

HUCKSTERS AND HOLY MEN - Foreword

The creation of the settlement that became the villages of Mahtomedi and Willernie is virtually unique in Minnesota history, a distinction largely unrecognized. Several recurrent themes underlie this unusual development:

1. Ownership. Most towns grow organically. As population increases, nearby land is converted to uses appropriate to the town and absorbed into the community by annexation. Mahtomedi and Willernie were created entirely out of land owned by a single entity, Wildwood Park Association.
2. Purpose. Communities generally grow up with a purpose, whether it is milling logs, milling grain, shipping products, processing agricultural commodities. Mahtomedi never had a purpose other than recreation. Prior to 1972, there was virtually no industry in the community (save the Wildwood Amusement Park in operation from about 1899 to about 1937). The town is located on a beautiful lake, but has no navigable river, no stream for waterpower, and no critical junctions. Its iconic buildings are taverns and restaurants.
3. Acquisition. The silent acquisition of land to assemble a parcel the size of this community, from many individual small landowners, had no precedent in Minnesota. Nothing comparable occurred until the new town Jonathan (a part of the city of Chaska) developed under the federal New Communities legislation in 1972, and financed with federally guaranteed loans.
4. Strategy. Large scale recreational land developments rely on creating amenities that will make the subdivided land appear more valuable than other nearby land without those features. In twentieth century America, this was usually golf courses. In Mahtomedi, the vehicle was self-improvement and growth in literary and scientific knowledge, to be achieved through the creation of a Chautauqua Assembly – an amenity both high-minded and humorless.
5. Participants. This land was assembled by two groups with entirely divergent purposes. Investors, members of Minnesota's nascent entrepreneurial class, largely in industrial concerns that arose from the ongoing development of the timber, logging, and milling concerns, sought to make money. Devout pastors and parishioners sought religious discipline and self-improvement. Sometimes it was hard to tell who was who.

The cover photograph is the mansion of Theodore L. Schurmeier, first lessee/owner of Lot 9, Block 2. He left nothing so fancy for the author.

HUCKSTERS AND HOLY MEN – THE MAKING OF MAHTOMEDI

In 1883, Mahtomedi Assembly platted a real estate subdivision known, cleverly, as Mahtomedi Assembly. The plat was intended to create a Chautauqua program, independent from but modeled after the established Lake Chautauqua, New York, institution. Leaders and officers of Mahtomedi Assembly included president Samuel G. Smith, a Methodist pastor, and John Espy a Methodist parishioner and wealthy St. Paul real estate developer.

The Chautauqua was to be built on land owned by the Wildwood Park Association. WPA's land amounted to thousands of acres. The forty needed for the Chautauqua would be donated by WPA. Wildwood Park's incorporators included three wealthy investors from Stillwater; three wealthy investors from St. Paul, and the Reverend David Tice. John Espy was its lawyer and manager. The identity of its shareholders was not revealed.

The arrangement between the two entities was a strange and unusual one. Many of the participants and investors were interested primarily in high investment returns and large profits. Others were primarily concerned with the high moral code, religious instruction, and self-improvement which were the essence of the Chautauqua movement and the heart of flourishing Methodism. Each group hoped to use the other's needs and desires to achieve its own goal. In the end, both were disappointed.

PARTICIPANTS

David Tice (born 1829): Fiercely independent, Tice left home at thirteen to make his own way in the world. In 1850 he converted to Methodism and by 1857 he had decided he had no choice but to enter the ministry. His was not an easy path. Arriving in 1859, he served at least 17 churches, some in locations still reeling from the Dakota Uprising. Assigned to Stillwater in 1878, he brought in new members, improved finances and the building, and imposed discipline, removing members he thought unworthy. His contract was not renewed and he left the church on September 22, 1881.

Samuel G. Smith (1852-1915): Smith was the fair haired boy of Twin Cities Methodism. Son of a pastor, graduate of Methodist Cornell in Iowa, Smith was called to St. Paul to take over the struggling First Methodist Church. He did well and was a popular and dynamic preacher. Faced with a mandatory transfer after three years, the Methodist hierarchy appointed him Presiding

Elder of the district after three years when he was only 31. He apparently did not like administration, and left that position spending a year in Europe. Rules were bent to let him go back to preaching at First Methodist.

John Espy (1842-1915): A 90 day enlistee, Espy saw brief action in the Civil War. In 1869, he left Pennsylvania to come to Minnesota to make his fortune and did. A lawyer, he spent most of his time on real estate development. In the boom market of the 1880's he developed city blocks in St. Paul. In his later years, Espy took credit for the creation of Mahtomedi.

Wildwood Park Association: Formed in 1882, WPA had seven incorporators, David Tice; Frank Seymour; J.C. O'Gorman; E.G. Butts; Charles P. Noyes; Hugh Pilkington, and; James Davidson. John Espy was its lawyer and manager. Through the actions of David Tice, WPA became the owner of most of the eastern shore of White Bear Lake, that being the western part of Grant Township.

Mahtomedi Assembly: Also formed in 1882, Assembly's president was Samuel G. Smith. Espy was its treasurer. Pilkington was a director of both WPA and Assembly. Its purpose was to create a Chautauqua emulating the Lake Chautauqua institution, with lectures, instruction, and self-improvement during summer camp meetings.

