

A black and white historical photograph showing a large, multi-story building that has been severely damaged or destroyed. The foreground is filled with a massive pile of rubble and debris. In the background, another building with a prominent tower is visible under a hazy sky. A large, solid green rectangular box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the title text in white.

HISTORIC BLACK COMMUNITY OF ST. ANTHONY

DONAL COUCH

HSEM 3205H - EXERCISE 3

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Historic Black Community of St. Anthony

INTERPRETIVE GUIDELINES FOR THE EAST BANK OF ST.
ANTHONY'S FALLS

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OVERVIEW

The East Bank of St. Anthony Falls is known for its historic mill buildings, the natural beauty of the river, and upscale apartments. In Minnesota's infancy, some of the first free Black residents of what is now Minneapolis called this area home.

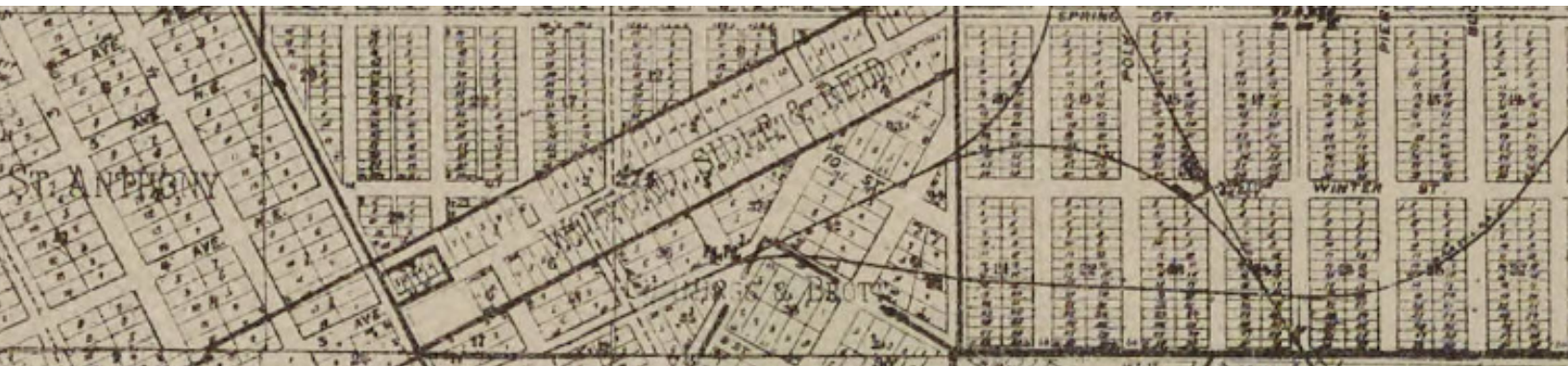
The East Bank of St. Anthony Falls and the Marcy-Holmes, the oldest neighborhood of Minneapolis, are rich in history. Bringing to light the experiences members of the Black community had requires updates to the current interpretive vision of the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board.

Project Objective

Overhaul signage and interpretation in the Old St. Anthony's area to provide properly highlight Minnesota's contribution to the abolition movement and the history of the Black community around the East Bank of St. Anthony Falls

This report will depict visitor experiences that will:

- Connect people to the compelling history of abolitionists in Minnesota
- Provide a draw for people not currently represented in the stories told in this space

