



'Where the biggies leave off...'

# Hill & Lake Press

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## Hill & Lake Press attention, advocacy help bring historic Quigley aerials to light for all to enjoy

By Michael Wilson

It's only taken 36 years of attention and advocacy in the pages of Hill & Lake Press, but the big day has finally arrived.

On October 30 the remarkable aerial photographs taken by Joe Quigley in the late 1920s and early 1930s for the Minneapolis Public Schools left the district warehouse where they have lain in darkness for the past 85 years and travelled to their new home in the Special Collections department of Hennepin County Library.

Archivists have already begun digitizing the photos and when they're done, the entire collection will be uploaded to the Digital Collections area of the HCL website where they will be easily and freely accessible to students, teachers, history buffs, researchers, and everyone else in Minneapolis, the metro area, and the world.

The aerial photo collection's history is as remarkable in its way as the aerials themselves, for neither the district's facility planners nor Joe Quigley himself intended for the aerials to have wide public distribution. They were planning documents, pure and simple, and the fact that the best of them were almost works of art was a happy, unforeseen coincidence.

### Booming enrollment required new approaches.

Throughout the 1920s and early 1930s the Minneapolis school district saw astonishing growth, from 60,010 students in 1918-19 to a peak of 90,073 students in 1932-33 -- an average of 2147 new students every single year. (MPS's current enrollment is 36,531.) Where and how to house this steady stream of new students was a major challenge.

The 1858-1918 era of bespoke schools, each designed by independent architects, gave the city many graceful buildings like Lowry Hill's Douglas School (1894) and Kenwood School (1908) and some monumental palaces of staggering proportions, but the system was far too cumbersome and expensive, and unscientific, for the post-World War I enrollment boom. (Go to <mpshistory.mpls.k12.mn.us> and click on the fascinating, illustrated "Historic Context Study," written in 2005.)

In 1919 the district's Division of Architecture was reorganized as the Bureau of Buildings and a rigorous process began to research the latest in best educational practices and modern school design, resulting in the creation of plans for a number of standardized, solid, cost-effective buildings which could be erected relatively quickly.

The district did block-by-block head counts and demographic analyses to get a handle on where the needs for more classrooms and new schools lay. Portable classrooms (called "sectional schoolhouses") such as Cedar-Isles-Dean's Alcott School (1921-1940), which could be transported and readied for in-



Joe Quigley's aerial photographs and many other Minneapolis schools historical treasures were moved on October 30 from district storage at North Star School to Hennepin County Library's Special Collections department. From left: HCL intern Gage Backman; MPS archivist Lara Ullman; Hill & Lake Press writer and Cedar-Isles-Dean resident Michael Wilson; Peg Carlson, MPS media & technology specialist (retired); Jenna Jacobs, Special Collections archivist; and Bailey Diers, Special Collections librarian. (Photo: Dorothy Childers.)

BELOW: Will Craig's introduction accompanying his May 1982 article featuring Quigley aerials of our four Hill and Lake neighborhoods.

8 HILL and LAKE PRESS March 6, 1982

### The way we were: old photos show early vitality

by Will Craig

The aerial photos on these pages show the Hill and Lake Press neighborhood as it was half a century ago. They were found in the archives of the Minneapolis Public Schools. Each shows a school and its surrounding neighborhood in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Drastic changes since that time have occurred in the areas farthest from downtown. Changes in the older portions of the neighborhood are more subtle. Trees have grown. The few vacant lots have been filled. Additions have been made. In a few cases, older buildings have been replaced. Try to see what changes you can find.

West High is at the bottom of the upper left photo. Behind West is a panorama of the neighborhood. Note the trails of three steam locomotives. Two are on the M&St. L. (now Chicago Northwestern) tracks between the lakes. The other is highballing west on the tracks to the south (left) of Lake of the Isles.

