

Thursday Night Hikes: Washburn-Fair Oaks Hike

Architecture Notes

Observations on Architectural Styles and House Histories

Washburn-Fair Oaks Hike

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(Note: This is a listing of only (1) residence. For a complete list, please see the website above for many, many historic structures)

General. The Washburn-Fair Oaks "Mansion" District is located in Minneapolis, just south of downtown. Fair Oaks became a fashionable neighborhood for several generations of Minneapolitans because it was convenient to downtown while it was separated by elevation of land from the working class sections of the city.

The neighborhood's grandest mansions were built by the first generation of Minneapolis business leaders from the 1850's to the 1880's. Unfortunately, only one of the houses from this era remains. Today, the district consists of the early 20th century homes of the second generation elite, which are clustered around the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Fair Oaks Park, and the First Christian Church. These structures were built on the sites of the earlier mansions. Most of the houses are now used for commercial and institutional purposes.

The architecture of the neighborhood showcases the work of some of Minneapolis' most prominent architects, including William Channing Whitney, Hewitt & Brown, and Ernest Kennedy. A wide range of period revival styles were popular during this period, and most of them are represented in the district. The district was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1977.

Specific Structures. The following presents available information on the housing styles of specific structures located along this portion of the hike:

500 Fifth Avenue South/Former 2600 Portland Avenue South: Site of the Former Marion W. Savage and Marietta Savage House. The 1909 city directory indicates that Crawford Burns, a chauffeur, resided at the rear of this address and that Baxter Hawthorne was the butler at this address. Marion W. Savage, owner of the race horse Dan Patch, was the president of the Minneapolis, St. Paul, Rochester & Dubuque Electric Traction Company resided at 2600 Portland Avenue according to the 1909 city directory.

The 1915 city directory indicates that Mr. and Mrs. M. W. Savage, Mr. and Mrs. E. B. Savage, and Miss C. A. Bean resided at this address. The 1923 city directory indicates that Mrs. Marietta Savage, Mr. and Mrs. Earl Savage, Mr. and Mrs. H. M. Savage, and Miss C. A. Bean resided at this address. Marion Willis Savage (1859-1916) was the

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proprietor and manager of the International Stock Foods Company. Savage wore a long coat, much like a parson's coat, and people around horse barns and race tracks nicknamed him "the Parson." Marion Savage purchased the race horse, Dan Patch, for \$60,000 in December, 1902. Dan Patch (#37323 ATR), bred from Zelica and Joe Patchen #5544 (#30239 ATR), was owned previously by Daniel Messner, Jr. (1861-1938) of Indiana, then sold in March, 1902, for \$20,000 to Manley E. Sturgis of New York. Dan Patch was a standardbred/Morgan horse whose racing career spanned the first decade of the 20th Century.

When he was born in Oxford, Indiana, in 1896, Dan Patch's legs were so crooked that he required assistance to stand and nurse. Neighbors of Dan Patch's owner, local shopkeeper Daniel Messner, Jr., suggested the poor foal be put out its misery. Instead, Messner turned the training of the colt over to a local livery owner, John Wattles, who trained him slowly. Dan Patch did not compete until 1900, when he was four years old and had reached his full growth, standing sixteen hands tall (sixty-four inches) at the withers and weighing 1,165 pounds.

In the course of his career, Dan Patch set several world's records, including the mark for pacers that stood for 32 years. In 1905, Dan Patch made history in Lexington, Kentucky, where the horse set a record of 1:55 1/4, and at the Minnesota State Fair, in St. Paul, where the horse ran a race at 1:55 in 1906.

Besides his prowess on the race track, Dan Patch was a celebrity in his lifetime making hundreds of thousands of dollars for his final owner through appearances and endorsements. Savage was a genius at promotion and kept Dan Patch's name in the public's eye constantly. Endorsements of International Stock Food Company products by Dan Patch, the use of Dan Patch's name on other products, exhibition races, and barnstorming made Savage a fortune. Dan Patch also "endorsed" products as varied as sleds, coaster wagons, the Dan Patch automobile, tobacco, and gasoline washing machines.

Dan Patch earned his owner \$17,000 a year in stud fees, and as much as \$21,500 for a single exhibition.

