



ReECHO

PARK HISTORY TODAY

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IN MEMORIAM

On a beautiful summer day in June 2023, I was scouting a future SLPHS walking tour of the northern reaches of St. Louis Park's Great Swamp at Louisiana Oaks Park and stopped for a beer on the patio of Park Tavern. I mentioned our walking tour plans to the Tavern's owner, Phil Weber, who was busy sweeping up and moving chairs, and he agreed to help the Society out as our plans developed.

As it was well after lunchtime, I was otherwise alone on the patio and was served my beer by an always-smiling KRISTINA FOLKERTS, whose mother had also waited tables there, and who was at the end of her shift. We all remember sunny days like that when we feel good about making incremental progress towards something. With Phil's help and sponsorship, we completed four Skunk Hollow/Great Swamp walking tours and a collaborative exhibit with the Hennepin History Museum on August 4th.

On Sunday evening, September 1st, just as our Fall issue of the *ReEcho* was put to bed, KRISTINA, mother of three, and GABE HARVEY, employed by Methodist Hospital, were killed on that patio by a driver who crashed his car through the fence and later tested four times the legal limit for alcohol consumption. Nine others were severely injured. The Park Tavern community was stunned, as were all residents of the Park and beyond.

When senseless tragedies hit people in our community, we try to do what little we can to cope and to help those directly injured. It never seems to be enough. Ten weeks later, Phil conducted another fundraising raffle for Kristina's family.

We count our blessings of community and conviviality and recognize our collective loss by remembering KRISTINA and GABE with a few photographs from the spontaneous memorial created by Tavern employees and the public at the patio, and from the November 18 raffle:



EDITOR'S NOTE: In our Spring 2024 *ReEcho*, we wrote of Leslie Fawkes, Minneapolis entrepreneur and earlier adopter and seller in 1900 of the newfangled *auto-mobile*, who left his mark on the Park building his family's suburban estate, Cobble Crest, in 1913. We profile another powerhouse of the same era in Minneapolis business, the truly incomparable Marion Willis Savage, who left a slightly larger mark on the Park – the Minneapolis, St. Paul, Rochester, and Dubuque Electric Traction Company, better known as the Dan Patch.

Our incomparable website covers the story of the Dan Patch in great detail; we fill in a few blanks and add some context, sparked by the recent incorporation of Dan Patch's successor, the Minneapolis Northfield and Southern RR (MN&S), into the country's first north-south international rail connector, the Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC) Railway, linking both coasts of Mexico with Minneapolis, Winnipeg and both coasts of Canada, 130 years after James J. Hill completed his own east-west transcontinental through St. Louis Park.

THE DAN PATCH RAILWAY – A SAVAGE BACKSTORY A MAN AND HIS DREAMS (1886 – 1896)

M.W. Savage was once described as the P.T. Barnum of the Midwest, and it was a fair comparison. Born in Ohio in 1859, raised in West Liberty, Iowa, by his pharmacist and veterinarian father, Marion left there with a love of horses, an eye for patent medicine money, and an attractive new wife, Marietta Bean. Based on Iowa census documents and Dubuque city directories, his path from West Liberty to Minneapolis was murky and involved brief stops in Iowa Falls and Dubuque where he formed the German Medicine Company.

But my own best guess is that the 28-year-old Savage made his final move to Minneapolis in 1886 as one of the half-million visitors to that city's giant coming-out party to the region, the 1886 Industrial Exposition. He'd have traveled up the Mississippi from Dubuque by train, through St. Paul, crossing the river on James J. Hill's new Stone arch Bridge, a path gradually revealing the destination – the Minneapolis Exposition Building, rising majestically above the east bank, the largest and tallest building in town.



Savage would not have missed a side trip to St. Paul to visit millionaire and city pioneer Norman Kittson's one-mile racetrack and 96-stall stable and stud farm for Standard-bred horses, often called "Kittsondale," straddling Hamline Avenue on the south side of University Avenue in the Midway area. He was hooked.

Savage and family first show up in the Minneapolis City Directory of 1887, residing at 715 8th Avenue North. A new house on land platted in 1882, its front yard was hard up against Bassett's Creek. Just four years earlier park planner Horace Cleveland informed the brand-new Minneapolis Park Board that if that creek continued to be ditched and tunneled,

it would become a malarial stew. It was already subject to severe flooding in the wet years and was an open sewer.

