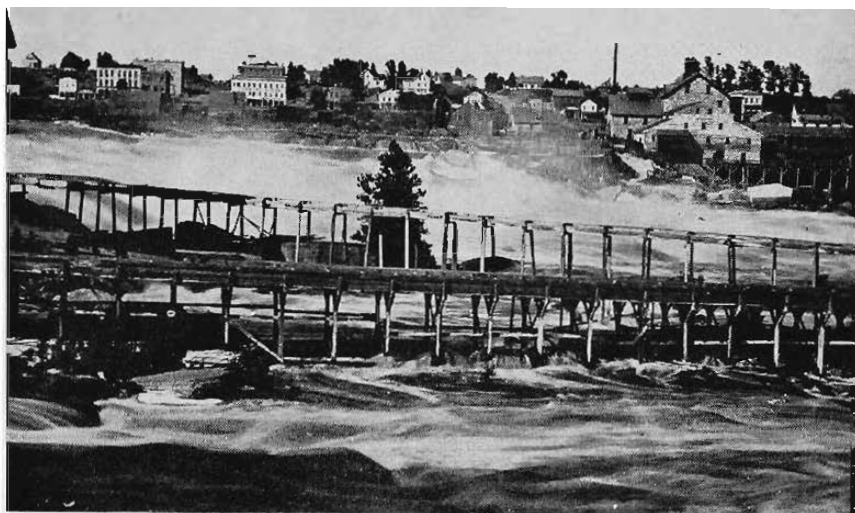


LOOKING
across the falls at
St. Anthony, 1867



Governing a Frontier City

OLD ST. ANTHONY, 1855-72

LUCILE M. KANE

WHEN St. Anthony received its city charter in 1855, it was a small town with a big dream. Located on the east bank of the Mississippi River at the magnificent falls from which it took its name, St. Anthony had reason to believe it would become a great metropolis of the Northwest. It had in the falls water power with so vast a potential that eminence in manufacturing seemed assured. It had to the north, south, and west a hinterland capable of producing raw materials vital to industrial development. It had at its door the Mississippi—a water highway to the north and south

and a link with eastern railroads building to the river. And it had in the fast-growing population of the surrounding country and in the states tapped by the Mississippi a market for its products.

These were natural advantages that could convert a frontier town into a metropolis. And everywhere in St. Anthony was evidence that its citizens were ready to make the most of good fortune. Logs in the boom, sawmills, flouring mills, new stores, stages loaded with newcomers, and wagons of incoming grain bespoke a developing economy; while the spires of churches, a nascent university, a library association, and a press symbolized the cultural aspirations of a town that had become a city.¹

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¹ For the city's approximate limits, see plate 12 B, in Minneapolis, 1940 Atlas (1941).

St. Anthony aspired to be queen of the Northwest, and for the crown it had only one rival. St. Paul, garrulous capital of Minnesota Territory, had metropolitan dreams too. An older and larger city, St. Paul had the prestige to attract immigrants and capital. But it had an even greater advantage over St. Anthony. The clamor of steamboats unloading freight and passengers at its two busy levees was a taunt to St. Anthony, for St. Paul could boast—and it did in long columns of print—that it was the head of navigation on the Mississippi. Although St. Anthony claimed that the falls marked the head of navigation, St. Paul pointed with unrestrained glee at the stubborn miles of boulders and low water that caused steamboats bearing cargo for St. Anthony to turn into the St. Paul landing.²

St. Anthony's bid for supremacy in the Northwest was a bold one, for by 1857, when a pre-statehood census was taken, St. Paul outnumbered it 9,973 to 4,689. But St. Anthony was confident of victory. With the energy of ambitious youth, it laid plans to overtake and pass St. Paul. They called for eliminating the obstacles that robbed the town at the falls of its rightful position as the head of navigation, penetrating the hinterland it coveted with roads and railroads, developing its waterpower, and attracting capital. St. Anthony was determined to win. And on the bright day of its victory St. Paul would be reduced to insignificance; the cities of the East would lose their grasp on the commerce of the West. The Mississippi would become the great central highway of the nation, and St. Anthony, the head of navigation, would be "the great manufacturing and commercial emporium for the country between Lake Michigan" and the Rockies.³