North Western Manufacturing and Car Company: Dwight Sabin, George Seymour, E.G. Butts, J.C. O'Gorman, Frank Seymour. The largest manufacturer of threshing machines in the world, the Car Company had shops inside the Stillwater state prison and employed inmate labor at favorable rates. Its principal developers were George Seymour and Dwight Sabin. Frank Seymour, J.C. O'Gorman, and E.G. Butts, all incorporators of WPA, benefitted from relationships with the car company and its principals. There were other substantial shareholders, but their identities were not revealed. A powerhouse, with 1881 profits of \$300,000, the Car Company would soon reveal its feet of clay.

THE LAND

In 1880, the western third of Grant Township in Washington County was very underdeveloped. One road or track ran from Stillwater, west northwest along the north side of White Bear Lake. Another, less well traveled ran straight west from Stillwater toward the south end of the lake.

These routes still exist as State Highway 96 and Washington County Highway 12. Virtually no other significant roads existed.

The area had become somewhat accessible in 1872 when what became the Stillwater branch of the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad went through from Stillwater to the village of White Bear Lake, following the track of the road north of White Bear Lake around the north end of the lake. The eastern half of this route is now the Browns Creek Trail.

The twelve sections at the west side of Grant, also the west edge of Washington County, had only two or three houses per square mile. There were no real settlements. The only town, Wilson, was platted in 1873 but was investor owned and unoccupied. Part of the Big Woods, the area was very likely still substantially wooded. The big woods were hardwoods, not pine. Hardwoods were not attractive to the big sawmills, but were vital for manufacturers of barrels, trim and equipment – such as the Northwest Manufacturing and Car Company.

The remote condition of the east side of White Bear Lake was very much a contrast to the west side, where the village of White Bear Lake had 463 residents by 1870, and the township over 1,000. In White Bear there were hotels and schools and businesses. By 1880, a hotel in White Bear could accommodate hundreds of guests and serve 800 meals for dinner and supper. By contrast, the east side of the lake was a wilderness.

ASSEMBLING MAHTOMEDI – THE REVEREND DAVID TICE

In September 1881, the Reverend David Tice was out of work. Very soon, however, and without explanation, he found a new task. He spent his time trying to buy up all the land in the western third of Grant Township, from many individual owners, and to do so in a sufficiently inconspicuous manner that prices did not rise unduly during the process. This included many parcels of 80 and 160 acres, but also individual lots in the unsuccessful Town of Wilson.

Tice was astonishingly successful at this process. In each case, he bought land in his own name. Most sales were for cash, although in a few early cases the sellers provided mortgages to finance the purchases. By the end of December, 1881, he had completed his first purchase, and went on to many more. He paid about \$10 per acre in bulk and \$25 for lots.

It is not known precisely how and why Tice undertook this task. It's unlikely that he could have been operating with his own money, or solely on his own initiative. His salaries at Stillwater, for three years, had been \$1,000 (\$645 paid); \$800 and \$1,000. The source of his funds and his employer were not revealed.

The parcel Tice assembled comprised at least 2,400 acres, nearly four square miles. It measured about 3-1/2 miles from north to south and over 1-1/4 miles from east to west. Several smaller lakes were fully surrounded by the property he bought, including Echo Lake and Hamline Lake. The property included half of Pine Tree Lake, abutted Long Lake and included about two miles of White Bear Lake shoreline. An attached exhibit shows the properties.

SILENT PARTNERS?

By 1883, the rapidly growing Car Company was in trouble although the public didn't know it. Its burgeoning thresher business was based entirely on credit sales to farmers, most of them growing wheat. With growing volume, the majority of the company's assets were receivables from individual farmers, and each year that total rose. Actual cash received from credit sales could not have been sufficient to fund the company's operations, making it entirely dependent on asset based lenders willing to lend against the farmer loans. Since the state owned much of the company's production assets, even those were not available to secure lending.

A year after the formation of Wildwood Park Association, when the Car Company failed, investors claimed that some stockholders had not paid for their stock, and specifically that Sabin had concealed company assets in speculative investments outside the company.

The stock records and books of the Car Company and WPA are unavailable. Neither George Seymour nor Dwight Sabin was an incorporator of WPA (which would not preclude their owning stock). Sabin's name appears in only a single document that would indicate his financial involvement in WPA, but it is a critical one. Tice's first purchase, from Christoff Hubman, was financed by mortgage Tice gave back to Hubman for \$900, most of the purchase price. Sabin paid off the Hubman mortgage and conveyed it to WPA.

Sabin and John Espy were close. Sabin, a sitting Senator, was chair of the national Republican party and Espy was secretary of the Republican state central committee. Moreover, one source claims that it was Sabin who informed Espy, the out of town guy, about the huge tract being assembled in Washington County. Sabin was well acquainted with others in the group. In 1881, he and Charles P. Noyes, an incorporator of WPA, were partners in the group that purchased Manitou Island, on the north side of White Bear Lake.

In addition, Frank A. Seymour, George's only son, was one of the seven incorporators of WPA. Even more significant, however, was the fact that when Tice had assembled all the transactions into a single parcel, he transferred all of them to Frank Seymour, in trust for an organization to be formed. Finally, Sabin's brother Jay was a member and substantial contributor to the Jackson Street Methodist Church in St. Paul.

There is, at least, substantial reason to believe that Seymour and Sabin were silent investors in WPA, and probably the initiators of the purchasing scheme with local pastor Tice.