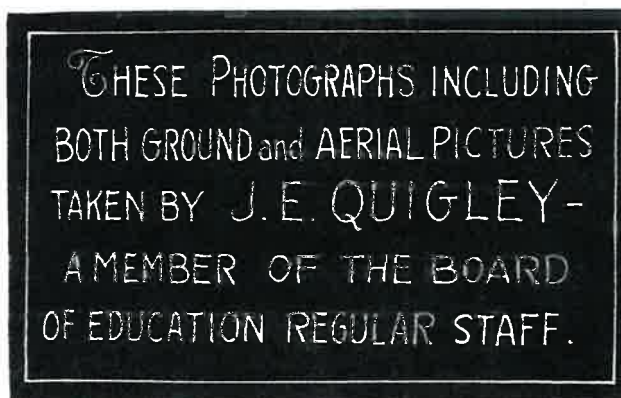
Douglas School is in the lower left photo. Franklin Avenue is at the bottom and Hennepin Avenue, complete with streetcar tracks, is in the upper right.

Kenwood School is at the bottom of the upper right photo—with a white line around it. The line around Kenwood Park probably indicates early School Board consideration of linking the facilities. Sound familiar? This is our current neighborhood plan.

Alcott School is in the lower right photo. Don't be embarrassed if you have never heard of it. The wood frame building was used only from 1921 through 1940; the site was sold in 1946. The neighborhood is the Sunset Sub-

division south of Cedar Lake. Lake Street is on the right and France Avenue, near the bottom. Alcott School is the white structure about one inch below the grain elevators in the upper right quadrant.

The Alcott photo may be the most interesting since so much change has occurred since it was taken. Note the virtually empty areas north (left) of the elevators. These areas now contain the Xerxes Avenue apartment complex and the Park Lane area. Below France Avenue is an empty St. Louis Park. Sunset Boulevard, originally platted as a rail right-of-way, has undergone much change above its intersection with Chowen. Landmarks remain however. Cedar Lake is the top left and the Calhoun Beach Club is in the upper right corner.



Plaque from the long-ago offices of the Minneapolis school district's Bureau of Buildings.

structional use in as few as ten days, came into widespread use. But an overall view of where to find vacant land for new school sites remained elusive.

### Joe Quigley, pioneering aerial photographer.

Enter Joe Quigley, a master plumber and (according to his obituary) the district's supervisor of sanitation. His colleagues in the Bureau of Buildings would surely have known of Joe's passion for the new-fangled field of aerial photography. His 2007 Minnesota Aviation Hall of Fame induction citation noted that Joe began his aerial photography career in 1925 when he went to work for a flying circus, taking aerial pictures and selling them. Joe no doubt jumped at the request from the Bureau of Buildings to photo-



## Remarkable aerials of late-1920s/early 1930s Minneapolis schools and neighborhoods lay in deep storage for 85 years, known only to a few (p.2)



Joe Quigley lived his entire life as a proud resident of south Minneapolis. Born in 1892, he built a house at 3333 - 33rd Ave. S. in 1916 where he raised his family and lived until his death in 1953. His widow Helen continued living at 3333 for many years afterwards, dying in 2003 at age 98. Above, Joe poses here with his dogs Fritz and Sappho. (Photo courtesy Quigley/Potter family.)



Noted aerial photography pioneer Joe Quigley (standing) used a high-quality Fairchild camera and 8x10 negatives to capture remarkably clear images of school properties and images across all of Minneapolis. Quigley was never a pilot, allowing him to focus solely on his photography. (Photo: Minnesota Aviation Hall of Fame, courtesy Noel Allard.)

graph the entire city from the air.

The 2005 Historic Context Study includes three stunning aerial photographs and states, "Another tool for studying the school plant was an extensive aerial photography project begun about 1928, which provided documentation of the facilities and their surrounding neighborhoods." The 1928 Superintendent's Annual Report included a beautiful aerial view of Howe School. But nowhere was the master photographer, Joe Quigley, given credit.

Quigley's school district aerial project ended in 1933 when enrollment began its long decline and the district fell on parlous Depression-era financial times. His collection of aerials, numbering upwards of 300, began their 85-year slumber in district file cabinets, disturbed only when mountains of old files and miscellany were moved in the late 2000s from the long-time MPS headquarters building at 807 N.E. Broadway to once-bustling, now empty North Star School at 2410 Girard Ave. N.