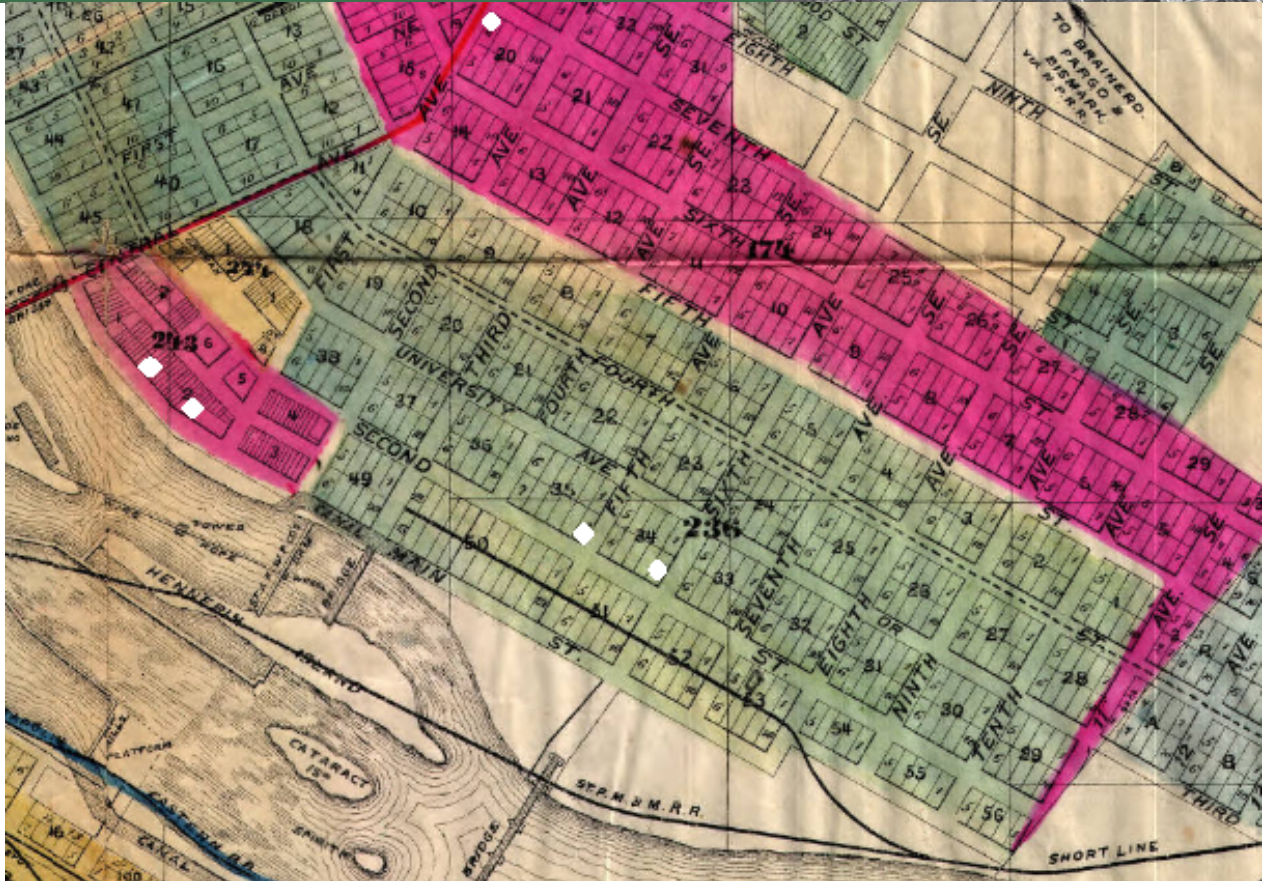


AREA OF STUDY

Focused on Old St. Anthony with borders to the west by the Mississippi River, northwest by Hennepin Ave, northeast by SE 7th Ave, east by I-35W, and southeast by 6th Ave SE. The area is a mix of industrial, commercial, single-family residential, multiple-family high density, and mixed-use zoning.



LOCATIONS OF INTERPRETATION



Davison and Abbot 1881 Map of Minneapolis

White diamonds represent locations suggested for interpretation including (clockwise from top):

- Free Will Baptist Church
- St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church (1869-1874)
- St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church (1874-1880s)
- Ralph T Grey Barber Shop
- Winslow House

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

This plan describes a range of engagement options developed around enhancing visitor experiences. Current interpretative locations and methods do not appropriately emphasize the Twin Cities region's impact on the abolition movement and other stories surrounding black culture in early Minneapolis and St Anthony. Telling diverse stories is paramount to the central vision of the Minnesota Historical Society: "The people of Minnesota will be grounded in their personal, community, and state history. They will understand how history shapes, inspires, and informs the present...". As it stands, the stories told are overwhelmingly white and male, failing to enact this vision. Representation in media and historical outreach matters and as such telling these stories is essential to the vision of MNHS and partner organizations.

