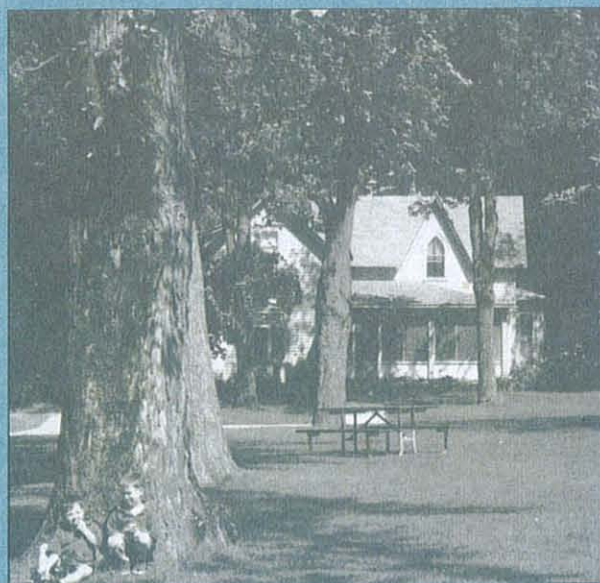


*Central Park:
Northfield's Historic Neighborhoods*

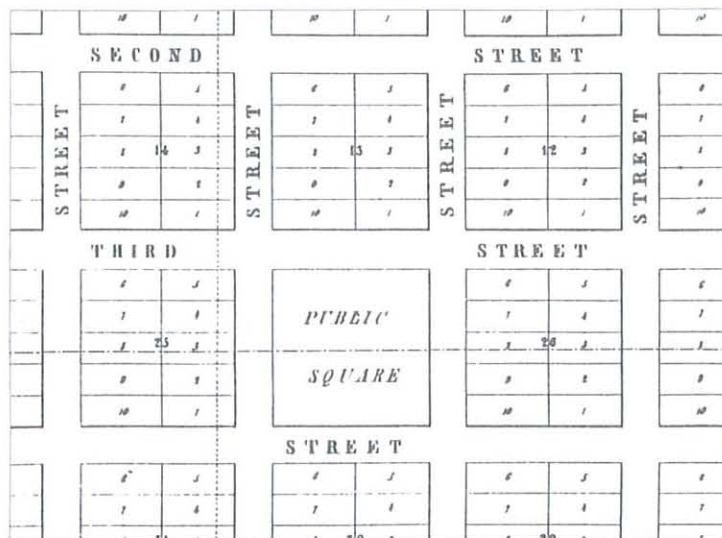
At
Home
in
Northfield



A Walking & Biking Tour

The Northfield Heritage Preservation Commission
Northfield, Minnesota

JOHN NORTH AND CENTRAL PARK



Central Park shown on the Map of Northfield, 1855. Caleb Iddings, surveyor.



1. Central Park in 1993.



John North (1815-1890).

Central Park is a symbol of the earliest planning for the city of Northfield and of the vision of John North, a native of Utica, New York. North, an early and influential resident of the Territory of Minnesota who first settled at the Falls of St. Anthony, was drawn to the waterpower potential of the Cannon River. North's plat for Northfield was made when permanent settlement of the Upper Cannon Valley was just beginning. Invested in land and waterpower, North had much in common with the many townsite developers active in Minnesota in the 1850s. With the provision of building lots intended for mills, stores, and shops, North envisioned a civic and commercial center focused on the river and Division Street. Central Park was prominently sited as the focus of a residential area. This early park, like others in Minnesota's first towns and cities, was of simple design and often served practical needs. In the first years of settlement, cows were sometimes allowed to graze here. Landscape improvements such as trees, walks, and benches were added incrementally. The turn-of-the-century fountain and gazebo have disappeared, but Central Park's historic appearance remains largely intact.

HOUSES: THE FIRST GENERATION



Central Park in a postcard view of ca. 1915.