But the citizens of St. Anthony who predicted so brilliant a future for their city had spoken too soon. In somber moments they knew that however dazzling their long-range prospects might be, their immediate future was bound up in the for-

tunes of one group of businessmen associated with Franklin Steele. These men, who controlled the water power on the east bank of the river and owned a great deal of property in the city, held the key to the success of St. Anthony. When Steele became deeply involved in difficulties with his Eastern partners, he had trouble developing the water power and selling town lots. As early as 1851, the *St. Anthony Express*, usually an optimistic interpreter of events, warned that the adversity suffered by the Steele group was a "mighty incubus" resting upon St. Anthony. "The magnificent waterpower . . . which is destined yet to make this the Queen City of the West," wrote the editor, "wastes its gigantic energies in propelling four insignificant saws." Steele and his partners labored for years to remove the "mighty incubus," but substantial development of their holdings came too late to open the door on the future St. Anthony envisioned.⁴

While St. Anthony struggled to overcome these economic obstacles, a new competitor arose across the river at the falls. Minneapolis, its growth long retarded, stirred from its slumber in 1852 when reduction of the Fort Snelling military reservation opened lands for settlement on the west bank of the Mississippi. Moving quickly to develop its water power and capture trade, Minneapolis grew at a remarkable pace. By 1857 it had a population of 3,391. St. Anthony, keeping a beneficent eye on the progress of the new community, predicted that some day the promising village might rank next to it as the second city in Minnesota. The new community partially fulfilled the prediction, for by

² For expressions of strong feelings on this subject, see the *Express*, July 2, 1853, and the *Pioneer*, July 28, 1853.

³ *Express*, February 14, 1852; C. C. Andrews, *History of St. Paul*, 74 (Syracuse, 1890). The Minnesota Historical Society has photostatic copies of the manuscript census schedules for 1857, including the St. Anthony enumeration.

⁴ *Express*, November 29, 1851, January 24, 1852; *Minneapolis Chronicle*, June 23, 1866.

1870, with a population of 13,066, Minneapolis was the second city in Minnesota. St. Paul, reporting a population of 20,030, reigned supreme in first place, while St. Anthony, hopelessly out of the race, recorded 5,013 souls.⁵

In the race of cities, St. Anthony was defeated by an enemy and overwhelmed by a friend. St. Paul was triumphant in victory, while Minneapolis reached hands across the water, ever strengthening the economic and cultural ties that bound it to its declining neighbor. As bridges spanned the Mississippi, trade flowed over them, uniting the cities in common interest. In 1872 came the last step in the merger, when St. Anthony lost its name to Minneapolis in political union. The place that once had challenged St. Paul for pre-eminence in the Northwest was dismissed by its old rival as the "city of the unburied dead." Minneapolis, buttressed by the union, took up the boast of St. Anthony and warred with its ancient enemy for civic honors.⁶

Although St. Anthony lost the economic race, it brought to the merger skills of a different order. By the time political union came, St. Anthony had been supporting a city government for seventeen years. Minneapolis had a far less impressive record. Although it was chartered by the legislature in 1856, the town did not organize until 1858. The people took so little interest in town government and managed it so badly that in 1862 the legislature took

away the charter. Not until 1867, when union with St. Anthony was already common talk, did Minneapolis become a city.⁷ Turning its attention to municipal affairs late in its history, it drew upon the rich experience of the ambitious city across the river.

IN ASSUMING political responsibility, St. Anthony showed none of its neighbor's hesitancy. With the same enthusiasm that marked its economic ambition to rank as the first city in the Northwest, in the early 1850s the community at the falls moved to obtain a change in its unsatisfactory status as a village in Ramsey County administered from St. Paul. To achieve the political status it wanted, St. Anthony had to become a city and divorce itself from Ramsey County. The accomplishment of these objectives came fast. Despite the opposition of St. Paul, St. Anthony's representatives succeeded in getting a bill for its incorporation through the legislature in 1855. A year later it struck its second blow at political dependence on St. Paul by persuading the legislature to detach the city from Ramsey County and expand the boundaries of Hennepin County to include it.⁸

When Governor Willis A. Gorman signed the community's incorporation bill on March 3, 1855, St. Anthony rejoiced. Running through the commentary on the achievement were familiar strains of civic ambition, rivalry with St. Paul, and reflection on the future. The *Express* of March 10, more succinctly than any other organ, sounded the keynote in the civic celebration: "By the faithful and diligent labors of our Representatives . . . St. Anthony has secured a degree of fostering legislation, much needed, but through the jealousy of a haughty rival, long withheld. Through the same instrumentality we have succeeded in winning the attention of the Territory to the superiority of our advantages, and all the capital, all the energy, all the official influence, and all the gassy fanfaronage of the press of our rival, cannot prevent the

⁵ William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, 1: 427-432 (St. Paul, 1921); Rodney C. Loehr, "Franklin Steele, Frontier Businessman," in *Minnesota History*, 27:314 (December, 1946); *Express*, March 27, 1852; *United States Census*, 1870, *Population*, 178, 180; manuscript census schedules, Minneapolis, 1857.

