

Portraits of the Past



Fourth Avenue South near the ravine in the early 1900s, as it was around the time of the construction of the First Presbyterian Church.

(Photos Courtesy Stearns History Museum and St. Cloud State University Archives. Information derived from Glanville Smith's Reminiscences of the First Presbyterian Church in St. Cloud, W.B. Mitchell's History of Stearns County and various obituaries.)

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Opening a Window on South Side History with the Stained Glass of the First Presbyterian Church

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First Presbyterian Church and the South Side



First Presbyterian Church, on Fifth Avenue, ca. 1900

Residential Locations of Window Honorees



A neighborhood is made of more than buildings. It is the people who live in a neighborhood that give it its spirit. Just as the South Side today is an increasingly vibrant residential district, the neighborhood is gifted with dozens of historic homes, churches and other structures that remind modern St. Cloud residents of the community's rich heritage. The First Presbyterian Church, founded in 1864, is one of the oldest congregations in St. Cloud. The Church has deep roots in the history of the South Side that it still calls home today.

The Church moved to its present location from Fifth Avenue South in 1917. The new house of worship was the first building on the northern part of Fourth Avenue South. In fact, the thoroughfare had only recently been extended to the church site when the structure was built.

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| 1. Lewis Clark House* | 5. W.B. Mitchell House | Modern Church site shown. Approximate locations indicated on an 1896 map. Asterisks indicate extant homes.. |
| 2. Ervin House* | 6. Hugh Evans House | |
| 3. E.E. Clark House* | 7. W.W. Smith House | |
| 4. H.Z. Mitchell House | 8. A. Riley House* | |

The Evolution of St. Cloud's South Side



Before automobiles became the norm, only foot and wagon bridges crossed the ravine that separated Middle Town from Lower Town.

The history of the South Side is one of great change—and great continuity. While the population of the entire city of St. Cloud numbered only 2,000 in 1860, within a century it exceeded 30,000. These early years saw changes in the neighborhood as well. Though the South Side remained a residential stronghold for members of the old Yankee elite, large numbers of Germans moved into the residential district west of Fifth Avenue. To the east of Fifth, the multi-acre estates of families who had emigrated early to the city gave way to more organized development.

The 20th century posed its own set of challenges. As the number of students at St. Cloud State College/University skyrocketed in light of the G.I. Bill and the Baby Boom, student housing became an important feature of life in the South Side. Today, the South Side is a diverse *milieu* of students, permanent residents, as well as historic and modern architecture that speaks to the unique heritage of St. Cloud.

The Stained Glass of the First Presbyterian Church



The Bell tower of the First Presbyterian Church, built in 1917

In the 1850s, the South Side neighborhood was settled by New Englanders of English and Scottish descent. Lower Town, the original name of the South Side neighborhood before the incorporation of St. Cloud in 1857, was home to several Protestant churches.

Many of St. Cloud's prominent residents attended the First Presbyterian Church. Families gave memorials to the church for the purchase of stained glass windows. In return, names of loved ones were immortalized in the stained glass. The windows were designed by Robert Norman of Minneapolis and were installed in 1941. The memories of Glanville Smith, a former South Side resident and Presbyterian born in 1901, guide this tour of the church's history based on the windows. The history of the South Side, where many of the families lived, comes to light when the sun hits the beautiful stained glass in which former South Side residents are remembered.

Daniel

The Daniel window was given in honor of Mrs. Ketcham, a founding member of the First Presbyterian Church. Mrs. Ketcham left her estate to the church that she so loved.

What was the South Side like when the church was founded by devoted Presbyterians like Mrs. Ketcham? The sparsely-populated residential enclave of the 1850s and 60s was a contrast to the bustling German business community to the north, on the other side of the long and beautiful ravine that drained from Lake George to the Mississippi and divided the two settlements (see photo on back cover). Thus separated from the business district in old Middle Town, the South Side was in some respects a culture unto itself.

Joshua

The Joshua window was given as a memorial to Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Clark (who made their home at the corner of Sixth Avenue and Fourth Street) as well as their daughter, Frances Clark. Glanville Smith remembered that Mrs. Clark provided “home-baked bread for communion. It was one of the unenjoyed duties of my small boyhood to accompany my mother on neighborly calls on this very old couple.” The Clark home at 356 Sixth Avenue South still stands today.



Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Clark, circa 1892

Luke

The Luke window was given in memory of W.W. Smith, an executive in local banks and financial institutions. His son, Glanville Smith, was a well-known local writer and artist. He and his family lived for many years at 405 Second Avenue South, in a house now demolished.



John

The John window was given by the widow of Anthony Riley of 325 3rd Ave. South, “a contractor in the palmy days of railroading,” says Smith. Riley was born in Pennsylvania and came to St. Cloud in 1861. He was associated with the A. Guthrie & Company railway company, headquartered in St. Paul, and also served as a director of the Security State Bank in St. Cloud. His wife, a native of Ontario, Canada, was a graduate of the St. Cloud State Normal School. His 1936 house still stands today.



Campus of the Normal School, circa 1908

Matthew

The Matthew window was given in honor of John Clark of Rockville, Minnesota. Born in Scotland, Clark was a granite magnate and friend of Cass Gilbert, a famous Minnesota architect who designed the State Capitol in St. Paul as well as the United States Supreme Court Building in Washington, D.C.

Clark's greatest claim to fame is the Cathedral of St. Paul in St. Paul (pictured here), which was built of stone quarried in his mines. Note the symbols in the stained glass. The Scotch thistle and the St. Andrew's Cross symbolize Clark's ancestry. The mallet and the chisel recognize his profession, and the cathedral's dome honors his famous architectural achievement.



Mark

The Mark window was given in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Evans of 335 Third Avenue South, "whose affectionate loyalty to their Welsh ancestry is symbolized in the borders by the harp, the crossed leeks, and the Prince of Wales's three feathers," notes Glanville Smith. Evans, "a white-haired gentleman whose handsomeness added luster to the Session of Elders," was a prominent St. Cloud grocer and served as Mayor of St. Cloud. Evans died in 1934.



Hugh Evans, circa 1930s

Hosea

The Ervins were successful local millers from Philadelphia. The son of the Ervin remembered in this window was the organist at the First Presbyterian Church. While during Harry Ervin, Sr.'s lifetime the family home was located on Second

Avenue South, in her widowhood Mrs. Ervin built a large, Dutch-colonial home on First Avenue. The home still stands on the campus of SCSU and is utilized as the headquarters of residential life.



Jeremiah

The Jeremiah window was given in honor of Edward Elijah Clark of 105 4th Street South, whose colonial style home still stands today. Clark was an entrepreneur in a transportation technology that changed the South Side in the late 19th century— street cars. The ravine that divided Lower and Middle Towns was filled at Fifth Avenue in the circa 1890s to make way for a street car line.

Isaiah

The Isaiah window has three dedications. One worthy of particular mention is the Reverend David Lowry, a Presbyterian missionary in Minnesota's early days. His son, General Sylvanius Lowry, was the settler of Upper Town, located north of the German settlement before St. Cloud was united in 1857. Sylvanius Lowry was a slave-owner from Tennessee.

The Mitchell Window

The largest window in the First Presbyterian Church was given in honor of Henry and Elizabeth Mitchell, who stood at the very height of St. Cloud's social elite in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Mitchells lived in a home at 509 First Avenue South, where SCSU's Garvey Commons stands today.

Of Scotch-Irish descent, Henry and Elizabeth Mitchell moved to St. Cloud from Pennsylvania in 1856. Mitchell quickly established himself as one of the community's leading merchants and businessmen. Henry and Elizabeth's granddaughter, Ruth Mitchell, inherited the house and ran it as "Grandmother's Garden Tea Room" in the 1920s.



The Mitchell Window

William Bell Mitchell, Henry and Elizabeth's son, built a house at 508 First Avenue South, across the street from his parents' home, on the present site of Mitchell Hall. Mitchell was one of St. Cloud's leading businessmen, publisher of *The St. Cloud Journal Press*, as well as a local historian. Mitchell was among the most well-known men of affairs in St. Cloud. His gracious Queen Anne home was the epicenter of local society for his generation.

Glanville Smith described the home. "The house was of wood painted a dark red, with corner turrets. The rooms it enclosed were masterpieces of pleasantness, of waxed oak paneling, fireplaces, abundant bookcases and Italian color prints."