THE PLAN

What appeared to the public to be just a simple summer camp meeting at the lake, with speakers and programs, was actually just the visible element of what was probably the largest scheme to develop recreational land in the state to that point. The requirements of successful recreational land development were only being developed in the late 19th century, there having been few people with recreational time and assets before that time. The essence has not changed since first established.

Successful recreational land development requires several things –

- The land must be reasonably accessible to a lot of people
- It must be cheaply purchased
- Substantial improvements must be made to create an appearance of distinctiveness and great value
- People must believe the value will increase in the future
- There must be a substantial group of motivated buyers

The goals of the holy men, including lay parishioners of Smith's, were fairly simple. They wanted a beautiful place to establish a two week Chautauqua summer program with cottage sites for like-minded folks. They wanted to

be able to exclude alcohol and Sabbath breaking. For that, they needed land.

The goals of the hucksters were to make their land very desirable and valuable so that they could sell it for many times what David Tice had paid. They saw the Chautauqua as the vehicle that could provide publicity, recognition and uniqueness to the rest of their property. Perhaps more cynically, they realized that they could essentially turn the Chautauquans into a sales vehicle for large parts of their land.

This somewhat Faustian bargain between the hucksters and the holy men was to work like this: WPA would donate forty acres to the Assembly, which could choose whichever land it wanted. Mahtomedi Assembly would invest funds to build and promote the Chautauqua. The cost of establishing recreational improvements, always an issue for a land developer, would thus be borne by the Chautauquans, not by Wildwood Park Association.

A secondary agreement provided that if the Assembly invested at least \$10,000 in physical improvements within a limited time, WPA would "donate" additional land – quite a bit of additional land. There would be a specified value of the additional "donated" land. Assembly would be responsible to grade, survey and prepare the additional land and then sell it as part of an expanded Chautauqua grounds. Half the net proceeds of all sales would be paid to WPA. If the land was not all sold in ten years, Assembly would return the unsold land or could pay off the balance of the stated value and continue the arrangement.

In essence, this would make the Chautauqua, with its image of selfless religion and morality, the sales agent for WPA. WPA would make no investment in its newly acquired land; would perform no marketing efforts or duties; would employ nobody, but would still get its land sold. By establishing a high perceived land value, by way of the Chautauqua, WPA could make huge profits with little or no actual effort. Although WPA would have to give away forty acres for the initial Chautauqua grounds to initiate the plan, this represented a tiny fraction of its new land.

From the Assembly's point of view, it would receive beautiful land for the grounds for free, or at least nominally for free. In the ancillary contract it would, if successful, have the chance to capitalize on its own reputation. For all this to work, all that was required was for the Chautauqua to be very successful, creating a high demand for many expensive cottage lots. It

was, simply, a land development scheme wrapped in the cloth of a religious and literary experience.

THE DOCUMENTS

There was another very significant common element among WPA, Mahtomedi Assembly, and the Car Company. All corporations had a stated amount of capital stock – stated in dollars. The company's articles, filed in the county seat, Stillwater, Minnesota in this case, recite that amount. Invested capital provides assurance to shareholders and to potential creditors that there is real economic substance to the company.

All three of these entities included in their articles a clause permitting payment for capital stock to be made in installments, rather than at the founding of the company. Thus, the capital might not be money, but obligations of shareholders who might, or might not pay.

This provision was central to some of the disputes after the spectacular failure of the Car Company. Lacking financial records for WPA or Assembly, it can't be said for sure that those entities took advantage of this clause to be undercapitalized, but it is surely possible, and the record suggests that it may have been the case.

Revealing shareholders' identities was not required in the pre-regulation, pre-income tax days of the later 19th century. It is already abundantly clear that Seymour and Sabin saw advantages in not discussing who was involved in a company. At the Car Company, they sought to capitalize on anonymity, referring to " 'certain wealthy persons' representing large railroad interests" in an obvious effort to create an appearance of wealth and solidity in a company that was highly leveraged and financially unstable.

The line between hucksters and holy men is not so easy to draw. Many of these people were devout. Some served both organizations. Espy was at times president of WPA and simultaneously treasurer of Assembly. Hugh Pilkington was a director of both entities. Tice, whose faith was the foundation of his life, was also the buyer, an incorporator of WPA, and apparently a person who made a lot of money out of this plan. Religious viewpoints of the 19th century did not demand poverty of the pious.

GETTING STARTED

The Assembly picked the best 40 acres for their purpose, with more than one third of a mile of White Bear Lake shoreline, a large amount of high ground and immediate access to the railroad for convenience of cottagers and Chautauqua visitors. A plat was prepared, showing 155 cottage lots; a large area to build the amphitheater and another large lot, overlooking the lake, for the hotel. Other, less significant, buildings would be fitted into these spaces or on less desirable land.

The Assembly had three potential sources of revenue – land sales or rentals, ticket sales during the Chautauqua (typically two weeks to 16 days), and fees for campers during the assembly. They set out immediately with the intention of putting on an assembly during the very first summer – quite a feat since the land was only transferred in 1883. They did manage it, but no records are available to show how extensive the program may have been.

Almost immediately, Assembly was in financial trouble. It is not known how much actual capital they had but their obligations to invest \$10,000 in facilities and to put on assemblies every summer were substantial.