⁶ *Chronicle*, August 25, 1866.

⁷ *Minnesota Territory. Laws*, 1856, p. 187-191; *Minnesota. Special Laws*, 1862, p. 217, 1867, p. 43-85; Jessie Marcle, *The Minneapolis City Charter, 1856-1925*, 3-5 (Minneapolis, 1925).

⁸ *Laws*, 1855, p. 10-18, 1856, p. 106; *Express*, September 24, 1853, March 10, December 22, 1855, February 23, March 29, 1856; Ramsey County Board of Commissioners, "Proceedings," 1849-58. The latter, a manuscript volume in the Ramsey County auditor's office, contains records of the county's administration of St. Anthony.

speedy development of our great advantages. St. Anthony is now a city; and many measures heretofore neglected for the want of an organized and efficient local government we may hope will now be speedily carried out."

The charter establishing the city of St. Anthony was short and simple. It provided for the election of a mayor, six aldermen, and a justice of the peace. The mayor and the aldermen formed the city council, which was empowered to appoint a clerk, treasurer, marshal, assessor, supervisor of streets, and any other officers it deemed necessary. The greater part of the brief charter was taken up with an enumeration of the legislative powers of the council. Between 1855 and 1872, the legislature amended the charter six times — a rather conservative record for the period. Most of the amendments modified powers and procedures for assessing, levying, and collecting taxes. Other changes included creating a fourth ward, and, subsequently, enlarging the council, altering the limits of the city, adding new elective offices, and paying salaries to local officials.⁹

St. Anthony lost no time organizing under its charter. One month after the governor signed the incorporation bill, the voters went to the polls to elect Henry T. Welles as mayor and Daniel Stanchfield, Caleb Dorr, Edward Lippincott, John Orth, Robert W. Cummings, and Benjamin Spencer as aldermen. The only critical comment made after the election seems to have been on the possible influence of the St. Anthony grogshops on the newly elected officials. The *Minnesota Republican*, stern advocate of temperance, expressed fear that the wrong men had been chosen. Although the editor admitted that the personal character of Welles, substantial St. Anthony businessman, was beyond reproach, he believed that the grogshops which had supported the new mayor would encourage laxity toward the liquor question. The paper was even more disturbed about the selection of some of the aldermen, one of

whom, John Orth, was the proprietor of the St. Anthony Brewery, and it called upon the new officials to declare "the sale of poisonous beverages a crime," and to voice their disapproval of the "vile saloons and the drunken street displays which disgrace the town at the commencement of their administration."¹⁰

Many citizens may have centered their attention on the disgrace of the grogshops, but the newly elected council had other important matters to handle. Faced with the job of putting the machinery of government in motion, the council moved rapidly into action. On April 13, at its first meeting, it amended and adopted for its procedures the rules of the city of St. Paul. The mayor then appointed the standing committees through which most of the business of the council would move — committees on claims and accounts, ways and means, streets, health, fire protection, markets, taxes, printing, and licenses. Since the new city had no public buildings, the mayor appointed a committee to rent a meeting room for the council. On this day and that following, the elected officers appointed a treasurer, assessor, marshal, supervisor of streets, attorney, collector of taxes, printer, and clerk.¹¹

After the appointment of officers, the council's most immediate task was to frame ordinances implementing the powers granted to it in the charter. By the end of May the hard-working city lawmakers had adopted twenty-three ordinances. In these and successive measures, the aldermen legislated on matters great and small. Some ordinances assigned duties to appointive officers, set up the machinery for law enforcement, and established the processes of

⁹ *Laws*, 1855, p. 11-15, 1856, p. 78; *Special Laws*, 1859-60, p. 3-24, 1861, p. 303-306, 1864, p. 208, 1865, p. 133-148, 1870, p. 216-220.

¹⁰ *Minnesota Republican* (St. Anthony and Minneapolis), March 29, April 5, 1855; St. Anthony, "Council Proceedings," April 13, 1855. Two manuscript volumes of "Council Proceedings," covering the period from 1855 to 1872, are in the city clerk's office of Minneapolis.

