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Interviewed by Peter Myers at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Minneapolis
Aug. 11, 2011

Q Start by giving a brief overview of the early history of University Avenue, when it was first some kind of trail and going forward from there.

A Well, according to the maps, the first road or trail that connected the port of St. Paul and the Falls and fording point in Minneapolis ran along the approximate alignment of University Avenue. There's a map from the 1830s that shows Fort Snelling Reserve and it shows a road. It's not possible to say that the cartographer was absolutely precise on where he had that road located, but he showed way houses along the route that people could stop at. Anyway from the very beginning there was the need for some kind of connection between where the port would develop and where the Falls - the industrial site - would develop. The early travelers were looking for the shortest distance between the two locations and University, or that corridor, is approximately the shortest route. Now actually from what I can tell from the old maps, the route kind of varied a little bit. So the people who were walking or going with carts would try to find the easiest route and the driest route. So it's kind of a combination of higher land and flat land. I can't tell you exactly when the first person took that route. It probably was the Native Americans, but they wouldn't have done it for the same reason that European or white Americans did. So the road was set up and it's kind of interesting, at least to me, that the roads that came first in the territory of Minnesota or in the old northwest territory were really private roads and people would kind of chop them out on their own. And then after…because in the territories the federal government ruled the territory and in our case it was just a military operation and they were concerned with a few so-called military roads that would connect the fortress to other points of interest. But the trading routes – the oxcart trail and so on – those were just people like you and I deciding we needed to go somewhere so we'd hack our way through the prairie or through the woods. Then once the civil government was put in place – the territorial government was put in place – then there were territorial roads. And there is a territorial road that runs in the corridor between the Falls and downtown St. Paul. So in a sense that's our first official road. And we don't have a name for these other roads – they're called trails or whatever – but they weren't really legal roads. So once the land ownership pattern went in place with the rectangular survey, many of these older pathways or trails or whatever you call them kind of disappeared into the new landscape. So I can't go back and take you along the early oxcart route, but it's approximately this route. And what's so interesting, I think, about this corridor is that in geography we talk about something called the preservation of place, where a landscape has the same function over time even though culture and technologies change. And University Avenue has had this same connecting function between the Falls of downtown Minneapolis and the port of downtown St. Paul through the whole history of the urbanization of settling this area. So it starts out with, I'm sure, some kind of walking trail. Then when the oxcart trade developed, with the port of St. Paul and people coming down from the Red River Valley, the oxcart trail. Then a kind of a road I'll call it, that was more formalized. Then the actual platted territorial road and then the city plats, the county plats and the building of University and the adjacent roads. So you have, then, this kind of movement from walking and horse/oxen carts to the automobile system, which needed paved roads. So University became a car route, a bus route, a truck route replacing the carts and then the streetcar. But parallel to the

streetcar and parallel to University was the railroad transfer. So at one point - and you can kind of imagine this - at one point you have passengers and freight moving in the same way on wagons along the route, then they divide with the train carrying the freight and the roads and streetcars carrying the passengers. So you have to kind of think of University as sort of spreading out in this function. And then after a while as the automobile era moved along, the freeway came in along that same route. And there was probably a lot of controversy about where the freeway should go. Should it follow up on the railroad side or should it go on the town side? But up until the present redevelopment of University with the central corridor light rail system you see the same thing – the function stays in the same general area, but the transportation technology and the cultural dimensions change along with it. So it's a fascinating place. You can't literally go back in time there but you can see the evolution of the settlement pattern so neatly there.

Q University Avenue was originally a largely residential street. When do you think the first actual homes were built on University Avenue, when it became an actual residential area?