In all, Savage's horse made him perhaps \$3 million richer. Savage was born in Akron, Ohio and was the son of a country doctor. As an adult, Savage tried his hand at farming, worked in a store, and failed in a company, due to his partner's embezzlement.

In 1886, Savage moved to Minneapolis and founded a stock food company which became the International Stock Food Company. Throughout his life Savage loved and owned horses. Savage owned 1,700 acres of land outside of Minneapolis, in Hamilton, which was renamed Savage in 1904. On that land, he built and maintained a magnificent farm called the International Stock Food Farm, later re-christened the International 1:55 Stock Food Company Farm. The complex included a mile track, an indoor half-mile track, and a magnificent heated stable which was affectionately called the Taj Mahal for its size and

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its onion dome. Besides Dan Patch, Savage owned many other famous horses of the day, including Cresceus, Minor Heir, Directum, Arion, and Roy Wilkes.

Marion Savage, along with the famous race horse, Dan Patch, were members at Wesley United Methodist Church, 101 E. Grant Street, Minneapolis. Savage pledged substantial earnings of his beloved race horse to the Wesley Church.

Dan Patch retired from racing in 1909, after injuring one of his legs. He continued, however, to make public appearances.

Dan Patch even had a railroad named after him. Savage also was the president of the Dan Patch electric line railroad. Opened in 1910, the gas-electric railroad traveled between Northfield, Minnesota, Lakeville, Minnesota, and Minneapolis and passed by Savage's farm along the way. After Dan Patch's death, the line lost its main reason for existence. Tourists rode the Dan Patch Line, formally known as the Minneapolis, St. Paul, Rochester and Dubuque Electric Traction Co., to Savage to see the racehorse. In 1918, the Minneapolis, Northfield & Southern Railway was formed and bought the Dan Patch Line at auction. The line discontinued passenger service in 1942. In 1982, the Minneapolis-based Soo Line Railroad Co. bought the Minneapolis, Northfield & Southern Railway. The Soo was itself acquired in 1990 by the Canadian Pacific Railway.

In 2001, the Canadian Pacific Railroad spun off part of the original Dan Patch line in Lakeville, Minnesota, to the Progressive Rail Inc.

Dan Patch even had his own private railway car. In 1912, Marion Savage commissioned Alexander Stirling Calder, Sr., (1870-1945) to sculpt a bronze statue of the trotter/pacer horse Dan Patch, entitled "To remember Dan Patch," which was completed in 1915.

On July 11, 1916, while Savage was in the hospital recovering from minor surgery, Dan Patch became violently ill and died of heart trouble. The following day, after receiving word of his favorite horse's death, Savage took a turn for the worse and also died. Their funerals were held on the same day. After Savage and Dan Patch died in 1916, Savage's eldest son, Erle Savage, carried on for a while with the International Stock Food Company, but had little interest in the horse farm and Savage's younger son, Harold Savage, was an avid horseman, but was too young to take over the operations. The farm was not able to sustain itself after the loss of Dan Patch, the remaining horses were sold to horsemen all over the world, including the Russian Imperial Government and New Zealand, to settle the estate in 1919, the land changed hands, and part of the stables subsequently burned.

The M. W. Savage Co., a mail order equipment supplier, owned the Exposition Building in Minneapolis, which was designed by John Hodgson, was built in 1886, was located at the current location of Riverplace, and was razed in 1940.

Harold Savage was the son of Marion Savage.

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Hiram H. Thayer was the president and treasurer of the International Stock Food Company and resided at 222 Groveland Avenue according to the 1909 city directory. Hiram H. Thayer was a son of Lucius Fowler Thayer and Martha Harrison Thayer, of Massachussets.

The Wesley Church is the current home of the first Methodist congregation to organize west of the Mississippi River. The congregation began in 1852, first as the St. Anthony Methodist Episcopal Church. The congregation has occupied three church buildings, with the current building, still on East Grant Street, having been built in 1891.

Cecelia A. Bean (-1915,) Marietta Savage (-1948,) and Earl Lawrence Savage (-1952) all died in Hennepin County. Harold M. Savage (1894-1977) was born in Minnesota, had a mother with a maiden name of Bean, and died in Hennepin County.

Hiram H. Thayer (-1927) died in Olmsted County, Minnesota. The structure is an 18 unit apartment building. The property is currently owned by PPL On Portland.