¹¹ "Council Proceedings," April 13, 14, 1855.

taxation; others prohibited citizens from bathing in the Mississippi River between 6:00 A.M. and 7:30 P.M., established a speed limit of six miles an hour for vehicles in the streets, and forbade the sale of indecent literature. In the years that followed, the council adopted over a hundred ordinances and amendments that touched the life of the people in an amazing number of ways.¹²

The council did not legislate in a vacuum, for the people showed a lively interest in government. Their will to pick the city up out of the mud and provide for an orderly municipal life was strong. Onto the council table poured communications from outraged, querulous, righteous, and dutiful citizens, praying their government to remedy ills in endless variety. They wanted dead animals removed from the streets, parks created, trees planted, streets graded, sidewalks built, sloughs drained, taxes abated, industry fostered, and saloons closed. The council referred the communications to the proper standing committees, listened to reports on them, and then, if favorably disposed, acted by resolution, ordinance, or instructions to city officials.¹³

Among the most urgent requests the people made of their government were those asking it to take measures for the protection of property and life, and for maintaining peace in the city. Although St. Anthony

called itself a law-abiding community, it did admit that the rowdy element unleashed by the grogshops gave cause for alarm. For many of the disturbances that broke the peace of St. Anthony the newspapers blamed the Irish, which in an unguarded moment they called "half civilized hordes." Their disorderliness probably never can be measured statistically, but they, and to some extent the Germans, certainly were lively additions to the population. In any event, enough of the city's inhabitants robbed, murdered, committed assault, became drunk and disorderly, and broke the local ordinances to require action by the city council.¹⁴

The charter and ordinances of 1855 established the framework for law enforcement and provided for two officials—a justice of the peace and a marshal. The former, known as the "city justice," heard all civil cases to which the city was a party and all criminal cases within his jurisdiction. It was the duty of the marshal to report violations of the city ordinances and criminal laws of the territory, execute processes, police the city, and perform other routine functions of a law enforcement officer. Frontier marshals often had to perform a strange conglomeration of duties, and the St. Anthony officer was no exception; in addition to his regular duties, he was required by law to clean the council rooms.¹⁵

The council took a step to secure law and order in 1858 when it passed an ordinance creating a police department. It operated under the mayor's direction and consisted of a marshal and as many policemen as the council chose to appoint. There are no official statistics on the number chosen, but the *Republican* at various times reported the strength of the force as four, eight, and ten. The ordinance also made provision for strengthening law enforcement by empowering the marshal to hire up to twenty assistants at two dollars a day.¹⁶

With an increasing number of laws on the books regulating the mode of life in St. Anthony and with officers to enforce

¹² The earliest ordinances are in the "Council Proceedings" for May 7 and 21, 1855. Others are mentioned in later proceedings, in newspapers, and in St. Anthony, *The Charter and Amendments Thereto and Ordinances* (Minneapolis, 1866).

¹³ Abstracts of petitions and communications are in the "Council Proceedings," and the texts of some are filed in a storage box labeled "Petitions, St. Anthony, 1855-72," in the office of the Minneapolis city clerk. Included there also are numerous miscellaneous items, all of which will be cited hereafter as "Petitions."

¹⁴ *Republican*, June 11, October 16, 1857, March 19, July 23, 1858. A few reports of the city attorney listing the cases tried before the city justice and giving the names of the accused, the charge, the judgment, and the punishment are among the "Petitions."

¹⁵ *Laws*, 1855, p. 16; "Council Proceedings," July 21, September 3, 1855.

¹⁶ "Council Proceedings," May 31, 1858; *Republican*, July 6, October 18, November 8, 1858.

them, the city needed a jail. In 1855 the council built a "watch house," a structure measuring twenty-four by sixteen feet, with stone walls two feet thick, barred windows, and heavy oak doors. For a time the building served as a jail for the county, as well as the city, Hennepin County paying ten dollars a month for its use. It could not have been very satisfactory, however, for in 1858 the council stated that it was necessary to send prisoners to Stillwater and appointed a committee to report a plan for a "proper city prison." In response to its recommendation, the council ordered that a fence be built around the jail and that a shanty be erected for the guard. The jail continued to vex city officials, however, and on various occasions in the 1860s the council passed measures to repair it, redeem it after it was sold on execution, and collect rental money from the dilatory county.¹⁷

Although the council had made progress toward establishing law and order, the people were still far from satisfied with the state of things in St. Anthony. In 1858, after a gang attempted to free three prisoners from the city jail, the *Republican* of July 23 complained that "rowdies, thieves, and ruffians" were trodding on the laws, and urged law-abiding citizens to become vigilantes and tear to pieces "all the rummeries and harlot-hells" of the city. The same paper reported that a murder and robbery which followed the attempted jail break stimulated the people to act. An army of six hundred marched through the streets against the houses of ill fame that were said to be the cause of the city's moral degradation. The mob announced that "Satan had ruled long enough here" and served notice on the establishments that St. Anthony would tolerate them no more. Although the city continued to harbor grogshops and prostitutes, the people never again expressed their indignation in so dramatic a fashion.