A It kind of depends on what stretch we're talking about because the stretch, the University Avenue that's now in old St. Anthony would have been developed very early; earlier than the St. Paul section of University. So clearly the area that's in old St. Anthony was developed first. Then there were these places that were.…roadhouses I'll call them. That's not really the word that's appropriate, but kind of inns or places along there that were very early too, but I don't think they spurred a real estate development. I think the real estate development came very slowly out of St. Anthony because St. Anthony really was looking west toward the western side of the river. And you think of St. Anthony Park, for example, was expected to be a wealthy suburb for the town of St. Anthony and it was really looking west toward the river. But people in St. Anthony weren't looking that way. So they went off that way. So you get the development pretty slowly out of St. Anthony Park. You get Prospect Park developing on that little knoll. And then on the east side, the real estate speculation was much faster so in the 1890s, once they solved the problem of the hill coming out of downtown with the electric streetcar, then you saw the big spread west to the first area that's…we'll call it east of Western and then from Western on to Dale and then the big chunks of people platting in the '70s and '80s and then by '85 jumping all the way out and claiming the vast majority of University Avenue for St. Paul and eliminating the notion that Minneapolis might take over that territory. So it's a street that is both heavily urbanized – not industrialized, but urbanized – and suburban and I'll say agricultural but I don't mean huge farms, but farms – all at the same time, kind of simultaneously. There aren't very many streets like that, that kind of start in a city and end in a city but in the meantime go through suburbs and agricultural land. And again, that was a transitory phase, but nonetheless it was real and people responded to it. And the people had great ideas for University. If you think of the area – Merriam Park – which was boosted as going to be the center of the metropolitan area. So I think its not an exaggeration to say that many real estate developers and businessmen and politicians looked at University Avenue as kind of the goose that lays the golden egg, that there's going to be a lot of action here, and we're going to make a lot of money and have a great time.

Q When do you think the first real commercial activity started to take root? Do you have any sense as to where the first commercial center originally started?

A No, I don't and the maps that I've looked at from the '70s, there's some commercial area down around where now the Capitol is located but the stretch over by the U had some commercial activity but pretty small in the '80s. The big boom, of course, came between '85 and 1905 and then it all exploded at the same time.

Q Talk more about that period, which the Minnesota Transfer Railway was a big factor and the streetcars became electrified.

A The geographers talk about the period from 1870 or so to 1920 as the railroad era. So you have railroads spanning the continent and then you have the so-called street railroad, which we now call the streetcar. So you have rails inside the city and rails connecting the city – really changed everything and it really changed University Avenue. The importance of the link was greatly magnified by the rails because it reduced the time between the two cities, it increased the capacity, so the Twin Cities expanded their trade area, their hinterland with the railroads west to the grain areas and then on to the coast, and also tightened their connection east through St. Paul to Chicago and the eastern markets. And all that transcontinental activity zoomed through the University Avenue corridor, the Minnesota Transfer Railroad. Now we live in this area where there are very few railroad companies, but in the late 19th century there were a lot of railroad companies. And they all had their own tracks and they all had their own freight yards and they had their own depots. So the Minnesota Transfer Railroad that connected them all was a critical idea and those guys, when they had an idea they made 'em happen and they didn't shilly-shally around talking about stuff. They did it. So you had this convergence of a national railroad network and an inter-urban railroad network right in the University Avenue corridor. And when that happened, there was no controlling the land use. It was going to go to the highest and best use without any…there was a stockyards there, all kinds of manufacturing along the corridor. They were making…I won't say they were making everything, but they were making a wide variety of products and really the continent was linked through that little stretch of territory. So I'll continue to talk here for just a second…the streetcar enabled the city to expand its middle class neighborhoods and working class neighborhoods and marshal the large number of people needed to work in the plants or to work in downtown.

Q Talk about the importance of the MN Transfer Railway and how that really shaped the street.

A The establishment or building up or whatever word fits best here, the evolution of the Minnesota Transfer Railroad and the railroad landscape along it, basically shouldered out other land uses because the railroads were so important, so powerful. And things like the stockyards - the Western Cattle Association, Montana Cattle Association - wanted that expanded and there just wasn't room to expand it, so the stockyards moved down to South St Paul. But the important thing here is that more profitable land uses could come in along the railroad and those higher-yielding land uses pushed residential out, pushed University Avenue away from the railroad track south and kind of made it this nice, straight street that it became. But the rail yards took up a huge amount of space, they caused pollution – remember they were steam locomotives burning lots of coal so lots of soot. So people began to move away from that district. If you think, for example, of the south St. Anthony area which started out going to be this nice mixture of commerce and residential – people realized, oh that's not so good. We'll move away from that. So you get the railroad pushing…the railroad didn't push, but figuratively the railroad pushed against the residential area and where it became close to

University Avenue, there was hardly any residential area at all. And then where it's kind of away from University Avenue – pretty much east of Snelling, let's say, it's an easy one to remember – there's this nice Midway district there. But as you get west and you get closer to the tracks, the residential areas just kind of disappeared or were transferred into. But it's just important for people to remember all the different things that were associated with that railroad and the huge investment in that landscape along University Avenue – the grain elevators and if you can imagine just throwing away the stockyards and then putting something else in its place. It was just a dynamic location and you think of also…related to the streetcar part of the railroad era, that whole development along University and Snelling where the streetcar barns were and then the coming of the big wholesalers, retailers like Wards that were part of the railroad era – it just had such a dynamism to it that its hard to imagine, because we see so few trains going through. I know if you sit at the Saints game you can see the trains go through, but that doesn't compare to what it was like in the past.