Most Chautauquas leased cottage sites to Chautauqua members. An advantage of the lease, as compared to a sale, was that it provided more leverage for maintaining discipline and punishing bad behavior. Most such leases were what a person would expect of a lease – periodic small payments continuing over a long period. Not so, however, with the leases at Mahtomedi Assembly. In order to generate a lot of immediate cash, Espy constructed leases that called for a single, immediate payment of \$200 followed by annual rents not to exceed 10 cents. The leases also could be cancelled for those who would not abide by the Chautauqua's rigid standards of behavior. The strange structure also meant that the Assembly would have no lease income in years to come.

In order to meet the \$10,000. investment criterion, and to bolster enthusiasm and excitement, the Assembly hired W. Graham to build a tabernacle at the amphitheater and the Bohn Manufacturing Company to build a hotel on the Hotel Block. The assembly was not able to pay the full cost of these projects and gave each contractor a mortgage for a single payment of \$2,000 payable in one year, with interest at 8% for the tabernacle and 10% for the hard-nosed builder of the hotel.

After the hurriedly assembled Chautauqua program in 1883, work was done to identify those people who would commit themselves to the Chautauqua

experience at White Bear Lake. On October 24, 1883, about fifty people gathered, likely at the hotel, to pay their \$200 and sign leases, formally joining the Chautauqua. It is not known how buyers chose their lots, but it was certainly not random. Reverend Smith received the lot just across the street from the hotel to the north. Reverend Tice was on the other side of the hotel, and John Espy was the second lot down the hill toward the lake from Tice.

There were 170 lots in the plat of Mahtomedi Assembly. If Espy and Smith had been successful in leasing all 170 at \$200 each, they would have generated \$34,000 in immediate cash, presumably enough to finance the building of facilities and subsidizing assembly costs for some period into the future. However, their efforts produced only about 43 leases – generating less than even the \$10,000 they were to commit to capital improvements.

What they accomplished by way of generating enthusiasm was remarkable. At \$200, lot lessees were, in effect, paying eight times as much as Tice had recently paid for much larger individual lots in the Town of Wilson. That these payments had more to do with the Chautauqua, the development amenity, than the land itself is also suggested by the fact that cottage lots on the lake and off the lake carried exactly the same price.

OUTSIDE TROUBLES

In January 1884, there were two large fires at the Stillwater prison. While Senator Sabin's personal papers were saved, there was great damage to shops and facilities used by Car Company to make its products. The causes were undetermined, and the losses of both the state and the Car Company were insured. Production was suspended, which unnerved the eastern lenders. Cashflow was insufficient. Sabin attempted to sell his farmer receivables, the notes of thresher customers, at a substantial discount, to raise cash. He failed. The eastern lenders (local bankers apparently having long since lost faith in Sabin) stepped in and the company was placed in receivership. Ironically, WPA incorporator J.C. O'Gorman was appointed receiver.

In receivership, a great many of Car Company's 1,200 non-convict employees were immediately out of work. This localized recession, a huge problem in a town with population of only 9,000 people in 1880, immediately dampened the Assembly's prospects for day visitors and additional lot purchasers. Employees without jobs would not be sending their families on

day trips to summer meetings, nor would the merchants and businessmen who supplied the workers have a lot of confidence about buying expensive Chautauqua lots. The collapse of the Car Company hit hard at the Chautauqua's only real sources of revenue.

The only towns with substantial populations close to the assembly were Stillwater and St. Paul. St. Paul had troubles of its own. Again, ironically, one of the largest companies in St. Paul was Hugh Pilkington's (another of the WPA incorporators) St. Paul Harvester Company. Harvester occupied fifty acres of manufacturing land and buildings northeast of downtown St. Paul, with another 80 acres reserved for employee housing. Harvester's financial structure was, not surprisingly, very like the Car Company's. Like the Car Company, St. Paul Harvester would soon fail spectacularly.

CRISIS

Details of the 1884 assembly are also not available, but it is clear that one was held. Lectures and performances were held in the amphitheater. Many guests enjoyed the beautiful new hotel, and some of the meetings were held in its spacious dining room. Lessees began construction of cottages. In August of 1884, WPA transferred about another 100 acres to Assembly under their agreement, confirming that the Chautauqua had invested at least \$10,000 in facilities in its first year of ownership.

At the end of the 1884 season, the Assembly faced the payment dates for the \$2,000 notes for both the hotel and the tabernacle. They couldn't pay. They didn't. From that point on, the likelihood of a successful economic outcome for the Chautauqua was very low, although people continued to lease lots, with some new leases signed during 1884. The resulting revenue was not nearly enough to solve the cashflow problems.

By early 1885 troubles were coming to a head. A sheriff's certificate was served on Assembly and, very soon, Bohn Manufacturing owned the hotel. There was a judgment for Samuel Sherrin, Tice's next door neighbor on Lot 1. Yet another judgment resulted in an execution sale of three lots on Block 2 for \$18.75 each. The Assembly was still claiming that lots were worth \$500 or \$600. At that point, Assembly no longer owned all the cottage lots.

Faced with the transparent inability of Assembly to perform its intended sales role, WPA demanded and received the return of the added land in 1885, by quitclaim deed, which may not have been recorded until later.

By 1887, something had to be done. The Mahtomedi Chautauqua Association was formed with new officers. The principals were James Suydam, Charles Lawton, G.H. Woodward and Edward Penniman, some of them original lot lessees. These were business people involved in real estate and insurance. They took over operations, land leasing, management of the assembly, basically everything. Smith, still revered as the founder, was out of the picture as a manager. The WPA no longer had any way to control the actions of the Assembly. The Association began issuing quitclaim deeds to some lot holders, converting their status to owners. Samuel Smith was one of the first in line.