KEEPING the peace in a booming city was a serious problem for the council, but

other municipal business, too, pressed for the aldermen's attention. Appearance was an important matter to a community that advertised beauty of location as one of its attractions. And yet the fast-growing city looked like a boom town. In the ungraded streets were mud holes, gullies, and pools of water, a threat to the sweeping skirts of the ladies, and, in rainy season, a hazard for men and carriages. "Nasty, piratical looking pigs" picked their way through piles of refuse tossed onto Main Street by householders. Mill waste and stray logs obscured the wild beauty of the falls. Pressed by petitions from individuals and by the newspapers, the council undertook to correct some of the abuses.¹⁸

Beautifying the city was a simple matter when compared with the larger problem of public improvements. In a raw town, where stumps on Main Street proclaimed that here indeed was still frontier, the council had everything to do — streets to open and grade, sidewalks to build, bridges to construct, and public buildings to erect. The charter and ordinances dictated how the job was to be done. They gave specifications for streets and sidewalks, outlined the process for securing rights-of-way, provided for assessing costs against adjacent property, required every man over twenty-one to contribute annually to the city three days' labor or pay commutation, and provided for surveillance of the work by a supervisor of streets.¹⁹

The council proceeded energetically with the work. Feeling a keen interest in facili-

¹⁷ "Council Proceedings," June 18, 23, July 2, September 3, 1855, July 6, August 23, October 4, 1858, February 5, March 5, 1861, August 23, November 8, 1865, May 1, 16, 1866, June 18, 1867; Hennepin County Board of Commissioners, "Proceedings," February 7, 1857. Four volumes of commissioners' "Proceedings," covering the years from 1852 to 1872, are in the office of the county auditor in Minneapolis.

¹⁸ *Express*, June 14, July 12, 1851, June 3, July 23, 1853, March 10, May 12, 1855, May 17, 31, 1856; *Minnesota State News* (Minneapolis), May 26, 1860, May 4, 1861, March 8, 1862; "Council Proceedings," May 21, 1855, June 17, 1869; C. E. Flandrau to the City Council, June 17, 1869, in "Petitions."

tating improvements that meant so much to their constituents, the aldermen gave a great deal of attention to public works. On occasion councilmen debating a proposed improvement left the council chamber to continue their discussion on the site at issue. For work like establishing street grades, the aldermen needed technical assistance, and they gained it through employing a city engineer. With the co-operation of the supervisor of streets, of contractors, of surveyors, and of hundreds of men laboring to pay off their labor assessment, he accomplished a great deal before St. Anthony closed its books. The city laid plank sidewalks along the main streets, built a plank road across a swamp, constructed and repaired bridges, opened and surfaced streets, and erected a jail. So active was the council in promoting these construction projects that some people protested. On August 12, 1859, the editor of

the *Minnesota State News* complained that "the enormous and useless" expenditure on the streets should be curtailed; and in the same year the council set a limit of six thousand dollars for such expenses.²⁰

Although the residents of St. Anthony, a mercurial constituency, feared the council would plunge the city into debt by an overly zealous program of public works, they urged greater expenditures in another area of civic enterprise. A wooden city without even the rudiments of a water system, St. Anthony was in daily peril from the devouring monster, fire. Even before incorporation, private citizens, prompted by the fear of an uncontrollable fire, organized the Cataract Fire Engine Company Number 1, and later the press urged the council to act under the ample powers of the charter to give the city fire protection.²¹

While the council delayed, public agitation continued. The *Express* reminded the city fathers late in 1855 that though St. Anthony had not yet suffered a destructive conflagration, it could not expect its good fortune to continue. A warning was sounded in 1856 after several small fires broke out, but the only heed paid it was the organization of a bag and bucket company. Finally, in 1857, St. Anthony's luck ran out. A fire swept through the lower town destroying forty thousand dollars in property. Ill-

¹⁶ *Express*, April 21, 1855; *Laws*, 1855, p. 13, 14, 16; *Special Laws*, 1859-60, p. 22, 1861, p. 305, 1865, p. 145, 1870, p. 219; "Council Proceedings," May 7, 21, September 3, 1855, April 14, 27, 1857, August 11, 1858, May 14, 28, 1859, June 18, 1860, September 5, 1865, June 9, 1869, July 5, 1870.