Q That whole thing speaks to the power of these major private financial interests in shaping a city. I'm sure the government tried to have some say here and there, but it seems like it was pretty much that the higher use was going to win.

A Right. Most of this happened in this boom period between lets say 1880 and 1920 period when there was no way to control land use. What we now have is something called zoning, which is a product of the WWI era, but it didn't come into St. Paul and Minneapolis until the middle of the 1920s. And by that time, the private market had pretty much determined what was going to happen and this phrase "highest and best use" was the rule. It still ruled under the zoning but industrial land use was more constrained after 1920. So you get the pattern kind of established by the railroad developers and the manufacturers and the grain processors and so on, and then zoning coming in and…I won't say freezing the landscape, but really slowing down the rate of change dramatically.

Q Can you describe the different key neighborhood areas of University Avenue starting in Dinkytown and working your way east?

A It's frequently useful to compare University and Lake Street. When we talk about the evolution of St. Paul, we really talk about it in terms of discrete neighborhoods that have pretty strong physical boundaries. Where in Minneapolis, and south Minneapolis in particular, there aren't these strong boundaries. And if you think about the railroad that went along Lake Street, there are all kinds of bridges over it. Not so in St. Paul. In St. Paul, the neighborhoods that developed along University Avenue are pretty discrete units and the railroad that provided…in the Midway area there, the railroad either divided the city strongly into units like north St. Anthony, but it didn't have the same kind of impact that it did in south Minneapolis. So in our case along University, you get the area you can think of as old St. Anthony and then the University and its development of Dinkytown and the conversion, and then you come to Prospect Park. And Prospect Park is now pretty much confined to the south side or west side of University but it used to be on the other side as well. And that area is very much like St. Anthony Park – it's a hill; they call these hills canes, a particular kind of glacial hill – both of them associated with the University – one the Minneapolis campus, one the St. Paul campus. Stable – University faculty weren't millionaires, but they had stable middle class income so they were stable neighborhoods. And then as you move east from Prospect Park and out of Minneapolis into St. Paul, you get a big change in the land use because there was no

real strong neighborhood contingent there that was up in St. Anthony Park. So you have this kind of amorphous area between the city limits and let's say Snelling, which is largely industrial around Raymond there. And that story is a little different in that it was set up as an industrial area during the horse transportation era where there were big livery stables that were out there, kind of pastures too, but big horses there. So it was kind of a commercial area, so it wasn't settled very densely. There's not much settlement until you get a little further east and then you have the area that was part of Merriam Park, which is mostly gone now – that Iris Park area – heavily impacted by the freeway and…but there's that industrial area again. If people can imagine this, coming down toward Fairview, industrial area south of University along that railroad spur. And then you get into the Midway area which, as I said, developed real quickly. But again, not much north of University because you have this industrial piece along the railroad again, if you think of Fairview as the boundary there. And then once you're east of Fairview you get into the Hamline neighborhood and again these were developed in chunks. The Hamline area developed really early in the 1870s and then kind of spread, I mean the area right around Hamline University and then spread westward there. So you had this neighborhood that lies west of Snelling, south of the railroad tracks, north of University that became known as the Midway. But the term Midway kind of gets stretched and compacted like a lot of these geographic terms are – there's no strict definition of it. So you have the Merriam Park neighborhood developed, again, on a hill by adventurous real estate developers in the Merriam Park area. St. Thomas and the Catholic Church was a big player in the developer of that. And then you move east from Merriam Park proper into east Merriam Park over towards Snelling, but the neighborhoods that we see are all kind of shaved by the freeway that went south of University. So there was more to those neighborhoods in the past than we see now. And then when you get east of Snelling, there's that whole big strip that was with the streetcar company and Montgomery Wards and Brown & Bigelow, so you saw big operations there that were taking advantage of railroad spurs and then the little - we'll call it little - that kind of rectangular shaped neighborhood that stretched from Fairview east to Marion Street that had several different names – Frogtown, Greater Frogtown, Midway – all kinds of names depending on who's talking about it. So you get that kind of working class neighborhood, north of University and then south of University the strip that ran…I suppose you could think of it running through lets say Lexington. And then the Aurora neighborhood, which was middle class which became lower income when the freeway was put through and people moved from the Rondo neighborhood into it and it became an African American neighborhood. Then you get Frogtown north of University, and initially Frogtown – very small area east of Dale – working class, built very early and then the name stretched westward to include this turn-of-the-century, 1920s bungalow neighborhood that really runs from Dale to Lexington and beyond to Snelling.