1. Highlight historic black community locations that have since been displaced
2. Connect communities to the river corridor that are not represented in current programming
3. Tie in to existing stories of interpretation
4. Integrate historic sites with their modern counterparts
5. Provide opportunities for visitors to engage with history that is not shared sufficiently in the classroom

Subsequent pages outline stories of note to be told either through updated signage or other programming discussed below



CENTRAL STORY: THE ELIZA WINSTON CASE

Eliza Winston, originally from Tennessee, was a slave of one Mr. McLemore. McLemore sold Winston to his son-in-law Mr. Gholson, who lived in Memphis. While Gholson held her as his slave, Eliza met a free black man named Jim Winston. The two were married, but because Gholson still owned Eliza, in a cruel manner, he made Jim pay him for the time Eliza spent as Jim's wife. Jim and Eliza saved enough money and eventually bought a house in Memphis and were saving to pay Gholson for Eliza's freedom. Jim shortly thereafter fell ill and unfortunately died. Gholson, who became debt-ridden, "pawned" Eliza to Colonel Richard Christmas, a wealthy planter from Mississippi. However, before he could redeem his pawning, Gholson died and Christmas seized ownership of Eliza through questionable legality in the mid 1850s (even for the time).

Christmas, who had never brought slaves on his vacations to the North before due to his fear of abolitionist presence, brought Eliza with him in the summer of

1860 to the Winston House in St. Anthony to make use of the "healing" chalybeate springs. He brought her with his family in order to help tend to his ill wife, who could not travel unassisted.

In St. Anthony, Eliza met Emily Grey, a free Black woman who was a seamstress, and her husband Ralph, who owned a barbershop in the Jarret House of St. Anthony near the Winslow House. The Greys' worked with white abolitionists in Minneapolis and St. Anthony to set forth a plan to free Eliza. When the Christmas estate moved from the Winslow House to a boardinghouse on Lake Harriet, Eliza grew worried the abolitionists would not be able to act so far from where they held power in St. Anthony. Because Christmas had previously promised to free her when his child reached the age of 7 but never did and because of this, Eliza had planned ahead and gathered to the best of her ability clothes and a small sum of cash for her when they traveled north.

CENTRAL STORY: THE ELIZA WINSTON CASE

After the Christmas household moved their lodgings to Lake Harriet, local abolitionists William D. Babbit and Ariel S. Bigelow swore complaint to the sheriff's office with official witnesses William S. King, the editor of the Republican-aligned *Minneapolis State Atlas*, and Francis R. E. Cornell, a prominent local attorney.

Judge Charles E. Vanderburgh immediately issued a writ of habeas corpus for Eliza and deployed the sheriff, his deputy, and 30 armed men, who all rode to Lake Harriet to take in Winston. Because few in town knew Winston's appearance, Emily Goodridge Grey and her White friend Mrs. Gates were brought along to identify Winston. Mrs. Christmas, once she heard the news, ordered Eliza to flee, but she did not. Babbit who was the first to come upon her in the road outside the boardinghouse asked whether she wanted to be freed and Eliza responded,

"I wish for my freedom, but don't tell my master or mistress that I said so". The sheriff and his men asked her the same question, to which she gave the same response. She was then taken to the Hennepin County Courthouse, at the time located where US Bank Stadium stands today. Judge Vanderburgh, only 29 at the time and the law partner of Cornell who swore witness, started the proceeding to a crowd of mixed interests, both Republican and Democrat, abolitionist to slavery sympathizers, and everything in between.

Christmas argued using the recent *Dred Scott v. Sanford* ruling that said slaves were still the property of their masters even in northern states where slavery was illegal. Cornell, who provided counsel to Eliza, argued on her behalf only with a portion of article 1, section 2 of the Minnesota State Constitution: "There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the state."

CENTRAL STORY: THE ELIZA WINSTON CASE

Vanderburgh swiftly ruled Eliza's favor. Immediately following this, Reverend David B. Knickerbacker, the pastor of Minneapolis' Gethsemane Episcopal Church, loudly accused the judge of making "an unrighteous decision", condemned the language in Minnesota's constitution, and assured that his church supported the institution of slavery. Democrats and slavery supporters had filled the courtroom with ruffians and laborers, who were whipped into a frenzy by Knickerbacker's words. For her safety, Eliza was swiftly escorted from the courtroom, but not before Christmas stopped her and asked one final time if she truly wanted to leave his family. Upon saying she did, he handed her some money and wished her well, assuring her that she was welcome to return home whenever she pleased.