By 1890, Will Savage had formally incorporated the German Medicine Company with the State of Minnesota, oddly, as a minority shareholder (16%) with two others. Majority shareholder, Col. Alexander Hughes (52%), was a Dakotan, railroad lawyer, and Civil War hero whose Minneapolis social credentials were impeccable. The company sold a line of patent medicines; one was *Dermola*, (think Gwyneth Paltrow's *Goop*). It was launched with an aggressive advertising campaign in the *Minneapolis Times*.

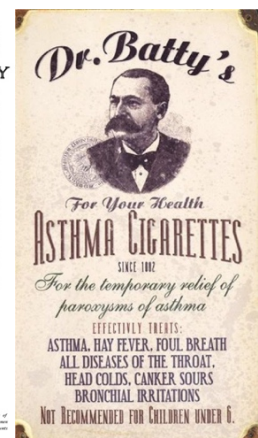
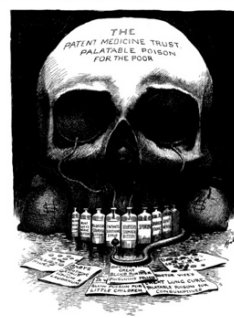
PERSONAL—EVERY LADY IN CITY should try a bottle *Dermola* for the complexion. Sample mailed for 6 cents. Colorless, stainless, harmless. German Medicine Company, Minneapolis, Minn.

He also formed a new business, the International Food Company, and moved his business from his home to 121 N. Washington Avenue. He would quickly outgrow the space, and move again to 121-125 1st Avenue N., and after that place was destroyed by fire in December 1900, build new at to 2nd Ave. N. The Panic of 1893 shut down thousands of other businesses in Minnesota and the nation. A four-year depression followed. Norman Kittson died unexpectedly in 1888 and his stock farm and racetrack, along with the harness racing industry, died shortly thereafter.

Savage must have done something right, however, and was prosperous enough by 1896 to flee the fetid Creekside property and build an eight-bedroom, three bath, three story, 8,000 square foot dwelling at 2600 Portland Avenue South. Costing \$15,000, it also featured a 3rd floor ballroom with a stage. (You could buy a new, seven-room, 1½ story house at 27th & Nicollet for \$1,600.) The 1900 U.S. Census recorded four servants living with the Savages and their two sons there on Portland.

Patent medicines were ubiquitous and were getting a bad rap for their wildly overstated health claims, and direct harm to some of the humans involved. In 1906, *Colliers* magazine launched an investigative report that weeded out the worst patent medicine actors and eventually resulted in federal regulation with creation of the Food and Drug Administration.

Collier's
THE NATIONAL WEEKLY



>>>continued on page 4>>>

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

On Dec 7th, we had our 10th annual Depot lighting event. It was a warm evening, but the lack of snow did not diminish the festive atmosphere or the glow of lights from the Depot. If you have never been to this event, it is a nice way to visit the Depot and get a hot chocolate all in about a half hour to kick off your Saturday evening.

That day also happened to be Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, which I noted at the event. We remembered the 2,403 people who were killed in that attack. We remembered the 1,053 men and women of St. Louis Park who served in WWII, and the 45 of them who died and many more who were injured.

The city, like thousands of others around the country, supported the war effort in many ways. There were scrap metal collection efforts, donations for the troops, purchases of war bonds, the creation of an outpost of the Red Cross, and much more that has been forgotten to time. The residents raised enough money to name a US military bomber, which was christened *The Spirit of St. Louis Park*, a nice homage to Lindbergh's famous plane and which highlighted our continued tie to all things St. Louis.

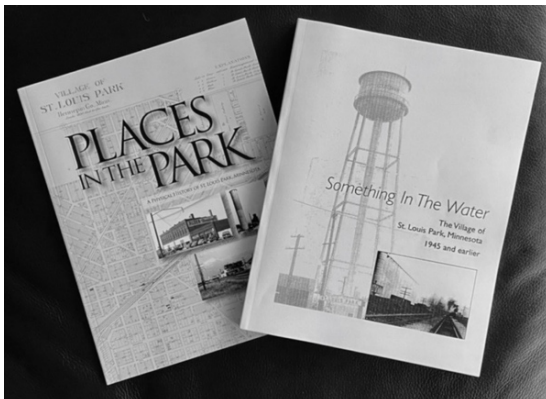
Speaking of raising money, we recently completed our fundraising as part of the state-wide Give To The Max campaign. We were able to raise just over our goal of \$2,000. Thank you to the 23 donors who gave generously to help us close our operational gap for the year.