Q Aurora/St. Anthony neighborhood….

A So we move east of Lexington into the Aurora/St. Anthony area that was built up from upper middle class, bigger houses and so on, and was pretty dramatically impacted by the clearance of the Rondo neighborhood and the building of the freeway. So that area has become the African American, or one of the African American neighborhoods. North of University and really separate from the Aurora and earlier Rondo neighborhood, was the Frogtown neighborhood, which was ethnically German-speaking and Austrian. There's a wonderful story about how patriotic that neighborhood was during WWI and…I can't give you the number but lets say 300 men rushed to enlist in the Army, but of course they were enlisted in the Austrian army rather than the American army. So it has

this name Frogtown and it's one of those wonderful names because no one knows exactly why it's called Frogtown. The story that's had various versions has a Catholic priest, a bishop or the archbishop, christening the area Frogtown. And one of the stories is the priest is giving a sermon or a eulogy in the cemetery and the frogs are croaking and…there's all these kinds of explanations. I actually believe that story. The French never lived in Frogtown, so this notion that it's named after French doesn't hold water. There's a notion that Lafond and the French Canadians platted it, so maybe that's why it was called Frogtown, but the French Canadians were never called Frogs. Frog is a derogatory term that comes out of WWI and as far as I can tell by that time it had already been called Frogtown. But what's so interesting about Frogtown as a name in the '60s when the urban renewal and the war on poverty got going, the planners tried to change these names and give them more…well now we'd call them politically correct. So Selby Avenue and Hell's Kitchen became University and Summit, that became the name of that neighborhood. And then the area north of University was going to be the Thomas/Dale neighborhood – nice, no symbolism at all. And the population refused to let the name go. They continued to hold onto Frogtown. It's kind of like Swede Hollow – people continue to hold onto that name, Swede Hollow, even though it was a derogatory term. And Frogtown was a derogatory term. I think it's an example of how place-based the neighborhoods along University were. People in the 20th century had strong identification processes with their neighborhoods - their parish churches for the Catholics, the merchants that were the kind of seams that held the neighborhoods together, the ethnic groups that tended to voluntarily cluster together like the Austrians in Frogtown and so on, Swedes on the east side. So those neighborhoods in St. Paul along the University corridor developed in like nuggets of identity along the strip. And University seemed to be a divide, rather than a bridge between the neighborhoods. It was a wide street and it had heavy traffic and people take those kinds of streets as the edges of their neighborhood. So it was easy to say, I live south of University or north of University. And then once that starts, people begin to identify that way. So you can think of other streets like Summit Avenue, which links people together on both sides of the streets; University Avenue kind of divided neighborhoods and people were able to set up themselves. So they would see people from other neighborhoods on the streetcar, but they kept a strong sense of identity.

Q Talk about what we had in the Rondo neighborhood in the 40s and 50s. I gather that it was a fairly mixed racial area….give a sense of what Rondo felt like back in that time.

