**From production to consumption. St Anthony Main**

We have talked about the birth of entertainment mostly in Europe in our class. That of course does not mean that entertainment was not in the United States. Big things were happening in the US and entertainment was trying to possibly catch up with entertainment in Europe.

Minneapolis is no exception to this. The city and its historical parts have their own interesting history of entertainment. We can observe the past of flaneur as well, which was so much seen in Europe of the 19th century.

**Flaneur** - The *flâneur* was, first of all, a literary type from 19th century France,essential to any picture of the streets of Paris The word carried a set of rich associations: the man ofleisure, the idler, the urban explorer, the connoisseur of the street. It was Walter Benjamin, drawing on the poetry ofCharles Baudelaire who made this figure the object of scholarly interest in the 20th century, as an emblematic archetype of urban, modern experience.Following Benjamin, the flâneur has become an important symbol for scholars, artists and writers.

With this in mind, we looked at the historical impact of the neighborhood of St. Anthony and its Main Street on the development of social life in the City.

**History of St. Anthony**

Civilian settlement was illegal in present-day St. Paul until 1837 and in present-day Minneapolis until 1851 because Indian cessions had not yet been obtained. In May of 1840, Major Plympton of Fort Snelling evicted 150 civilians illegally living on the West Bank of the river. The evictees moved to “Pig’s Eye”, or St. Paul. Minnesota annexed the Village of St. Anthony in 1887.

Minneapolis and St. Anthony developed as a manufacturing city, originally focusing on sawmills. Minneapolis had a useful position on the Mississippi River and became the terminus for a large number of railroads, which both allowed for the processing and shipment of goods at and from mills. Minneapolis is also located within the Northern Interior of the country, which traditionally provided a large market for manufactured goods. The mills were powered with the St. Anthony Falls, which were originally why the city was founded where it was.

The city was originally built along the river banks, which is why St. Anthony Main is the oldest part of Minneapolis. Minneapolis’s favorable position for the manufacturing of flour and handling of wheat brought in business and people. Its population was 13,066 in 1870, and, by 1920, Minneapolis reached a population of 380,000, which is roughly its population today.

Eventually, St. Anthony Main went from a place of production, specifically with mills like the Pillsbury Mill, to a place of consumption. By 1956, the flowering of the postwar auto-oriented shopping center began with Southdale mall’s opening. This eventually led to a movement that transformed St. Anthony into a different marketplace. Because of its distance from Downtown compared to many other shopping centers, fantasy, entertainment, and visual excitement were more important experiences here than attracting business in casual needs like grabbing lunch before work. By the 1980’s the area was used as a festival marketplace, but it’s success died down to being a “virtual ghost town” by the 1990’s. Today it has achieved renewed success, likely related to the decline of other competing “festival” malls, and it is used as a shopping and office complex. New businesses and community events have begun in the area in the last several years, showing new interest in the birthplace of Minneapolis.

**Main Street Buildings**

The village of St. Anthony was platted in 1849, and by 1855 a number of frame buildings stood along Main Street. In that year brothers Moses and Rufus Upton constructed a fine business block from locally made brick and opened a store on the ground floor. Next to it were the Martin and Morrison buildings, constructed of limestone in 1858. The upper floors housed several lawyers and for a while the offices of the Minnesota Republican newspaper. These are the oldest masonry buildings in Minneapolis.

The Stone Arch Bridge was built in 1883 by railroad baron James J. Hill. The bridge allowed for increased movement of people and goods across the river. It served as a working railroad bridge until 1965 but is still seen as a symbol of the railroad age. Thanks to the Bridge people could commute better. The neighborhoods were better connected, which also helped to the social life around those neighborhoods.

Pracna on Main:

Pracna is the oldest restaurant in the neighborhood, established in 1890. This bar is the only one to be open and serve during the WWI - it served men for gathering and discussing news from the front. It was closed as other 434 other bars in Twin-Cities during prohibition. A house of ill repute opened upstairs. Pracna didn’t prosper after 1933, when Roosevelt brought Repeal.The business changed - machine shop and later local mattress company occupied the space. Pracna reemerged in 1973, after restoration.

Now it features original brick walls, arched entries, and high ceiling. They have seasonally outdoor cage seating along the street.

Martin and Morrison Blocks:

Three story blocks, two separate buildings. M and M came both at the same time and started constructing in 1858. The elegant buildings served for living and also housing of the Minnesota Republican and Weekly Express.

Morrison became a president of Mississippi Bridge company - built the first bridge over the River.

Upton Building - corner of 4th Street SE and 10th Avenue:

The oldest commercial masonry building still standing. Three story Block was built in 1855. The house is in the Gothic Revival style.

**Connections to class**

Lights:

Because Minneapolis began using hydroelectric power shortly before Thomas Edison “invented” it, he had a lifelong hatred for the city. However, his invention of the light bulb helped to transform St. Anthony Main and Minneapolis.

The St. Anthony Falls area quickly adopted Edison’s invention for use in electrical advertising signs. Many of these old signs that still stand include “GOLD MEDAL FLOUR” and “NORTH STAR BLANKETS” on the west side of the river. On St. Anthony Main, the use of large, electrical signs remains. One particular example of this is the large St. Anthony Main sign that truly demonstrates the history of the Main. Another example of vestigial lightshows includes the blinking lights on a nearby skyway that create the image of a moving steamboat, which is similar to the Leaders of the World light display.

The St. Anthony Main Cinema creates a nostalgic image of the old cinema attracting moviegoers on broadways with big lights and signs. The theater likely has more lightbulbs on its exterior than it does inside. When working properly, a big, red sign reading “MAIN” can be read as pedestrians and drivers alike approach the theater. It’s in this way that the theater shows both its placement in the present and its role as a symbol of older, pedestrian-based attempts to attract seekers of pleasure with lights.

The urban night landscape of the Main is also shaped by lighting in many restaurants and other businesses. Aster Cafe uses strange, unique hanging lamps to attract curiosity in passersby. As can be expected from a business with a large sign reading, “Temptations,” a newer addition to the area, the Wilde Roast Cafe, has hanging lights over its patio area that create the same nostalgic and interesting atmosphere. Pracna also uses large lights and signs to attract pedestrians.

Newer businesses further down the Main have incorporated more modern looks to the light-based atmosphere. A nearby dog salon and the eye care business next door use bright, white internal lights over a white interior to create an image of modernity set against the nostalgic styles of other businesses’ lights. This shows the complex nature of history and modernity along the Main.

The electric telegraph was extended to St. Anthony and Minneapolis in 1858 and 1859. It was because of the opening of the Mississippi to navigation as far as St. Anthony Falls. The telegraph was installed for better communication among people in the city and people who were in trading business with the city.

The streets were connecting at first wooden buildings by muddy unpaved streets. They started to make it better, for better commuting around the neighborhood. These improvements were necessary, because of more social life around.

“The editor of the *Minnesota Pioneer,* the territory’s first newspaper, recognized the value of social events to the wellbeing of a new and heterogeneous community.”

* to the importance of St. Anthony and its social events at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century

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