Our annual membership drive will start in January, and you can expect a renewal letter from us. As always, if you have any questions about your membership, please email us. The best way you can show your support for our organization is to continue being a member.

That means we keep our organization as lean as possible while still ensuring the preservation and accessibility of our collections and sending you this newsletter quarterly to keep you connected to St. Louis Park history.

With Park Pride,

Ted



CONNECT WITH US

Visit: 3546 Dakota Ave. So., Suite C
St. Louis Park
Saturdays, 1-4 pm,
Or, by appointment

Phone: 612.465.9288
Email: slphistory@gmail.com
Online: <https://slphistory.org>

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Founded in 1971, the St. Louis Park historical Society collects, preserves, and shares the history of St. Louis Park. The *ReEcho: Park History Today*, is an official publication of the Society.

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Patent medicine purveyors were seen as flimflammers, weasels, and socially inferior beings. Will Savage had higher aspirations. In 1890, he escaped the super-saturated patent medicine market for humans, forming the International Food Company, making medical dietary supplements for livestock.

His clients were farmers - common folk, but beyond social reproach. That company began to sponsor horses in local harness racing contests at the Minnehaha Park racecourse and the State Fair track after the demise of Norman Kittson's Midway operations, and Savage began to buy trotting and pacing stallions to build his own stock farm. But M.W. was just getting started. The next decade would mark another explosion of the Savage family fortunes, and partly-borrowed fame.

THE HORSE BECOMES A STAR (1896 – 1906)

Town or country, everyone who needed to go somewhere drove a horse to get there, and friendly competition between neighboring horseflesh became grand entertainment in rural America. In 1896, Dan Patch was a sickly foal in Indiana, barely escaping euthanasia. He got special attention from a trainer, grew up, and started winning harness races for pacers at county fairs. These races were the stock car races of their day. It was "the people's" sport.

Through his company, International Stock Food, Marion Savage began to indulge his passion for horses and racing as early as 1890. A decade later he was a fixture in the Minnesota racing scene and owned quite a few trotters and pacers. In 1902, he went for the brass ring, purchasing the already well-known Dan Patch from an Ohio gambler for \$60,000, when a good racehorse sold for \$200.

Dan Patch immediately became America's first sports celebrity spokesmodel, a household name two years before baseball great Honus Wagner allegedly started the sports endorsement industry with his signature on a Louisville Slugger.

Savage spent freely to indulge his twin passions, creating, in 1902, a 700-acre farm for his 86 horses in the Minnesota River bottoms and commissioning architect Harry Wild Jones to design a country home on a 250-acre Bloomington bluff site with unparalleled views to the horse farm across the river, its exotic onion-domed barn and mile-long racing oval. The mansion's south façade overlooking the river valley was a direct but scaled-down crib of the south façade of the White House in Washington, DC.

The International Stock Food Company, driven by Savage's advertising genius, had outgrown its initial buildings north of Hennepin Avenue near the Great Northern Depot a couple of times, so, in early 1903 Savage bought the then-empty, but mammoth, Exposition Building on the east side of the river with its commanding presence and 240-foot tower.



In the next five years Savage expanded into Canada and spun off a dozen new businesses, including plants in Toronto and Memphis and Minneapolis for sugar-based supplement to animal feed, and started slapping the International Stock Foods label on other products from automobiles to watches, washing machines, breakfast cereal, and manure spreaders, much like today's Costco's Kirkland Signature brand. The firm's 2.5-million-farm-family mailing list was constantly updated by 200 typists churning out mailing labels in the Exposition Building. It was the largest direct-mail operation in the world.

Before he came to Minneapolis arriving as royalty with a parade down Nicollet Avenue, Dan Patch had already set world record times and won so many races that nobody would agree to race him, so from 1903 to 1909, Savage sent him around the country regally, in his own private train car with four grooms and other staff, to race the clock in exhibition matches. He continued to win handily against the clock.

At his first appearance at the Minnesota State Fair in 1903, Savage and his horse drove the first day attendance record up by almost seventy percent, with an assist from a massive advertising blitz. By the 1906 State Fair, Dan Patch's fame had been cemented by his 1905 1:55 ¼ mile at the Lexington, KY track, the Yankee Stadium of U.S. racetracks. When the horse broke his own record for the mile at the Minnesota State Fair in September 1906, running a (later-disputed) 1:55, flat, he became the most famous horse in harness racing history. Savage leveraged that glory into an orgy of International Stock Food Company product promotions.