A Pieces of the landscape get stories told about them and they kind of epitomize other things that are going on and they become the focus of people's attention. And Rondo, the Rondo neighborhood, Rondo Street is one of those places. In the 1930s, African Americans lived in a large number of neighborhoods in St. Paul. They lived generally in neighborhoods that were on the fringe of other large neighborhoods and they tended to be confined into lower quality, but not all. So there were African Americans spread pretty much everywhere but concentrated in this area along Rondo. If you look at an old streetcar map, the streetcar line that served that neighborhood dead-ended there. So you couldn't really get easily from that neighborhood to other neighborhoods in the city. It was kind of connected to downtown but it's pretty clear that this was kind of a segregated transportation system. It at first was a Jewish neighborhood and in American cities there's this strong pattern of the Jewish community developing in the late 19th century when the big migration came from Russia and Poland, the lower income Jews moving into neighborhoods close to the downtown, prospering,

moving out and their places being taken by other minority groups. And in St. Paul it was the African American group in that area around the Capitol and the Cathedral. On the west side it was the Hispanic population, but similar processes. So you have one immigrant group succeeding, so to speak, and moving out of the neighborhood and creating a space for the new immigrant group to come in. I looked, once, at some photographs taken in the neighborhood that were taken when the clearance was being conducted for 94. And there was a series of convenience store operations, personal services, barbershops, beauty parlors, social spaces – bars and stuff – but very small scale and localized. And from what I could tell, the people who were running the commercial operations were primarily the Jewish residents that were there first, and then there was a mixture in of the African American entrepreneurs. I'm not quite so confident that I know exactly who owned the residential land, but it seems that the African Americans owned a fair bit. But clearly the Jewish community owned most of it and it was largely absentee landlords. I have a wonderful story of a guy named Macy O'Moody who was on the Landmark's board early on, who became a big property owner in the Rondo area because he had come north to get an education and become a teacher, got his degree from the U of M but no one would hire him. And while he was going to the University, he lived in an apartment, duplex and took care of it for the owner and then sort of by extension became the caretaker of lots of these places and eventually became the owner of them as the population moved out. I tell that story frequently because it indicates the kind of entrepreneurship that was in the African American community and how it was constrained. So there's social constraints on that community and strong geographic constraints because there was no way that legally you could force somebody to sell a house to an African American. Now that's changed. So the neighborhood became really compacted and again if you look at the maps of ethnic distributions in the 1930s, the Rondo area stands out as this kind of rectangle right along the streetcar line, a very dense population of African Americans and a scattering elsewhere in the city. When the freeway came, Harold, the planner for the city, was adamant that it should go north along the railroad track and not go along the University corridor. Then he really complained a lot about that decision. He thought it was very foolish – not because it was going to go through an African American neighborhood; he wasn't that kind of a guy. He just thought it was going to divide all of the residential areas and fragment the city, cut the Capitol off from downtown. And he was absolutely right. Everything he said was true. But he lost the argument. When the freeway came, they were looking for the cheapest land and the most direct route. And the cheapest land and most direct route was south of University over to south Minneapolis or southeast Minneapolis. But, again, it had to stay in that corridor so it either had to go on one side of University or the other. They weren't going to tear up University and put it down University. So the community didn't want it, but they lost that argument. They wanted an open housing law, which they did not get; the city actually voted against it. They wanted to stay in their property as long as they could. They wanted a fair price and they wanted a depressed freeway. According to the literature that's available they were able to stay in the houses for a longer period of time. Property prices were fair. Initially there was not going to be a depressed freeway, but the planners learned from people in Detroit that an elevated freeway is really very bad for neighborhoods, so they got a depressed freeway. Now what happened? Because the city refused to have an open housing law, the people who were displaced from Rondo went to the immediately adjacent neighborhoods – the only place they could go. And that made the white population start to run from Frogtown and from Lex-Ham and Summit-University. You've got people running out, fearing the expanding African American community. And in this case…from my perspective it's a pretty clear case where the civic leaders did not act

responsibly, and their prejudice created issues that we're still dealing with in St. Paul, and in Minneapolis, too. But it's a story that's quite well documented and people are trying now to revive the spirit of Rondo and from what I can tell they're doing a good job of it.

Q It certainly seems to have a life. They're not going to let it die. And some people look at the central corridor in some ways a replay of Rondo, even though it's not as destructive physically, but it's this matter of "do we trust these politicians to do what they say?" Talk about the impact that I-94 and other things that were happening at the same time…how those elements changed the character of University Avenue.