The Chautauqua Association took over management on July 1, 1877. Along with other changes, they began the publication of the Mahtomedi Chautauqua Herald, published by Mr. Penniman. Early issues of the paper reported on the 1887 Assembly. They did so in great detail, but never disclosed how many people actually attended the programs. They planned and carried out an equally elaborate assembly for 1988, also reported without revealing actual attendance, except to say that it was "less than management had reason to expect." Their efforts were sincere, unstinting, relentless, and almost surely unsuccessful.

The Association was unable to arrange significant lower rail fares for day trippers on most railroads; unable to provide a sufficient passenger base to induce the railroads to provide special trains from Stillwater and Hudson for day tripping customers; and was thus very dependent on tenting customers and cottage owners. The St. Paul Dispatch reported that attendance at the opening session in 1888 was between 200 and 300 people, a number that management termed remarkable. Notice that with more than fifty lots leased to active participants, attendance of 200-300 people might represent very few people beyond the lot owners and their families. This does not appear to represent a flood of participants.

The Herald revealed a certain desperation. After the 1888 Assembly, they felt compelled to ask in print if there would even be an assembly, and to assure readers that it would take place. Cottage owners, meeting just after the close of the 1888 assembly, decided that they needed to pre-sell 1,200 tickets to be sure of having the resources to stage an assembly in 1889. Among themselves, they committed to only 330. Notice the similarity of this number to the attendance reported in the St. Paul Dispatch. The Herald

offered all sorts of premiums for new subscriptions and expressed the hope that it could double present subscriptions of about 1,000.

It seems very unlikely, despite claims to the contrary over the years, that there were thousands of people attending the Chautauquas. The ability of the Association to continue was questionable at best.

In 1889, a YMCA Sunday School training was held on the Chautauqua grounds. The timing would not have precluded holding a Chautauqua assembly, but no record has been found documenting one. A single newspaper article reports on the opening of meetings at Mahtomed in 1910, but no other information is found. Likely the summer assemblies withered after that.

By 1907, yet another entity, the Mahtomedi Improvement Company, was formed to take things over. This entity regularized the ownership of land, borrowing \$3,600 to do so from the Goodyear Company. It appears from those documents that virtually none of the lots that were unsold in 1888 had been sold by 1907 – nearly two decades of stagnation - while development continued in the rest of the Wildwood Park Association land. Indeed, the Chautauqua Association would have found itself a competitor, rather than a partner, of WPA after the 1887 reorganization, and WPA's sale prices were far lower than the claimed values of land in the Assembly. With the arrival of the streetcars in 1892, the Assembly's land became less convenient to St. Paul, rather than more, which likely made it less valuable than land still held by WPA. Further, the pattern of sales at the Assembly, with all lakeshore lots sold first, and for equal prices with back lots, would have made it hard for the Association to compete with WPA in land sales.

POST CHAUTAUQUA DEVELOPMENT

WPA continued to sell off land. Eventually much of the land, including Willernie, was taken over by the Belden Mayo Company, and platted or replatted and sold. Two large parcels were sold. Much of what was originally platted as Wildwood Park was sold to James J. Hill and held by members of his family until about 2012, when a 180 acre parcel north of the current city of Mahtomedi was sold. Another large parcel was sold to Twin City Rapid Transit to become the Wildwood Amusement Park, and subsequently reverted to residential uses. During its tenure, the amusement park served as a developmental amenity, generating excitement in the community and thereby improving the market for the WPA lots.

WPA's negotiation with St. Paul Suburban Railway, the streetcar company, brought the streetcars, and easy transportation to St. Paul, to Mahtomedi in 1892, providing a station within a few hundred feet of all of WPA's land. Their ability to negotiate the streetcar's coming to Mahtomedi, where almost nobody lived year round, instead of to the major city of Stillwater is an amazing accomplishment and surely increased the value of WPA's land.

During the last years of WPA's ownership of land, it was selling lots for as little as \$70 apiece, with credit terms. While this may seem quite inexpensive, the lots were very small so the sale price was likely equivalent to at least \$300 an acre – vastly more than Tice had paid a couple of decades before. It seems certain that the investors in WPA, the hucksters, eventually did very well out of this transaction. However, in some cases the gains received from WPA may have been dwarfed by calamities in their primary businesses.

CONCLUSION

It may seem that the originators of Mahtomedi lacked vision for what they wanted the community to become. However, many of the aspects of development in what became Mahtomedi and Willernie show sensitivity to good design and community building. The lots were small, but appropriate to the structure sizes that were anticipated. Street ends and lot layouts were clearly intended to permit everyone to reach the water and stroll the shore. Parks were provided and paths were incorporated.

These provisions are not unlike those of Jonathan, nearly a century later. Jonathan is protected by a homeowners' agreement, and Mahtomedi was not. However, the small houses on small lots character of the area held good for 100 years. Only after about 1980 did huge houses start to appear on the lakeshore. Even now, the community has few large homes. The apparent intentions of the various founders, as reflected in Mahtomedi Assembly, have been thwarted at times, yet the overall effect has been to create a community that is close-linked and delightful to live in, and a place to which generations have returned.

HUCKSTERS AND HOLY MEN – THE MAKING OF MAHTOMEDI

FOOTNOTES

Foreword:

The 1920's agricultural community of Hollandale, in Freeborn County, arose from 15,000 acres of land owned by Payne Investment Company. In that case, however, the land was already in common ownership, a huge swamp that had defied useful development.

