



'Where the biggies leave off...'

Hill & Lake Press

Published for East Isles, Lowry Hill, Kenwood Isles, & Cedar Isles Dean Neighborhoods

VOLUME 40 NUMBER 4

www.hillandlakepress.com

APRIL 22, 2016

Never-published aerial photos from 1920s-30s provide birds-eye views of our Hill and Lake neighborhoods

By Michael Wilson

Interest in a treasure trove of never-before-published 80-year-old aerial photographs of Minneapolis neighborhoods, first seen in last month's Hill & Lake Press, has swelled to the point that moves are afoot to make the entire collection available online to the public.

The images were taken in the early 1930s by noted aerial photography pioneer Joe Quigley, hired by the Minneapolis Public Schools' facilities and planning department to document all 111 school buildings in use at the time and to scout out sites for further expansion. The photographs were never intended for viewing by the general public and have languished for years in boxes and file drawers at North Star School, once the largest elementary school in the state and now a warehouse and repository for district support functions and old school records.

As reported in last month's HLP, district enrollment rocketed from 54,000 students in 1916 to a peak of 90,073 in 1933, an increase in just 17 years of 36,000 students – equal to the entire district enrollment of today. District officials were working overtime back then to find ways to accommodate the flood of new faces. The aerial photographs were one of their planning tools.

Fast forward to 2016 and to the remarkable volunteer efforts of Peg Carlson, a retired MPS media and information technology specialist described by former Burroughs School librarian Nancy Hennen as "tireless" and having "a heart of gold." Carlson has taken on the enormous task of saving and organizing hundreds of boxes and file cabinets of old MPS photos, documents, and memorabilia.

Although Carlson is known to historians and preservationists such as Ted Hathaway, senior librarian and manager of Special Collections at Hennepin County Library, and StarTribune writer and columnist James Eli Shiffer, they were unaware of the Quigley aerials. Minneapolis City Clerk and history buff Casey Carl and Christian Rummelhoff, assistant city clerk in charge of the Records and Information Management Division, likewise had never seen the Quigley aerials before the March Hill & Lake Press broke the news.

Hathaway is currently in talks with Chad Carr, manager of Real Estate and Business for the district, for Special Collections to take over conservatorship of the photo archives, which also include boxfuls of beautiful and very old glass-plate photographs. Hathaway is stressing that not only will the general public benefit from being able to examine all these photographs; students will be able to access them too for History Day projects and other purposes.

Last month's HLP carried aerial photos of the Lowry Hill and Cedar-Isles-Dean neighborhoods. To examine those photos as well as the two photos printed on this page of the Kenwood and East Isles neighborhoods, go to our website (<hillandlakepress.com>),



Joe Quigley's remarkably crisp photo of Kenwood School shows a largely undeveloped Kenwood Park outlined in white. The reason is unknown; certainly the school district wasn't planning to acquire part of the park for school purposes. Note that Franklin and Penn avenues meet at right angles at the corner of the school property. Taking a slice of parkland on the northeast corner in order to build Kenwood Rec Center was a battle that would be fought in the 1970s. St. Paul's Episcopal Church wasn't built on the corner of Logan and Franklin until 1956, as Kathy Kullberg recounts in her March 2016 article.



Peg Carlson, retired MPS media and information technology specialist, shows Ted Hathaway (left), senior librarian and manager of Special Collections at Hennepin County Library, and HLP writer Michael Wilson (right) some of the hundreds of previously unpublished aerial photographs of Minneapolis neighborhoods dating from the 1930s. The collection currently resides in cardboard boxes and file cabinets in an unused MPS former elementary school.



Noted aerial photography pioneer Joe Quigley used a high-quality Fairchild camera and 8x10 negative film to capture remarkably clear images of school properties and their neighborhoods across all of Minneapolis. (Photo: Minnesota Aviation Hall of Fame, courtesy of Noel Allard.)

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click on “Past and Present Issues,” and open the PDF version of this or last month’s issue. Use your computer’s “Zoom In” command to examine these remarkable images in as much detail as you want.

Check out also the outstanding collection of aerial

photos at the U of MN’s Borchert Map Library (<www.lib.umn.edu/apps/mhapo/>). Note however that the earliest aerials in the Borchert collection date from 1938. The Quigley photos are five years older – and you saw them first in Hill & Lake Press!



West High figures prominently in this photo of Uptown and the southern end of the East Isles neighborhood. Calhoun School is on the right, facing Girard between Lake and 31st streets. Zoom in to see Jefferson Jr. High on the left at West 26th and Fremont; the property that is now the Jefferson playground was in private hands back then. Note that The Mall connected directly to Hennepin Avenue. The 29th Street trench – today’s Midtown Greenway – was an active freight rail line.

Photos: Minneapolis Public Schools, courtesy of Peg Carlson. Captions: Michael Wilson