A It's possible to see an old air photo from the early 1950s that was taken above Summit Avenue looking to the north and you can see the Cathedral and the Capitol and that whole area of the freeway and the strip between the freeway and University all built up with houses. In 1934 there was an article in *Fortune Magazine*, which really criticized the Twin Cities and particularly St. Paul and the area around the Capitol. And there are these graphic images of slums around the Capitol. There was an effort to re-do what's now Mount Airy in the 1930s, which was voted down. But people began to get the notion that the University Avenue residential areas needed major surgery and that major surgery started with the Capitol area project. That was the first big renewal project. And then, along with the coming of the freeway came the whole notion of let's get into slum clearance. That's the official words; we don't like to use those words anymore, but that's what the words were. And so the residential areas that were south of the Capitol and up to University were simply bulldozed and they were mostly bulldozed – not all of them, but big chunks of that area were bulldozed – all the way out to Lexington. So, again, not everything was bulldozed but the bulldozers were there. So you had the clearance of the Capitol and then the notion that the city leadership had was, you know we've got a problem with downtown so lets move. I'm exaggerating here but let's move the retail function from downtown out to University and lets bring Sears in. So we'll have Sears and Wards on our University Avenue. So University will be this dynamite shopping strip for middle class people. Well, this really upset the downtown business community, but the planners went ahead and cleared this big chunk of land next to the Capitol, turned it over to Sears, Sears built their building. Then they decided they'd have a park and then they'd put in public housing. And then a group of individuals – I don't know their names – lobbied very strongly against building up that whole strip into public housing. So this thing called…the housing neighborhood between Western and just east of Lexington was built up to look suburban. It didn't look suburban, it is suburban – cul de sacs, ramblers, the whole thing – so Capitol Village, to get a different kind of neighborhood in there. So you have this intriguing set of forces – one tearing down the neighborhood, putting in commercial space on a huge scale, or public housing and then a suburban-like thing for middle class, upper middle class African Americans who wanted to stay in the neighborhood. Again, I can't think of a place similar, where all this has happened in a very short period of time with, of course, huge amounts of discussion and controversy. So no gentrification, however, in that strip; gentrification is further south. But the freeway really re-made the neighborhoods from the city limits to downtown. It had a big impact on the east side, but really was mostly in the area west of the Capitol up to Lexington.

Q On University Avenue the traffic count dropped significantly after the freeway opened. What effect do you think the freeway had on what had been an active commercial corridor?

A There's no question that the freeway killed the commercial corridor. But it wasn't just that freeway. It was the freeways that took people out to the suburban shopping centers. It's not actually the number of cars that go by a store that are important. It's the number of people who want to shop at the store that's important. So University had developed a real specialization, I'll say, in automotive services and dealerships. These were big users of land, so we're not talking about ma and pa stores here; we're talking Midway Ford and all these operations that were powerful but responded to the change in the way cars were sold. So initially you didn't buy a car by test-driving it; you looked at a picture and ordered your car and then it came. And then, gradually the car manufacturers had their dealers take over the task of warehousing cars and almost decade-by-decade the car dealers got bigger and bigger and then realized they couldn't deal it. They had to move to the suburbs. So that was a freeway phenomenon, but not necessarily 94 freeway that pulled them out to these suburban locations. So big pieces of land opened up and they've been hard to fill; very hard to fill.

The other thing that happened is that the scale of manufacturing changed during that period, too. So the spaces you might have seen small industrial operations go into, they just didn't go into University. They didn't replace these car dealerships and the other people who were in industry kind of moved out rather than expanding. But, again, you have this extraordinary development after the streetcar barns are torn down, of the Midway Shopping Center, and in theory that Midway Shopping Center should have been a huge success because it is in the Midway. But it was a suburban shopping center lined up on University Avenue, rather than on a freeway. So you had to get off 94 and fiddle around and get in there. I remember looking at that in the 60s…the freeway's finished in the mid-'60s and then everybody was all excited about Midway Shopping Center and what a great idea this was and how are we going to save the community. And looking back I don't have a better idea for that space, but it clearly didn't work.

And we've got a lot of cases, a lot of plans for University Avenue that haven't worked. One of the interesting things about University Avenue is that none of the plans that were made called for an ethnic shopping strip. None. And I remember I was on the city planning commission when the Hmong migration was taking off and I said maybe we should have this kind of an Asian shopping center – not in Lowertown – we've got all this stuff going down there, Farmer's Market. And while I'm dithering around thinking about that, boom! Up come all these operations on University Avenue. Now the city…I should give us some credit – we did have one, little operation there which the city funded, kind of a mall, international market thing. But it was puny compared to what the private sector did. Of all the ideas that were put forth, none of them worked anywhere nearly as well as the private sector taking advantage of the market for land, the changing population in the inner city, the arrival of the Asian immigrant population, all that entrepreneurial spirit, all that localized demand. You know, if Oliver Towne were still alive, I think he would be just jumping for joy to see his street come back to life the way he thought it should be.