PARTICIPANTS

David Tice: *Twin City Methodism, Being a History of Methodism in the Twin Cities*, Price Bros, Mpls, 1895. In 1883, David Tice started the Western Avenue Methodist Church "in one of his own buildings". The church was officially organized by Presiding Elder J.F. Chaffee in 1884. He then built the church at St. Louis Park and by 1893 was at the prestigious Fowler Church. P.36.

In his youth, Tice bought 120 acres of land and platted the village of Caistorville, near Niagara Falls. In Minnesota, he served churches in Stockton, Marion, Austin, St. Cloud, Mankato, Hamline University (then in Red Wing), Lake City, Rushford, Faribault, Taylors Falls, Clinton Avenue, St. Paul, Stillwater and then the various churches in Minneapolis. He was described as being able to support himself in mission work through his activity in buying properties.

Tice's difficulties in Stillwater are detailed in *And it Came to Pass*, United Methodist Church of Stillwater, 1841-1894, p.3.

Samuel Smith: He was transferred from Iowa in 1879, serving at First Methodist, St. Paul, from 1879-1882 and again from 1884-1888. During 1883 he was the Presiding Elder of the St. Paul District, but left that job in 1884. He left the Methodist church on January 1, 1888 to found the Peoples Church, which became one of the largest churches in the nation. *Twin City Methodism*, p.227.

Espy: *History of St. Paul, A Chronicle of Progress*, Henry Astor Castle, 1895, p. 992. He is there credited as the "originator of the enterprise for the purchase of a large tract of land at White Bear Lake"

North West Manufacturing and Car Company, History of Washington County, Washington County Historical Society, 2008, pp 102-104.
p.143: "organized by Sabin and 'certain wealthy persons representing large railroad interests'".

Other relationships: Hugh Pilkington's wife Emma was the daughter of John Nicols. There were close relationships among those who formed the Chautauqua.

THE LAND

See: C.M. Foote and Co, Washington County Plat Map, 1887.

Timber. Recollections of people in the area at the time reflect large shipments of timber moving to Stillwater on the trains at the turn of the century. A History of Mahtomedi, prepared for PTA presentation, 1957. White Bear Lake Historical Society, p.3.

The Car Company's need for hardwood is reflected in their purchase of 20,000 acres of hardwood timber in Wisconsin.

<http://www.farmcollector.com/steam-traction/dwight-m-sabin.aspx>

This source also includes a detailed description of Sabin's business career and the elaborate turnout of his workforce to celebrate the election of "Boss Sabin" to the U.S. Senate.

White Bear Lake Development: Looking Back at White Bear Lake, Cynthia E. Vadnais, 2004, 2008, Introduction by Steven Goslin.

ASSEMBLING MAHTOMEDI

The first deed, from Christoff Hubman was recorded on January 3, 1882 in Book 8, Page 563, Washington County Property Records. At least twenty six other transfers were recorded in the next year and a half.

See enclosed chart of Tice purchases and city boundaries compared.

SILENT PARTNERS?

Sabin's affinity for silent partners is reflected in The Minnesota State Prison During the Stillwater Era, MNHS Magazine, December 1960,

<http://www.farmcollector.com/steam-traction/dwight-m-sabin.aspx> includes a full description of Sabin's business career.

Tice's mortgage to Christoff Hubman was paid by Dwight Sabin and assigned to WPA, Book R, Page 216, Washington County Property Records. Book 1, Page 114.

MNHS Collection of Minnesota History, Volume XV, Rasmus S. Saby, William Watts Folwell, pp 585-586

Sabin connection to Noyes, Looking Back at White Bear Lake, p.16.

Sabin's Reputation: Sabin's reputation was not unsullied. H.P. Hall describes an effort to swing Washington County to the democratic congressional candidate while Sabin was a Republican Senator. His associates reportedly included George Seymour and E.G. Butts in a plan to distribute cash to influential people in the county. E.G. Butts was the bag man.

Frank Seymour transaction. His deed to WPA on May 18, 1882 includes 16 different parcels and is in favor of an organization yet to be formed. Book 11, Page 435.

THE PLAN and THE DOCUMENTS

Wildwood Park Associations Articles of Incorporation were executed May 9, 1882, but not filed until June 23, 1883.

Mahtomedi Assembly's Articles of Incorporation were filed on October 31, 1882, Book I, Page 114.

The full agreement regarding land transfers and marketing is found at Book G, Page 354, Washington County Property Records.

GETTING STARTED

Many leases are recorded in book G of the Washington County Property Records. Plkington and Espy's leases are at pages 163 and 201 respectively.

Leases: The Colorado Chautauqua, still in business though enveloped by Boulder, as an example, used and still uses periodic payment leases.

The two mortgages, signed by Smith and Espy on September 7th and 6th, 1883 respectively, are found at Book Q, Page 61 and Book T, Page 246.

Signing Leases: Smith had Lot 9, Block 3; Tice, Lot 2, Block 4; Espy Lot 4 of Block 4.

OUTSIDE TROUBLES

Stillwater population – 1880 U.S. Census figures

Ticket Sales. A discussion of the content of the Chautauquas is beyond the scope of this effort, at least for now. Suffice it to say that Mark Twain did not appear in Mahtomedi. Strangely, enough, he did appear at Samuel Smith's Peoples Church on July 24, 1894. John T. Flanagan, Minnesota's Literary Visitors, Pogo Press, 1993, p.120.