In order to stall the quickly forming mob, William King addressed the crowd, performing a quite eloquent speech, surprising the ruffians into inactivity.

Babbitt escorted Eliza to his carriage and drove off. Using his experience from helping with the underground railroad, he successfully hid Winston in the home of Professor Stone, an abolitionist sympathizer. In the meantime, despite the abolitionists' best efforts, mobs had formed, with one led by C. W. McLean, the owner of the Winslow House, on Babbitt's home. McLean proclaimed "I came to this State with five thousand dollars; have but five hundred left, but will spend the last cent to see Bill Babbitt's heart's blood!". The mob shortly thereafter stormed the house and they were only repelled when 7 months pregnant Mrs. Babbitt shot warning shots over the crowd.

There is little account of what happened to Eliza following the trial. She spoke at an antislavery society meeting on October 19th, 1860, two months after she was freed. After this, there is dispute on whether she left for Canada or returned to Tennessee to the home she and her deceased husband had purchased.

WINSLOW HOUSE

The largest and most elegant building of the period in the Twin Cities region, the Winslow House primarily served as a boardinghouse for slaveholders from across the South who came to Minnesota by steamboats up the Mississippi River.

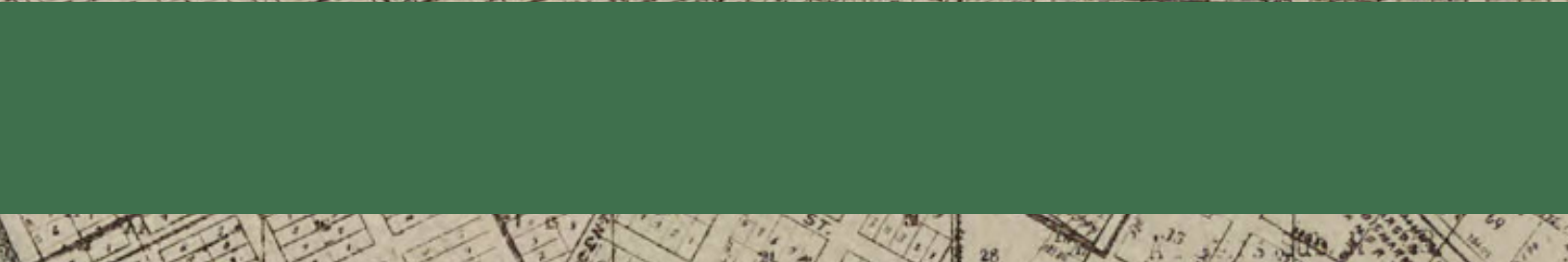
Its owner, C. W. McLean, led the mob on abolitionist William D. Babbitt's home after Eliza Winston was freed. With the aftermath of the case discouraging southerners from vacationing in Minnesota and the start of the Civil War, the hotel fell upon hard times. When the chalybeate springs whose supposed medicinal properties brought tourists to the city were discovered to merely be drainage from a nearby marsh, the hotel suffered even more. Soon after, the furnishings were sold for whatever profit could be made and the building was left empty. In 1863, the building burned and left to stand until it was razed for new development in 1886.



ST. JAMES AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The St. James African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church got its start in humble beginnings in the homes of its members between the 1850s and mid-1860s. By 1869, they had their first dedicated location at the corner of 6th Ave SE and 2nd St with Rev. W. Hedgeman as the first pastor of the congregation. In 1874, the church changed location by one block, now located on 5th Ave SE.

Over the next 80 years, the church would move its location another five times (pushed out by railroad interests, business owners, and other groups) before settling into its current home in 1958 at 3600 Snelling Ave S (pictured upper left). The church is sometimes credited with forming the first African American church in current-day Minneapolis, or even all of Minnesota. Many other AME congregations across Minnesota have been birthed from the original St. James AME Church, giving it the moniker "Mother" to recognize it as the first. Mother St. James AME Church continues with weekly services to this day, you can find out more on their website by following the QR code.