²⁰ "Council Proceedings," May 15, June 2, 1856, June 11, 1857, March 22, April 26, 1858, January 28, May 28, 1859, July 30, 1860, June 17, 1869.

²¹ *Express*, December 9, 1854, May 17, 1856; *Laws*, 1855, p. 14.

FIRE fighters
of the 1860s
with hook and ladder



prepared for the emergency, the townspeople fought a losing battle to save the buildings.²²

And then the council acted. A little more than a month after the disaster, the aldermen passed a resolution stating that "the wants of this city imperatively call for some protection from damages arising from fire." The council directed that the city purchase hooks, ladders, and other necessary apparatus; and the mayor appointed a committee to investigate the cost of two fire engines. A year later a city ordinance created a fire department consisting of a chief engineer, two assistants, and the various fire companies that had already been privately organized.²³ The department was a venture in public-private co-operation, since the city furnished most of the equipment and the supervision, while the citizens, organized into fire companies, provided the manpower.

St. Anthony's fire companies, composed of "as stout, hearty and jolly a set of firemen as ever 'manned a brake,'" made exciting news in the city. Animated by group loyalty, the companies vied with one another for honors and for equipment. When the city acquired two new fire engines—one a gaudy red with gilt stripes, and the other a somber black—three companies clamored for them. Before the council settled the issue of which groups should receive them, the fire companies called special meetings and the press warmly debated the question. Upon receiving their engines, the favored companies staged water-shooting trials and crowds cheered their favorites. The people applauded, too, as the firemen paraded at civic events in glazed hats, red shirts, and black pants with white stripes.²⁴

Although the combination of private enterprise and municipal support produced a fire department superior to anything St. Anthony had known earlier, as usual, some were unhappy. When fire broke out in the home of Dr. Samuel H. Chute, the Hook and Ladder Company was on the job; nevertheless its members were criticised for

chopping a hole in the roof, knocking out windows, and damaging furniture. On another occasion, three fire companies turned out to fight a blaze that consumed several buildings. Since one had but fifty feet of hose and the buildings were four hundred feet from the river, the *Minnesota State News* commented facetiously that the aldermen should have passed an ordinance requiring fires to limit themselves to areas within fifty feet of the river.²⁵

NOT ALL municipal responsibilities were so clear-cut as fire protection. In no area of civic trust was there more confusion than in the care of the poor. In 1849 the legislature vested the counties with the "entire and exclusive superintendence of the poor." To discharge this duty, Hennepin County in 1857 provided a poor farm. In 1860 a law providing for township organization empowered these units to raise money for the support of the poor. The county then ordered the town boards to take charge of paupers in the county poorhouse and resolved to sell the poor farm. Another reversal came in 1864, when a new state law reiterated county responsibility for the poor. The county then moved again to purchase a farm and take up the burden.²⁶

Legally there seemed to be no reason why the city should care for paupers. The charter made no mention of them; the council passed no ordinances on the subject. In practice, however, St. Anthony did assume responsibility for some of the indigent within its limits. For example, when

²² *Express*, November 24, 1855, April 19, 1856; *Republican*, October 2, 1857.

²³ "Council Proceedings," November 24, 1857, October 25, November 8, 15, 1858, January 13, 27, 1859.

²⁴ *State News*, April 15, July 15, 22, August 12, 26, September 3, 24, 1859, March 10, 1860; *Minneapolis Chronicle*, August 4, 1866; "Council Proceedings," April 11, June 13, July 18, 1859.

²⁵ *State News*, January 28, 1859, May 12, 1860.

²⁶ *Laws*, 1849, p. 128-130, 1859-60, p. 116, 1864, p. 48-58; Hennepin County Board, "Proceedings," July 10, 28, 1857, March 23, 1860, September 6, 1864.

the city cared for a pauper with smallpox after the county refused to take action, its attorney argued that the decision had been made from humane motives, not from legal imperative, "else a pauper might die pending the red tape movements of county officials."

In a cloud of confusion, the council appointed a standing committee on the poor and paid bills for paupers' support while debating its authority to do so. Although the group's name later was changed to committee on hospitals, the council continued to pay bills for paupers. Seeking legal counsel to untangle the web, the aldermen in 1860 instructed the city attorney to prepare an opinion "as to who are liable to take care of the poor." He expressed the belief that St. Anthony had no power to assume management of the poor or to disburse city funds for their support.²⁷ The council took no action on his report and nothing was clarified by his opinion.