CRISIS

The Minneapolis Journal reported on August 8, 1884 that the assembly was completed on August 4.

Assemblies Held: A website collecting Chautauqua information, lists only three meetings at Mahtomedi, 1883, 1886 and 1887.
www.crackerjackcollections.com

The Minneapolis Journal reported on July 23, 1885 that "it is expected to have quite a full programme for the meetings next week" [at Mahtomedi].

The same newspaper announced the 1886 program to open August 9, including Dr. Gillet; Leon H. Vincent; Rev. W.L. Davidson; Rev. John DeWitt Miller, and Washington Gladden. These people figured prominently in the subsequent meetings.

In 1887, the Herald argued that with the population of 400,000 within fifteen miles and a full year to prepare, "may we not expect such a growth in Chautauqua work as shall bring thousands to our assembly this coming year?" Clearly, this is not the analysis of an enterprise which had experience with "thousands" in attendance.

1889 YMCA Sunday School Meeting: Seed Thoughts William Woodward, 1889.

Land Transfers at Book G, Page 354; Sheriff's Certificate recorded January 8, 1885; Sherrin in February, Book W, Page 230; Lot Sale, Book 18, Page 180, 185; Hotel Repurchase, Book 7, Page 423.

Goodyear Loan. The 1907 mortgage to Goodyear Rubber Company includes a list of unsold lots still under the control of Mahtomedi Improvement. This includes virtually all lots in the 1988 sale advertisement plus the Hotel and Amphitheater Blocks.

POST CHAUTAUQUA DEVELOPMENTS

The 180 acre Hill property was sold in about 2012 for a reported \$25 million. Notice that the sale of less than 10% of the land fetched a price about 1,000 times the prices Tice paid for the entire parcel.

LEGACY

Reportedly, the structures at 1624 Mahtomedi Avenue and 1714 Mahtomedi Avenue were, respectively, Spink's Store, and the Post Office. A History of Mahtomedi, op cit, 1974 addendum.

Unitarian Church: Dee Smith writing in 222.psd.uaa.org/heritage

ADDENDA

THE CHAUTAUQUA LEGACY

Physically, little remains of the Chautauqua. Most significantly, the house at 76 Quail Street is a part of the hotel. Windows apparently from the hotel are found around town, although the picture of the hotel doesn't seem to show them. The residence at 1914 Mahtomedi Avenue, formerly the Unitarian Church, and before that the Union Chapel, may date from the Chautauqua. The cottage at 71 Pine Street and the cottage at 68 Spruce Street, could conceivably date from Chautauqua days. Mr. Harmon's cottage (71 Pine St), could even have belonged to John Espy. Reportedly, the timbers from the demolition of the tabernacle, occurring about 1907, were moved and used to construct the log home at 1829 Park Avenue.

A number of houses in the district are extensive remodelings of what were apparently original Chautauqua cottages. Some, notably were apparently remodeled in the early 20th century by famous Minnesota architect Edwin Lundie, for a time an association of Cass Gilbert's. Lundie lived with his wife at 1823 Mahtomedi Avenue, in a house which he extensively remodeled. That house was faithfully redone by owners Fred and Lamese McDowell and is vivid proof of Lundie's attention to detail. Rep

Impressions of the amphitheater on the ground south of Spruce Street and east of Mahtomedi Avenue could be seen until a few years ago. At least two of the three commercial structures in the district, 1524 and 1614 Mahtomedi Avenue, are described as the Spink store and the post office for the Chautauqua area settlement.

A sense of community, perhaps harking back to the Chautauqua persists. The informal Camp White Bear neighborhood, occupying largely what was the fully subscribed Block 2 of the Chautauqua Assembly, has annual celebrations as a neighborhood. Within the Assembly plat (leaving aside the sad vacation of park and path land in 1890) the right of people to walk to the lake and to stroll the shore has been preserved, even if less frequently asserted.

A more general legacy of the Chautauqua is the identification of the high school auditorium by that name. Presentations in that building by the Wildwood Artists Series and lectures by accomplished Minnesota authors put

on by the Mahtoreadi group accord well with the goals of the Chautauqua movement itself, bringing literacy, culture and self-improvement to the community.

AFTERWARDS – THE FATE OF PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS

In the years that followed the creation of the Chautauqua, those involved fared very differently.

David Tice. Finishing his career as a preacher at what was apparently the wealthiest and most prestigious Methodist church in Minneapolis, and wealthy enough to own buildings, Tice seems to have done well.

Samuel G. Smith. Out of Chautauqua management in 1887 he was already working on a different plan. At the end of the year he left the Methodist church, resigning on Christmas Eve. With his friend and wealthy parishioner John Ross Nicols and others, he founded the Peoples Church in St. Paul. One of the largest independent churches in the nation, the church had a 2,000 seat sanctuary, the largest organ in the middle of the country and a big congregation. Smith no longer had to report to the bishop and ran a church in which "the only creed was the Apostles' Creed". Smith became a national expert on prisons and the founder of the University of Minnesota's Department of Sociology.

John Espy. Espy kept his home at Mahtomedi, spending summers there. In 1903 he was described as being "worth millions". His life was crossed with tragedy and troubles. In 1903, his beloved daughter Maud picked toadstools near their Mahtomedi home and died within a few days. Traveling to San Francisco, he escaped the San Francisco fire on foot. Traveling to Europe, his ship sank and he was rescued.