MAN & HORSE BUILD A RAILROAD (1906 – 1916)

Half a century after the U.S. government provided 130 million acres of free land to boost railroad construction, the Minneapolis, St. Paul, Rochester, and Dubuque Electric Traction Company was designed as an all-electric *Interurban*, a passenger line connecting large cities with their rural cousins. No free land was involved.

Will Savage undoubtedly saw an opportunity when he took control of the defunct start-up company in 1907, shortly after Dan Patch's historic State Fair appearance. It was full-speed-ahead. Will Savage always put his money where his mouth was and spared no expense. The fact that well over ninety percent of all railroads started in the U.S. since 1860 had gone

bankrupt might have given Savage pause. But he was a plunger, not a pauser, and proceeded to turn on the full force of his relentless salesmanship, selling stock in his railroad to the common folk who had made him already worth over \$15 million, (north of \$400 million today).

In 1908 he started building south from the then-city limits of Minneapolis on 54th Street. Rather than crossing near Fort Snelling, he had changed the original route to cross the Minnesota River at his International Stock Farm, now a destination for Dan Patch lovers. Savage created an additional attraction by developing an amusement park on Lake Marion in Lakeville, mimicking the TCRTC's success at Wildwood Park on White Bear Lake.

Savage was briefly distracted in 1908 after being drafted as a Hennepin County's Republican candidate for Governor. He gave it a good run, losing a close primary election, but public politics was not his thing and he got on with railroad building.

According to the book, *The Electric Railways of Minnesota*, Savage had a deal with the Twin Cities Rapid Transit Company, headed by Thomas Lowry and Calvin Goodrich, for trackage rights from the 54th & Nicollet streetcar terminus into downtown. No specific deal was ever reported, and Lowry died in 1909, leaving the Dan Patch passengers with a streetcar transfer to reach the city proper.

On the 4th of July 1910, the Dan Patch started service from 54th Street Station to Northfield, via the International Stock Farm in Savage and Antlers Park in Lakeville. Lacking a direct connection to the center, Savage began to plot an end-run through Bloomington, Edina, St. Louis Park, and Golden Valley.

It was an expensive project, involving hundreds of individual landowners. A 50'x130' residential lot in Brookside cost \$200 then, over a thousand times what pioneer farmer George Drew paid for that land in 1855. And it was a much longer route with dozens of at-grade crossings, plus massive amounts of grade-leveling fill and a separate deal with the owners of the Luce/Electric Short Line for shared access and a terminal building on the last leg into downtown.

In 1915, the Dan Patch was apparently leaking money and had to issue actual debt for the first time, selling bonds to the public. Up until this point, only stock sales and Savage's personal fortune had been adequate to finance the railway. It should have been a warning sign but wasn't.

In February 1916, as Buick dealer Bohn Fawkes was organizing the nation's largest auto show in space rented from M.W. Savage at the Exposition Building, Dan Patch, now a retired 20-year-old, died suddenly in his luxurious, padded stall on the Minnesota River floodplain. Will Savage had been hospitalized for routine surgery about the same time and was recovering normally when he received the news of his beloved horse's death. Savage was dead 32 hours later, at age 57. Three decades of spectacular growth driven by the energy of man and horse ended like a popping balloon. Worse timing would be unlikely.

THE PARK AND THE PATCH GET ALONG (1916...)

The world was at war in 1916, redirecting world commerce, while in 1917 the U.S. government was preparing to take over all U.S. railroads. There was a brief opportunity following Will Savage's death for St. Louis Park to end the railroad permanently by reclaiming the right-of-way and selling the tracks for scrap, but it passed. In 1918, the railroad bondholders managed to reorganize as the Minneapolis Northfield & Southern Railway, grudgingly maintaining passenger service but dedicated mostly to freight hauling, and happy to use smelly, noisy steam engines for it. To distract from the railway's financial history, the new owners dropped the Dan Patch name, but that name wouldn't die.