DEVELOPING an educational system for St. Anthony required the co-operation of the state, the county, the school district, and the city. The germ of the school system was a territorial law passed in 1849, which authorized any township containing at least five families to become a school district or districts, and, upon organization, to draw upon the county for funds in proportion to the number of scholars. Ramsey County acted quickly to take advantage

of this opportunity to found public schools in St. Anthony. In 1850 the county divided the village into two school districts and authorized them to draw money. When St. Anthony became a part of Hennepin County, the commissioners divided the city into four school districts.²⁸

That a substantial number of St. Anthony children attended the public schools is indicated in the annual reports made by the school districts to the board of county commissioners. They reveal that school attendance increased from 277 in 1851 to 1,037 in 1859, and then dropped in the two years that followed to 1,017.²⁹ Information about the schools these students attended is scant, but it seems that at least one public school operated sporadically in 1851. After a St. Paul newspaper, in a fit of ill temper, declared that St. Anthony did not have a school worthy of the name, the *Express* of August 30, 1851, replied that a school had operated about two-thirds of the time since the first public funds were appropriated in February of the same year. The educational facilities could not have been much improved by 1853, for the *Express* of November 26 suggested the formation of a joint-stock company to raise money to build a schoolhouse. "The present open and dilapidated buildings our schools are obliged to occupy," wrote the indignant editor, "should be converted into stables, as fit only for cattle." By 1854 either the mood of the editor had changed or the schools had improved, for in the issue of January 28 he reported with satisfaction on the enrollment in two district schools, a preparatory school opened in the University of Minnesota, and private or "select" schools that offered the children of St. Anthony all the accomplishments taught in the best Eastern schools.

The organization of the city of St. Anthony had little apparent effect on the school system, operating as it did under the management of independent school districts. The only provision in the 1855 charter relating to education was one empower-

²⁷ "Council Proceedings," May 7, 26, 31, July 23, September 8, October 13, December 4, 1860, April 3, 16, May 7, June 17, 1861, April 11, 1864; reports of the city attorney, October 13, 1860, March 14, 1870, in "Petitions."

²⁸ *Laws*, 1849, p. 41-43; Ramsey County Board, "Proceedings," January 9, July 8, 1850; Hennepin County Board, "Proceedings," April 9, 1857. A third district within the future limits of St. Anthony was organized late in 1850 by settlers living in the vicinity of Tuttle's Creek.

²⁹ Ramsey County Board, "Proceedings," January 18, 1851, January 10, 1852, January 24, 1853, February 20, 1854, December 12, 1855, February 2, 1856; Hennepin County Board, "Proceedings," April 23, 1857, February 2, 1858, February 28, 1859, April 25, December 3, 1860, February 4, 1861.

ing the council "to establish, regulate, and support common schools." Since the powers granted were not implemented by ordinances, the school districts were not supported by the city. The districts, however, made progress on their own. In 1856 one received permission from the legislature to borrow as much as twelve thousand dollars for building a school, and it was authorized to levy a tax for the payment of the debt.³⁰

After the legislature passed an act setting up a separate school system for St. Anthony in 1860, the council began to display greater interest in education. The law made sweeping changes in the system. The city became a single school district administered by a six-member board of education, which was empowered to establish four or more primary schools, two grammar schools, and a central high school. To them would be admitted free of charge the children, wards, and apprentices of all residents of St. Anthony and vicinity who owned property subject to a school tax. Each year the board was required to report to the council the amount needed for incidental expenses, which sum the council was to raise by taxation and turn over to the board. Although legally the council had no control over the board, the fact that, with the county, it held the purse strings gave it some influence. In 1865, for example, the council exercised a supervisory function by refusing to levy a requested tax because the board had not fulfilled one of its legal requirements.³¹

After 1860 the board, the council, and the state worked together well in developing the school system. The legislature forced greater democracy by removing the property qualification for school admission. Another move toward democracy in education was made in a state law of 1869 prohibiting schools that practiced segregation from receiving public funds. Other advances came in 1867, 1868, and 1871, as the legislature passed laws enabling the board to issue bonds to build schools and acquire school

sites, and the city to levy a tax to pay off the bonds. The city owned three schoolhouses by 1861, and between 1867 and 1872 it built at least three more. Its pride was the Union School, built in 1867 at a cost of twenty-five thousand dollars. A stone structure three stories high, with an observatory on the roof, it was designed for all grades from primary through high school.³²