Wildwood Park Association. Eventually sold off the rest of the land around Mahtomedi to the Belden Mayo Company which developed and platted much of the southern part of Mahtomedi.

The Northwestern Manufacturing and Car Company. Managed to stay in business under the guidance of George Wilson and eventually managers appointed by the eastern lenders, although in much reduced form. When

finally evicted from the prison system with the creation of the new prison in 1902, it finally collapsed completely.

Dwight Sabin. In March 1882 when elected to the Senate, he was treated to a great celebration in Stillwater, with bands and speeches and all his employees out to cheer him on. The only Senator in Washington County's history, he was apparently not very effective, and was not renominated when the term expired. His business interests were largely lost in the collapse of the car company, though he retained some for some years, apparently losing them about the turn of the century. The huge house he built on Stillwater's north hill, across the intersections from George Seymour, was essentially abandoned and decayed. By 1920, it was gone. When he died in Chicago in 1901, it was said that his death was not expected.

Hugh L. Pilkington. In 1880, Pilkington had been a principal of Pilkington, Busch and Company, which sold wagons and carriages. By 1883 he had parlayed that into a role at the massive St. Paul Harvester Works. A huge company on the northeast side of St. Paul, Harvester collapsed in a mountain of debt. Its locations were taken over eventually by the somewhat more enduring Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing.

Charles P. Noyes. A descendant of a wealthy and successful New England family, his company Noyes Brothers and Cutler prospered, building a block long manufacturing building in St. Paul. He built a huge house on Summit Avenue, the cost of which exceeded the total amount spent to buy Mahtomedi, and was a pillar of House of Hope Presbyterian Church. His papers are at the Minnesota Historical Society, but include nothing about Mahtomedi or the Chautauqua. He is remembered for having built the Fillebrown house on Lake Avenue in White Bear Lake, although he left there in 1881, summering on Manitou Island.

Theodore L. Schurmeier, Lot 9, Block 2. A principal of a huge drygoods company in St. Paul, Schurmeier may have been the wealthiest person among the early members of the Chautauqua. His Cass Gilbert house, originally on Virginia Avenue, was moved to Summit, but he moved on to the mansion he built on Crocus Hill in 1888. The lives of rich people are not always wonderful. When Theodore died in 1901, James J. Hill's wife called it "a pathetic end to a miserable life."

Notes on Overlay of Mahtomedi Assembly Plat:

- Palestine Avenue was straightened and became Neptune
- The area south of Neptune, vacated 1902, sold to Mr. Sullivan
This was likely where the tent city was located
This resulted in the loss of Shady Dell Park
- Hotel Block and Amphitheater Block were re-platted and sold off
- Amphitheater block was the location of the tabernacle – near depot
- YMCA building was built for 1888 season on lot 9, by Neptune
- Dots show locations of people who leased during the first year
- Established paths to the south were lost with vacation, and with subsequent re-platting of that area
- Some paths, e.g. Spruce to Tamarack have been closed
- Many lots have been split and assembled to make larger parcels

First Lessees Mahtomedi Assembly:

Block 1 Lot 5	Jabez Brooks	Block 3 Lot 9	Rev Samuel Smith
Block 2 Lot 2	Mrs. William Harrison	Lot 10	James S. Anderson
Lot 3	Rev. Robert Forbes	Lot 11	Lyman B. Smith
Lot 4	Albert Harrington	Lot 13	Rev JF Shaffee
Lot 5	Emily H Miller	Block 4 Lot 1	Samuel Sherrin
Lot 6	J.D. Blake	Lot 2	Rev David Tice
Lot 7	Chas. E McGraw	Lot 4	John Espy
Lot 8	HB Brill	Lot 6	HL Pilkington
Lot 9	Theodore Schurmeier	Lot 8	HL Lillibridge
Lot 10	Martha J. Remney	Block 7 Lot 6	JOB Seabert
Lot 12	Philip Abbot	Lot 7	GA Matthews
Lot 13	Charles H Woodward	Block 8 Lot 6	Carrie A Halbrook
Lot 19	Adam L Bolton	Lot 7	Frank B Fawell
Lot 22	Maud Moon	Lot 8	Hezekiah Hall
Lot 23	Daniel Getty	Lot 9	GS Norton
Lot 24	EJ Sykes	Lot 10	AW Bradley
Lot 25	CCH Smith	Lots 12	J Ross Nicols
Block 3 Lot 2	JF Lee	Lot 13	AJ Goodrich
Lot 3	Rev Thomas McClary	Block 10 Lot 30	Hyantha Harger
Lot 7	GH Woodward	Lot 31	SB Warner
Lot 8	Edward Scribner	Lot 34	DF Thompson

READING MATERIALS:

Mahtomedi Memories, Alice Smith, Alice Wright, Judy Kaiser, 1976.

A History of Washington County, Washington County Historical Society, 2008.

Looking Back at White Bear Lake, Cynthia E. Vadnais, 2004.

A Walk Through Dellwood, Paul Clifford Larson, 2007.

Additional Research:

- House histories in Mahtomedi and Willernie – possibly incorporating a class in how these are done
- Development of parks – some are apparent, others yet undiscovered
- Information about Chautauqua performers, who was actually here?
- Re-plattings and subsequent plattings
- Notable structures, present and gone