2. 311 Winona, ca. 1870.



3. 317 Winona, ca. 1870.

Today, Central Park is at the heart of one of the city's oldest residential areas. Because there was very little development outside Northfield's original plat and its early additions until well after 1900, the edges of the "old town" around the park remain distinct.



4. 500 E. Fourth Street, c. 1870.



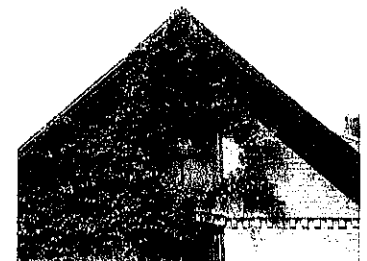
Three examples of Northfield's distinctive Gothic Revival cottages frame Central Park, along with a variety of other nineteenth- and early twentieth-century houses. (See #2-4.) Many of the picturesque cottages built during the first decade after the Civil War have steeply-pitched dormers and round, segmental, or pointed-arch windows.

THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

In 1880, Northfield's population reached 2,298. Many of the seventy-five blocks of the original town plat were already built up with a generally modest collection of houses. In the late 1880s, however, a building boom led by business owners, professionals, and Carleton College faculty members significantly changed the appearance of the area. Competition for choice lots was strong, and existing houses were sometimes moved to other lots to make way for new construction. In some cases, the older houses were split into several sections and dispatched to other locations. The *Northfield News* regularly reported on the construction of the city's largest and most commodious residences. The Queen Anne and Eastlake styles were favored by local builders, as the steeply-pitched roofs, small multi-paned windows in gable peaks, and richly detailed exterior surfaces attest. Some of the largest houses were equipped with late nineteenth-century conveniences, including filtered running water, dumbwaiters, bathrooms, and advanced central heating and ventilation.



5. Matthew Tiffany House, 302 E. Nevada St., ca. 1895.



New York native Matthew Tiffany (1832-1907) farmed near Dennison before moving to Northfield in 1892. His handsome house, one of few local examples of cream brick, retains its original exterior details, including the decorative brickwork in the gable end.



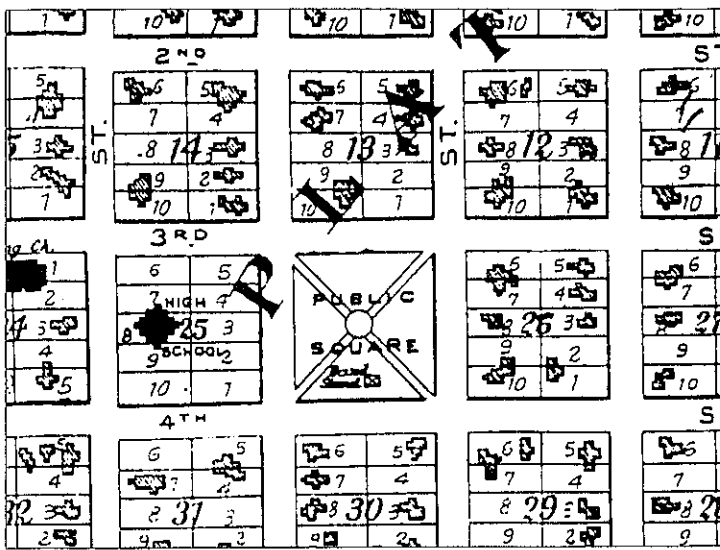
6. F. J. Wilcox House, 216 E. Nevada St., ca. 1890.



photo ca. 1900

The truncated hipped roof seen on this house is a common feature of a number of late nineteenth-century houses near Central Park. Brackets under the eaves often embellished the roofline. Builder Frank J. Wilcox (1848-1921), a native of Taunton, Massachusetts, worked at the First National Bank for over thirty years; he moved to Yakima, Washington in 1909.

THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY



Central Park shown on the Map of Northfield, 1900.