The village was powerless to stop the electric/steam bait-and-switch, despite appeals to the State Railroad Commission. With over a dozen at-grade street crossings in the Park, inevitable collisions and occasional deaths ensued. There was a non-fatal crash on Excelsior Blvd almost immediately after service began in 1915. During the Depression, a 14-year-old boy who lived near Jorvig Park died after falling off the MN&S bridge over the M&SL/Milwaukee Road tracks. The MN&S was sold to the Soo Line in the early 1980s, changing little. The Soo, in turn, was sold to the Canadian Pacific in 1990, and the Twin Cities & Western (TC&W), a remnant of the Milwaukee Road through the Park to Milbank, SD, was spun off in 1991.

In 1980, Hennepin County created the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA), a committee-of-the-whole of the County Commission. In 1987, the legislature empowered such authorities to implement light rail transit, and in 1988, the HCRRA adopted a 20-year plan. But it would be hard to imagine a more clueless, incompetent, corrupt, and moronic process than their planning for the Southwest Light Rail project.

Republican Governor Tim Pawlenty ended the State Planning Agency by executive order in 2002, (who needs planning?), and the same year Timmy and the legislature passed a gag order prohibiting any public agency discussion, mention, or thinking about using the Dan Patch line for public transit; a gag that stayed on for over twenty years.

On April 15, 2023, the Canadian Pacific and Kansas City Southern combined to create the Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC), a mind-boggling international rail conglomerate. An innocent observer might guess that the new company employs more lawyers than the entire population of St. Louis Park.

What a different and interesting train ride it might have been had Will Savage lived to be 80.



YOUR LAST CHANCE
 TO SECURE A \$21.50 DAN PATCH GOLD STOP WATCH
ABSOLUTELY FREE
 WITH YOUR ORDER FOR A \$68 BILL OF INTERNATIONAL PRODUCTS
 YOUR ORDER MUST BE MAILED AT ONCE

You can easily make up an assortment amounting to \$68.00. We list 30 different preparations, all good sellers, and a \$68.00 assortment will not over stock you.

TWO GOLD WATCHES IN ONE WATCH

These two Photographic Engravings show the Handsome engraved case of the watch and the Speed Timing Hand stopped at 1:55, Dan's World Record and they also show the exact size of

**THE BEAUTIFUL
 "DAN PATCH GOLD STOP WATCH."**



The Savage family officially arrived in Minneapolis society with their new mansion at 2600 Portland Ave. S. Dan Patch arrived in 1902 and immediately started paying his way. Briefly stabled on Portland Ave., the horse was driven around town by his owner, shown off much like a new Rolls Royce. Above, Savage decided that new technology – gas-electric self-propelled railcars – would replace more expensive overhead electric lines. Manufactured by General Electric beginning in 1913, the cars were an early hybrid – think a big, homely, Toyota Prius, without the battery. The downtown depot was a block from today's Butler Square, a spot directly across 7th Street N. from the end of the right field stands at Target Field. The route into town was shared with the Electric Short Line.