There were occasional sightings over the decades of an old aerial or two taken at an oblique angle,

which we now recognize as Quigley's hallmark. Only a handful of people were aware, however, of the existence of an entire collection of such photos, and virtually no one remembered the man who took them.

### Hill & Lake Press publishes aerials in 1982.

Will Craig was one of the few who knew about the aerials, alerted to them by local historian Tom Balcom. Will and Ginny Craig were Kenwood residents, mainstays for many years of both KIAA and Hill & Lake Press. Now the associate director emeritus of the UM's Center for Urban & Regional Affairs, Craig is internationally known as a leading figure in the technical and institutional development of Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

Craig knows a good aerial when he sees one, in other words, and in the May 1982 Hill & Lake Press Craig published a startlingly real-life aerial view of each of our four Hill and Lake neighborhoods. (See page 1 for Craig's paragraph introducing the 1982 article.)

Fast forward to December 2015, when a Hill & Lake Press article on the long-gone Alcott School at

West 29th Street and St. Louis Avenue asked readers for more information. Cedar-Isles-Dean resident Amanda Vallone replied that her neighbor Nora Whiteman's mother-in-law had attended Alcott School. Whiteman recalled having seen an old aerial photo of Alcott School.

Concurrently, a January 2016 StarTribune article mentioned that Peg Carlson, a retired MPS media & technology specialist, had been safeguarding the district's historic photos and other artifacts. When contacted and asked about the aerials, Carlson replied, "Well, let me *show* you!"

Major articles in the March and April 2016 issues of Hill & Lake Press ensued, this time for the first time giving full credit to Joe Quigley as the pioneering master aerial photographer.

### Quigley the person comes into view.

Clearly the Quigley aerials deserved to be made available to the public, and Ted Hathaway, senior librarian at Hennepin County Library's Special Collections department, commenced what would become a two and one-half year effort to win MPS



Hennepin County Library's Special Collections team loaded the Quigley aerials and other Minneapolis school district historical treasures on October 30. From left: Gage Backman, intern; Ted Hathaway, senior librarian; Bailey Diers, librarian; and Jenna Jacobs, archivist. (Photo: Michael Wilson.)



Joe Quigley's daughter Helen Josephine "Jo" Quigley Potter grew up at 3333-33rd Ave. S. She and her children Joe Potter (named after his grandfather) and Monica Potter have donated a vast trove of Quigley's aerials, other photos, films, and documents to HCL's Special Collections department, to go online as the Joseph E. Quigley Collection. (Photo: Michael Wilson.)



## HLP attention, advocacy help bring long-neglected aerials into public domain, shine spotlight on Joe Quigley, the pioneering photographer who took them (p.3)

agreement to donate the aerials.

During this time the Joe Quigley story acquired a human face when his daughter Helen Josephine "Jo" Quigley Potter was located out in Eden Prairie. A delightful octogenarian, Jo has had many stories to tell about her dad, his service in the Air National Guard, the family homestead at 3333 - 33rd Avenue S., and Joe's many contributions to the field of aerial photography.

Jo was the much-loved only child of Joe Quigley and his second wife Helen, after both of whom she was named. Joe joined the Minnesota Air National Guard 109th Observation Squadron in 1932 and directed their photographic section. He served with the 109th in England during WWII, retiring with the rank of major in 1945. Never fully recovering his health after his war service, Joe died in 1953.

Jo married Clifford Potter, Jr., in 1954 and both began careers in education. Jo and Cliff celebrated their 64th wedding anniversary earlier this year.

Helen continued to live at 3333 for many years after Joe's death before moving to an apartment. She died in 2003 at age 98, with her obituary stating fondly, and simply: "She was a dear and loving wife and grandmother; she dedicated her life to her family."

### Joe always brought gardenias.

Joe was stationed in Louisiana during the early years of WWII and Jo remembers the bouquets of gardenias he always brought back to 3333 on home leave.

Her parents loved to entertain, particularly her father, Jo recalls, their small house always full with friends and family, fellow photographers, and especially Joe's buddies from his beloved 109th.

