013)

Zimitsch, Mark (September 20, 2013)

Maps

Sanborn Fire Insurance Company. New Prague, 1887 – 1931.

Websites

Scott County Assessing (www.co.scott.mn.us)

Appendix A – Research Design

Introduction

This Research Design describes the objectives and methodology of the historic context study completed for the City of New Prague. The City commissioned Smith & Main to complete the study. The project began in March, 2013. Early on in the process, the consultant met with Ken Ondich, New Prague's Community Development Director, and Dennis Dvorak from the New Prague Historical Society, and solicited input from New Prague's Planning Commission.

Objectives of New Prague's Historic Context Study

Ultimately, the City of New Prague wants to update their historic walking tour map of their downtown and surrounding areas. However, as part of the background information for developing a walking tour map, the City of New Prague is completing this Historic Context Study. The City is then planning on completing a Reconnaissance Survey of the downtown.

This project meets the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Preservation Planning by explaining: what aspects of geography, history and culture significantly shaped the physical development of New Prague.

1. What important property types were associated with those developments.
2. Why those property types are important.
3. What characteristics the property types need to have to be considered an important representation of their type and context.
4. The study is organized into the different development themes and contexts of the city. A narrative for each context describes the nature of each context or theme. Representative buildings, structures, and area for each context are referenced. In addition to describing the themes which illustrate the patterns of New Prague's development, the report also places the city in the larger context of Minnesota's early settlement, particularly with regard to early agricultural and tourist towns. A time table with important dates of U.S., Minnesota and New Prague's history is also included to help place the development of New Prague within the context of the development of the nation, generally, and the State, specifically.

Recommendations and/or note of any special situations related to the resources: ownership patterns, existing conditions, etc. are provided. In addition, the report concludes with a list of general historic preservation planning programs that the city should discuss during their historic preservation planning process.

A final presentation to the community was given to New Prague's Planning Commission on October 23, 2013. The PowerPoint presentation illuminated the highlights of the study, and discussed the next steps in the planning process.

Methodology

1. Identifying the concept, time period and geographical limits for the historic context.

The Historic Context Study examines the general historic development patterns of the community. The geographical limits of the study are New Prague's city limits and the surrounding countryside since farming has played a significant role in the development of the city.

This historic context study describes the historical and architectural development of New Prague between pre-history and 1963.

2. Assembling the existing information about the historic context.

The study process began by meeting with Ken Ondich, New Prague's Community Development Director, and Dennis Dvorak, member of the New Prague Historical Society and local historian, to identify prominent local resources, sites and priorities. The local newspaper, *New Prague Times*, also printed an article describing the Historic Context Study process and solicited stories about New Prague's history.

Archival research and fieldwork have formed the basis of the context study. These sources included state, county, and local histories, land use and other historic maps, archival materials such as those found in local collections (most notably the New Prague Historical Society, courtesy of Dennis Dvorak), at the Minnesota Historical Society, and state contexts on file at the State Historic Preservation Office. Primary sources such as historic photographs, historic plat maps, and city directories were also studied.

Field work included a thorough reconnaissance of the city's existing building types and architectural styles.

Oral histories have also been used to supplement the archival research and fieldwork by the consultant.

Historic photos are from the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS), Minnesota Reflections, the Chameleon Café, and Lau's Czech Bakery. Current pictures were taken by this author in 2013.

3. Synthesizing the information

The narrative of the Historic Context Study covers the history of New Prague and identifies important patterns, events, persons and/or cultural values that shaped the development of the community.

4. Defining the property types

Groups of property types are identified that link the relationship between the historical narratives of the context study with the actual historic properties that illustrate that narrative. Sanborn Maps and fieldwork have determined the locational patterns of the different property types.

5. Identifying information gaps

The New Prague Historical Society has a working list of the different businesses in the different buildings in the downtown. However, there are no dates to determine the period of significance for those businesses. This type of information would help determine the period significance of each building.

Appendix B – 1887 Sanborn Map