BREAKING THROUGH: BLACK REPRESENTATION

John Francis Wheaton and the Wheaton-Morris Amendment

John Francis Wheaton, a Black Minnesotan and the first African American graduate of the University of Minnesota Law School, in 1895 was refused service at the Creamery Restaurant in Minneapolis. His White colleagues he was with were not turned away. In part because of this incident, Wheaton ran for and was elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives, the first Black person to do so. In office, he represented the Kenwood neighborhood of Minneapolis, modern Edina, Eden Prairie, and Excelsior. This district was overwhelmingly white, making his election even more of a surprise.



While in office, he collaborated with William Morris, drafting what is known as the Wheaton-Morris amendment. This addition to an 1885 equal rights bill further strengthened protections through tougher criminal penalties, higher fines, and clarified language on public accommodations.

BREAKING THROUGH: BLACK REPRESENTATION

Robert "Bobby" Wells Marshall, athlete and civil servant



Robert "Bobby" Wells Marshall, born in 1880 in Wisconsin moved to Minnesota at the age of 2. As he grew up, Bobby always excelled at sports - participating in football, basketball, hockey, baseball, and tennis in high school. At the University of Minnesota, he played on the Golden Gophers' football and baseball teams while also studying law. Once Marshall had graduated with his law degree in 1907, he became the first African American to coach a high school sports team (Minneapolis Central) and the first Black coach of a college sports team at Parker College in Winnebago, MN.

Bobby had trouble finding clients for his law practice, in part due to low numbers of Black clients and in part due to potential White candidates' prejudice against him. Because of this, he switched careers and became the state grain inspector for a number of years. Marshall volunteered in his community and participated in sports for many years.

A member of the University of Minnesota M Club Hall of Fame, Marshall was the first Black player in the precursor to the NFL, the American Professional Football Association, when he played in the first game in 1920 at the age of 40.

CONNECTIONS TO EXISTING PROGRAMMING

The current programming on the stories outlined in this report is either nonexistent or wholly lacking: the only sign on the Eliza Winston case in its entirety reads, "By 1860 St. Anthony had become a favorite summer resort for wealthy southerners who traveled on steamboats up the Mississippi. Often they and their black slaves stayed at the Winslow House. One such slave was Eliza Winston. Slavery was illegal in Minnesota, and a local free black woman named Emily Grey persuaded her to leave her owner. A court sustained Winston's right to freedom, but a proslavery crowd threatened harm. Antislavery people in the town hid her, and she later made her way to Canada."

As a city that is home to many firsts for Black Americans and an essential component in the history of the abolition movement, this is simply unacceptable. Active programming like the St. Anthony Fall Heritage Trail, plaques, and signage in the area of old St. Anthony could easily be revised to better incorporate this material.

In particular, the history of the Black Americans in connection to the work at Historic Fort Snelling has direct ties. Dred Scott, who's law case is nationally famous, spent time at the fort and tying in the story of Eliza Winston to show how antislavery efforts in Minnesota prevented southern activists from further harming more individuals, would be easy to incorporate and effective. As well, in the historic St. Anthony area, connecting these stories to those of the Dakota people, the ancestral stewards of this land could create powerful parallels. Less directly, the industrialization of the twin cities region into a milling and railroad hub towards the late 1800s could be linked through Black people traveling north to seek employment following the Civil War. Depending on future developments in line with the East Bank Vision Plan, this content could easily be included in the interpretive work developed for that series of projects.

PARTNER OPPORTUNITIES

Minnesota Historical Society, the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, the National Park Service, and the Minneapolis City Council are all public entities closely aligned with the work outlined in this report. Private landowners, both commercial and residential, would need to be contacted throughout the process to determine locations and possibilities of installing additional signage and plaques to properly represent this significant history. Moreover, connections with the University of Minnesota for work with developing interpretive programs have been fruitful with previous projects. As always, community input is essential to all parts of the process, so the Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Association and community members should be brought in for feedback and consultation.



SOURCES CONSULTED

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3. A Historic Walking Tour of St. Anthony Falls
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5. Eliza Winston and the politics of freedom in Minnesota, 1854-60
6. The Black Community in Minneapolis - A Memoir
7. The Minneapolis Black Community, 1863-1926
8. Mother St. James Church website
(<http://www.motherstjames.com/about.html>)
9. "A century ago, Bobby Marshall made history in NFL's first game". Star Tribune, 2020, 10/5.
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