7. John C. Nutting House, 217 Union St., 1887.

The Nutting house, now the Carleton president's residence, was one of the most elaborate of those constructed during the building boom of the late 1880s. The Queen Anne style design is credited to architect J.E. Cooke. John C. Nutting was the president of the First National Bank.



8. Drew-Hill House, 205 College Ave., 1894.

photo ca. 1900

Charles Drew (1840-1907), a native of Boston, arrived in Northfield in 1866. He became a partner in the general merchandise store of Spence and Drew and a civic leader. His Queen Anne style house appears to have been enlarged and altered by subsequent owners, but many of the original decorative features remain intact.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

After the turn of the century, most of the empty lots remaining around Central Park were built up with Craftsman and Period Revival style houses. Craftsman houses were often smaller than their neighbors of the 1880s and 1890s, and ornate architectural details such as carved brackets were replaced by simple features such as exposed rafters. Complex, decorated rooflines gave way to simpler gable and shed forms. Local builders who favored Period Revival styles interpreted a variety of English Tudor and American Colonial forms. Northfield's population reached 15,000 in 1990. Because of the efforts of property owners, many of the historic residences of Central Park will enter the next century in excellent condition, with their exterior appearance intact. While some houses have been maintained in near-original condition for over a century, several dramatic transformations have also occurred in recent years. In several cases, home owners have peeled away old "maintenance-free" siding and discovered a wealth of historic architectural detail hidden underneath.



9. Calef House, 300 E. Sixth St., 1914.

Twentieth-century garden art near Central Park.



Three blocks south of Central Park, the O.N. Calef House is one of several excellent examples of the Craftsman style. A variety of houses distinguished by sturdy geometric trim and simple wall surfaces were constructed in this area before World War I. Calef was a printer for the *Northfield News*.



10. William W. Pye House, 613 E. Fourth St., 1905.

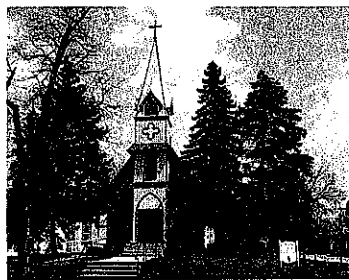


Northfield attorney and bank president William W. Pye (1870-1965) was an architectural enthusiast who designed his own residence in the English Tudor Revival style. Half-timbered stucco walls, a turreted front bay, and a steeply-pitched, wood-shingled roof add to its picturesque appearance.

CHURCHES AND SCHOOLS

Three congregations were organized on the east side of Northfield in 1856: the Congregationalists, the Methodist Episcopalians, and the Baptists. Most churches associated with the first Irish, German, and Scandinavian settlers were located on the city's west side, close to St. Olaf College. Northfield's first public school was established in 1856 at Union and E. Third Streets. It was replaced with the Central School in 1874. In 1910 the Northfield High School (today's Middle School) was built on the site.

Central School, Union Street, 1874. The brick and limestone building featured a mansard roof. Central Park is visible in the background. (Date of photograph unknown.)



11. All Saints Episcopal Church, 419 Washington St., 1866.



12. First Congregational Church, 300 Union St., 1881.

All Saints is an outstanding example of a small Gothic Revival church from the post-Civil War period. The exterior is clad in distinctive board and batten siding. Founders of nearby First Congregational (now affiliated with the United Church of Christ) were among organizers of Carleton College.



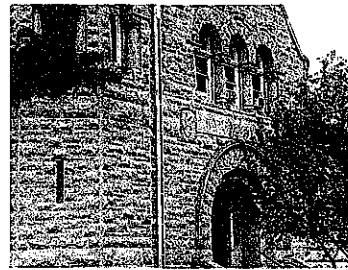
13. Northfield High School, 301 Union St., 1910.



Northfield High School auditorium addition, 1936.

Central School (see above) was replaced in 1910 by the Northfield High School designed by architects Kinney and Jogerst of Minneapolis. Additions were made to the Renaissance Revival building in 1936 and 1955.