Jo and her children Joe Potter (named after his grandfather) and Monica Potter have eagerly agreed to donate all of Joe Quigley's extensive photo archives, films, and correspondence to the Special Collections department, where they will form the Joseph E. Quigley Collection on the HCL website.

Julie Schultz Brown, MPS executive director of marketing & communications, provided the final push to get the donation agreement signed, and on October 30 the Quigley aerials plus dozens of other boxes of other old photos and historical artifacts were



Gini Tyson, her daughter, and their cat Patches are the current owners of the longtime Quigley homestead at 3333-33rd Avenue South. (Photo: Michael Wilson.)

loaded into a HCL van and driven from North Star to Special Collections at the downtown library.

Processing such a large collection and recording the metadata is a hugely time-consuming task, Hathaway says. Staff will begin uploading the Quigley aerials to the HCL website's Minneapolis Schools Collection at some point during 2019. Watch your Hill & Lake Press for updates.

### Quigley shows us 'the face of the land.'

"Maps and air photos help us understand our community from a distant perspective -- unless the air photos show us the *face of the land* as the Quigley photos do," Craig writes. "Shot from the seat of an open-cockpit plane, his photos show us the real place where buildings have sidewalks, windows, and doors. Top down (ortho) photos give us an abstract overview. Quigley's angled (oblique) photos show how

each part of the city was lived.

"Quigley's photos have been a rare treat for the few people who saw them over the past eight decades," Craig says. "With the help of the Internet, they will soon be available to all of us to see Minneapolis as it was those many years ago."

"Joseph Quigley's aerial survey of Minneapolis is one of the earliest ones extant and is significant on that basis alone," says Hathaway. "However, of greater interest to viewers is the fact that his was an *oblique* survey (i.e., shot at an angle) rather than the more standard *orthographic* survey (i.e., shot directly overhead)."

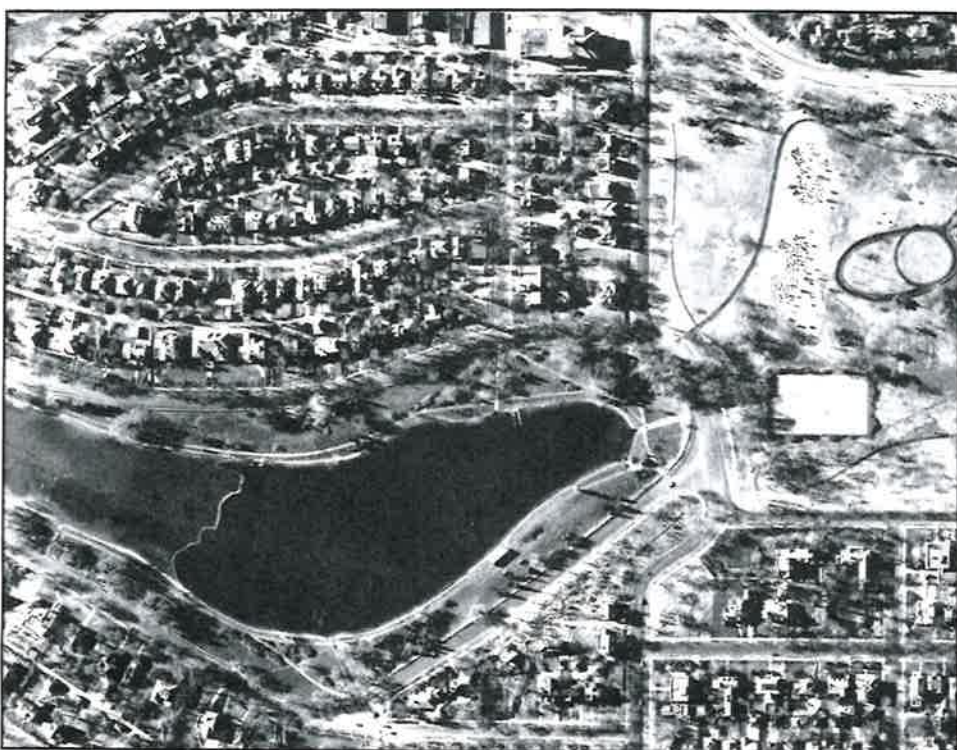
### Quigley surveyed a pre-freeway city.