Q That reminds me of a comment that you made….you recall a column of his referring to University Avenue as, "the street of the city slicker." Talk about the era and the background in which he made that comment.

A There was a columnist who went by the name of Oliver Towne – you know, All Over Town – named Gary Hebert. He loved St. Paul and all the idiosyncrasies of St. Paul and wrote his column. He would write about Dave Lanegran's garden and

whatever. And somehow he conceived the notion that University Avenue was the street of the city slicker, or the street of city slickers or the street of broken dreams. And his notion was that there were lots of bars along there; fancy bars, bars that you and I would never go into but also really fancy bars. And the businessmen would come and the people who were in what we now call "the informal economy" would come and there would be a lot of deals cut – some legal and some quasi-legal. And the power brokers would gather.

Now there's this myth in St. Paul that all the power brokers would have breakfast and lunch together at the Minnesota Club and yeah, there were a lot of them there. But there were also a whole bunch of other power brokers that had lunch out at the Criterion or later the Blue Horse and these places that are gone now. So there were people cutting deals and…it was, of course, the center of prostitution for a long time. Prostitution was on both Selby and University Avenues but when Towne was writing that it was mostly on University. He was trying to find a positive handle on what was happening, you know? That it wasn't your friendly little neighborhood shopping street. It was something bigger and kind of hustling and bustling and…the word city slicker has kind of dropped out of our vernacular totally, so it's kind of hard to convey now what he was thinking. But he wasn't thinking so much of hoods with guns robbing people, but people who had an angle on this or that or the other thing or were doing the gambling illegally or maybe having their bars open after hours, and of course clearly, prostitution, yeah looking for suckers.

Q Another question was that from what I've read there are some great descriptions of Prospect Park back in the 1880s. It was really one of the first suburbs, in a way, and it had the commuter train that stopped there between the two downtowns and…was Merriam Park also set up like St. Anthony Park as kind of suburbs?

A Right.

Q Talk about that in the sense that it was an attraction for well-to-do business people. They could work in the downtowns…but retreat to these nice, quiet areas….the role of these little neighborhoods as essentially our first suburbs.

A I'm going to stretch my analogies here, but you can almost think of University Avenue as a hundred year old I-494 strip, with commercial space and residential suburbs being developed along it. I'm going to end my analogy there, but that was to give people some kind of reference. In the 1880s, the area between Lexington and the county line was all open; townships: Rose Township for example, Reserve Township. And the real estate speculators of that era were really sharp people. I mean that intelligently they were smart but they also cut smart deals. One of them, my favorite guy – Louie Menage – who was the developer of Prospect Park. You know, Louie Menage, one of those classic Minnesota people, came west for his health and could read and write and add and subtract and became incredibly wealthy in real estate speculation and development. But there were a lot of people like him. The developers of St. Anthony Park, for example, involved lumber barons from Wisconsin, governors of the state and Merriam…these people realized that the two downtowns would be linked by the streetcar and that would provide all kinds of opportunities for suburban development and real estate speculation. And most money is made when land is changed from rural to urban – that's when the biggest jump in value occurs. So those guys knew that and they set out to create some suburbs. So they created St. Anthony Park first – this very lavish

place with villas and so on and that didn't work, so they changed it down. St. Anthony Park, Prospect Park, Merriam Park and then everybody saw…this all happens in the 1880s when the towns are just booming…so we have this interesting strip of land from north to south. It goes St. Anthony Park, then south St. Anthony Park then Prospect Park then Merriam Park then you've got Macalester Park thrown in, you've Groveland Park and you've got Highland Park. So there's this whole zone of park-type suburban developments along here, all of them focused on the streetcar or the commuting railroad. So there's a commuting railroad in St. Anthony Park and in Prospect Park and in Merriam Park, but also the streetcar lines that really, really made it work. But it is fun to think about University Avenue as the 1880 version of I94 in 1960 when it was booming away. The University Avenue streetcar carried lots of people back and forth to those suburban communities.