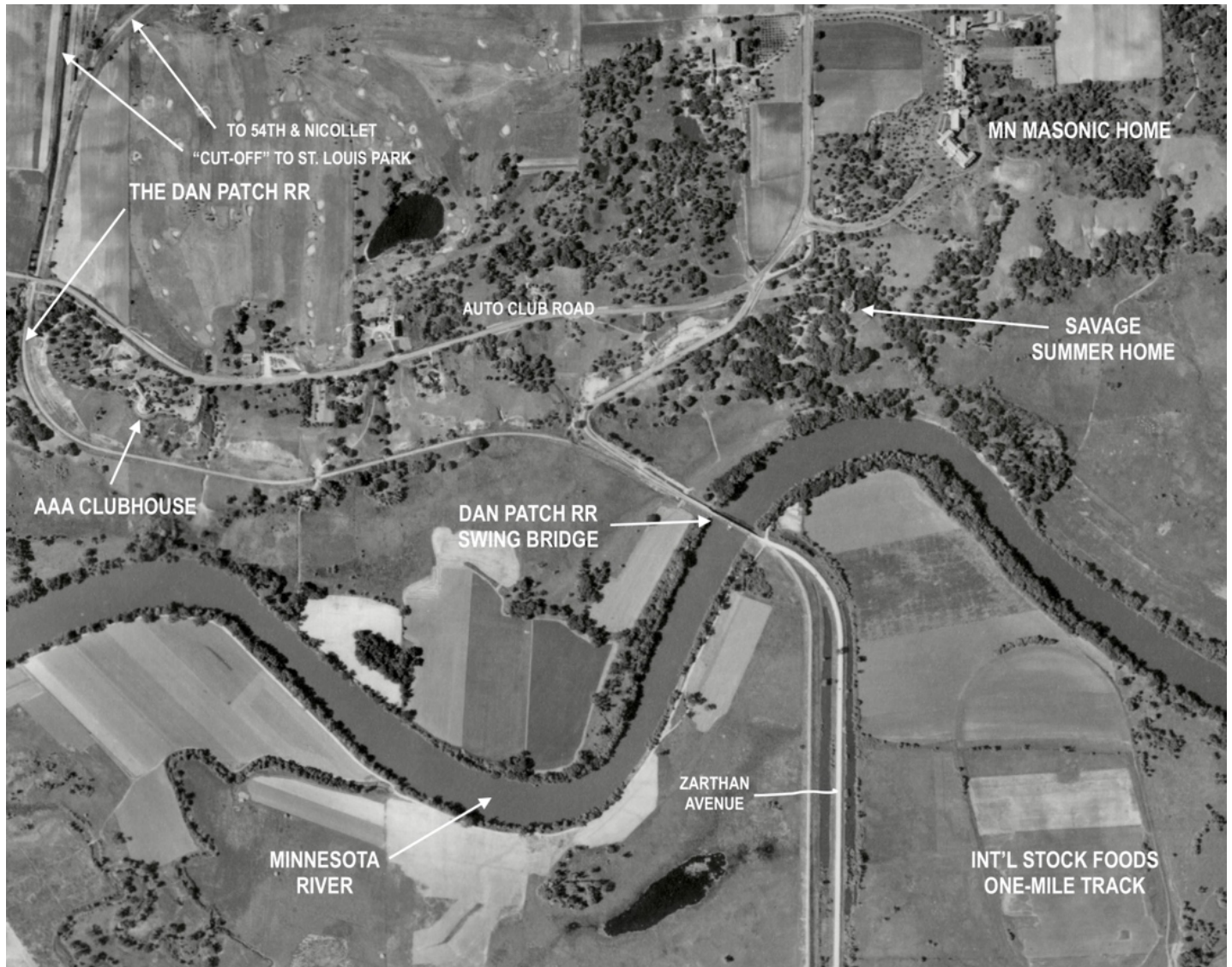
Below, in an MnHS aerial photo looking northeast circa 1922, you can trace the path of the Dan Patch snaking through our village of about 2,000 residents by marking the power transmission towers, co-located to add revenue to the rail operation. Based on the MN&S schedule from about that time, you could ride an express train from the Brick Block to the downtown Minneapolis terminal in about twenty minutes. The TCRTC had been running much slower streetcars along Lake Street into town from that same point for 30 years, and, of course, you could catch a train to downtown just a block away at the either M&SL or Milwaukee Road Depots.





In his own words, Marion Willis Savage described the basis of his stock food empire, noting that he had decided: "...there was a large field for a High Class Medicated Stock Food to be fed to animals in small amounts...because people demand salt, pepper vinegar, mustard, etc. mixed with every mouthful of their food. I believe that it is just as essential that animals have certain Roots, Herbs, Seeds and Barks mixed with their food." Beginning in 1902, he purchased a 275-acre farm on the north side of the Minnesota River for a summer home, along with 750-acres of floodplain south of the river for his harness racing stables, all paid for by happy horses and hogs, contented cows, serene sheep and calm chickens.

The aerial photo from 1945 below shows the Harry Wild Jones-designed mansion featuring a two-story living room the size of a high school basketball court connecting the front entry with a colonnaded portico facing south across the river to the exotic, onion-domed stable of harness racing champions and one-mile racetrack. Of course, the Dan Patch Railway was designed to connect his destination stables to the world, no matter the convoluted route required. A half mile west was the upstart AAA Clubhouse, a stop on the rail line in 1908, promoting a new technology that would spell the death of passenger rail across the land.





REeCHO
PARK HISTORY TODAY

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COLOR LITHOGRAPHY LOOKBACK

Around 1890, the possibilities of mass printing in color were revolutionizing the advertising business, and Will Savage was at the forefront, mailing out thousands of posters advertising his products. The Hennepin County Library has an online collection of these beauties, a few shown here. Enjoy the rest at: https://archives.hclib.org/resources/international_stock_food_posters.