"While the latter is perhaps more useful for geographers and urban planners, it is somewhat of a disappointment to nearly everyone else with its two-dimensional representation of the world, reduced to lines and squares," Hathaway states. "Quigley's survey shows buildings and houses as real and recognizable. You want to reach out the airplane window with him and touch as you pass - almost."

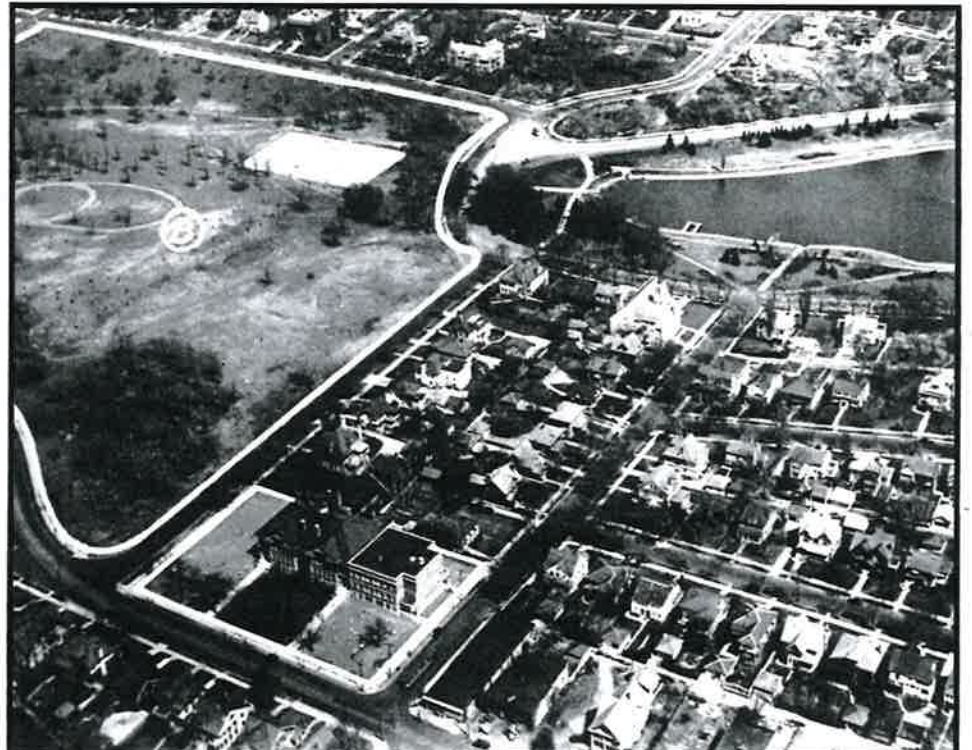
"'Almost' is the word, because Quigley's aerials also represent a City long lost," Hathaway continues. "While much of the housing stock remains, the central core, the riverfront, the industrial corridors and many of the commercial centers are radically altered, sometimes to the point of being unrecognizable. Quigley surveyed a pre-freeway city nearing its peak population, nearly fully developed. Viewers will be fascinated to pick out familiar objects among the many that are unfamiliar - and now vanished."

The 2007 Minnesota Aviation Hall of Fame citation lauded "Quigley's fine, sharp aerial photos and ground portraits ... portraying landmarks and cityscapes from the air, leaving an indelible image of Minnesota during the the 1920s through the 1940s and a legacy of fine quality pictures serving Minnesota historians now and into the future."

It's been an 85-year wait, but well worth it. Hill and Lake residents both past and present can be proud of the role their neighborhood newspaper has played through its attention and advocacy in bringing the almost-forgotten Quigley aerials into the daylight for all to enjoy.



This 1938 orthogonal ("straight down") aerial photo shows the north arm of Lake of the Isles with Kenwood School at the top and Kenwood Park on the left. (Photo: Borchert Map Library, University of Minnesota.)



Joe Quigley's late-1920s oblique aerial photo brings Kenwood School, Kenwood Park, bustling downtown Kenwood, and neighborhood homes and churches to life. (Photo: HCL Special Collections department.)