CARLETON COLLEGE AND NORTHFIELD



Scoville Hall (1896).



Skinner Memorial Chapel (1916).

Carleton College, founded in 1866, has a 200-acre campus of impressive buildings set amidst trees and lakes at Northfield's northern edge. The growth of the campus has had a great impact on the adjacent residential area. For over 120 years faculty and students have lived in a variety of private dwellings and boarding houses. These buildings have included Gothic Revival cottages, elaborate Queen Anne Style houses, and even a Georgian Revival mansion overlooking Central Park.



14. James Strong House, 118 College St., ca. 1872.



15. Campus Coffee Cup, 510 E. Second St., ca. 1870.

The Italianate style Strong House was built two years after James Strong became president of Carleton, where he served from 1870 to 1903. Nearby, the Campus Coffee Cup was opened in this Second Street house in 1926; it later became the Mary Way Tearoom. (It is now a private residence.)



16. George Huntington House, 117 College St., ca. 1886.



photo ca. 1900

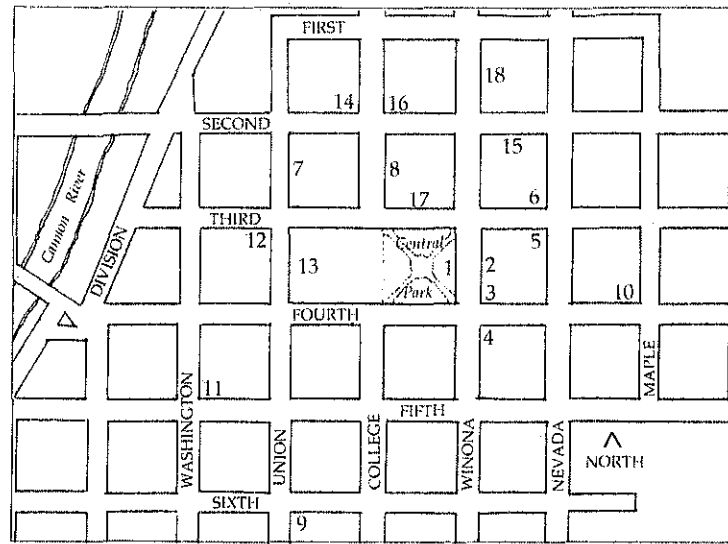
The Huntington House was designed by architect Charles Sedgewick in the Queen Anne style. Featured in Minneapolis newspaper articles, it is typical of houses built by Carleton faculty and local business owners in the 1880s and 1890s. George Huntington was a distinguished professor of classics.

CARLETON COLLEGE AND NORTHFIELD



The Central Park residential area shown a bird's eye view of 1888.

CENTRAL PARK NEIGHBORHOOD MAP



17. Fred B. Hill House, 405 E. Third St., 1911.



The entry.

Fred B. Hill, a professor of religion, and his wife, Deborah Sayles Hill, included a library, gymnasium, and marble bathrooms in their luxurious Georgian Revival residence. Since Hill's death in 1919, the building has been used as a Methodist Church parish house, a public school, and a college dormitory.



18. Bush-Huntington House, 109 Winona St., 1892.



The Palladian window.

This variation of the Queen Anne style was built by George Bush, a painting contractor. In 1909 it was owned by Miss Margaret J. Evans, Dean of Women and Instructor of Modern Languages at Carleton. At the age of 72, she married Professor George Huntington. The house was later used as a dormitory.

For Further Information

The Northfield Heritage Preservation Commission was created in 1979 by the Northfield City Council. The Commission's responsibilities include planning for the conservation of the city's cultural and historic resources, including its many fine residential buildings. For more information, contact the Commission at 645-8833.

Prepared by Landscape Research, St. Paul, Minnesota for the Northfield Heritage Preservation Commission, 1993. Historic photographs courtesy of the Northfield Historical Society.

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