THE GOVERNMENT of so small a city as St. Anthony did not have enough resources to meet all needs. One of the neglected areas was health. Although the city's charter gave the council power to establish a hospital and make regulations for protecting health, in the early years the council did little to implement that power. In 1859, stirred to action by recurrent reports of smallpox, it finally passed an ordinance relating to contagious diseases. It provided for a committee on health to enforce local as well as state regulations; prohibited anyone having a contagious disease to enter the city; provided for the removal or isolation of those who had contagious diseases; and regulated the conduct of physicians attending patients suffering from them.³³

Although undoubtedly framed to control smallpox in particular, an ordinance could not prevent its spread. In 1864 "Many Citizens" signed a petition begging the council to do something about the "culpable carelessness" displayed by smallpox victims and their families. "We feel there is no time to be lost," wrote the worried citizens, "and verily believe that if efficient means are not now employed to prevent it,

³⁰ *Laws*, 1855, p. 13, 1856, p. 91; *Special Laws*, 1859-60, p. 3-24.

³¹ *Special Laws*, 1859-60, p. 71-75; *State News*, December 31, 1859, January 7, 1860; "Council Proceedings," July 12, 1865.

³² *Special Laws*, 1864, p. 238, 1867, p. 311, 1868, p. 342, 1871, p. 333, 334; *General Laws*, 1869, p. 7; *Minneapolis Daily Tribune*, May 29, July 28, 1867; *Minneapolis Daily Chronicle*, April 14, 1867; Minneapolis Board of Education, *Annual Report*, 1880, p. 13.

³³ *Laws*, 1855, p. 13; "Council Proceedings," April 13, 1859.

it [*smallpox*] will sweep through our city, carrying desolation and anguish to many households, and that our City Fathers will, in a great measure be responsible for such a calamity." Evidently the councilmen were not greatly moved by the appeal, for the records do not show that decisive measures, other than the establishment of pesthouses, were taken, and smallpox continued to be feared.³⁴

The council showed even less interest in the construction of waterworks than it did in health. Although its proceedings record that the city permitted construction of public wells, they remain silent on the subject of city waterworks until 1871. At that time the council appointed a committee to ascertain the altitude of various lakes in the vicinity "with a view to obtaining water for city waterworks and fire purposes." Reporting in 1872, the committee concluded that since none of the lakes could supply adequate water, it must be taken from the river. By that time the city was closing its books, and St. Anthony went out of existence without ever having made a thoroughgoing study of its water supply.³⁵

ALTHOUGH St. Anthony failed in a few of its civic responsibilities, in general its record of providing municipal services was good. Since they involved considerable expense, financial management itself became a challenge to city officials. So important was fiscal policy that a maze of charter pro-

visions, special state laws, ordinances, and resolutions defining it appeared between 1855 and 1872. The charter and ordinances of 1855 put fiscal responsibility in the hands of a comptroller, a treasurer, an assessor, and a collector. Because all reports of city officers had to be approved by the council, the aldermen, through standing committees, exercised control over expenditures and shaped policies.³⁶

As the volume of financial business was small, a single individual often performed the duties of more than one office. For example, one person served as city marshal and collector in 1855 and the council soon made this combination official. In 1859 the office of collector was actually abolished and his duties were taken over by the city marshal. Other combinations were assessor and supervisor of streets, and comptroller and city clerk. With these shifting combinations of positions and frequent turnover in personnel, it is little wonder that financial management was often careless and record keeping sporadic.³⁷

The council raised money by taxing owners of real and personal property for general city purposes, lot owners for public improvements adjacent to their property, inhabitants of each ward for public works within its limits, and residents of school districts for school purposes. It also secured income by levying a poll tax, assessing persons who did not work out their road duty, licensing billiard halls and other establishments, and fining lawbreakers. In addition, it drew upon the credit of the city by issuing bonds and scrip, and then taxed the people to pay the interest and principal.

Charter provisions regulated the type and rate of taxation. In 1855 it limited to one per cent of the assessed valuation the tax the council could levy against real and personal property for general city purposes. The revised charter of 1860 lowered the rate to one-half of one per cent; another revision of 1865 omitted any reference to a limitation. In addition to taxes

³⁴ "Many Citizens" to the council, April 18, 1864, in "Petitions"; "Council Proceedings," May 14, June 7, 1864, April 10, 1866, June 9, 1869.

³⁵ "Council Proceedings," June 6, 1871, February 6, 1872; report of the committee on water works, February 6, 1872, in "Petitions."

³⁶ *Laws*, 1855, p. 13; "Council Proceedings," May 7, 1855, March 5, 1856.

³⁷ "Council Proceedings," November 12, 1855, April 16, August 12, 1856, April 14, 1857, April 21, 1859, April 5, May 16, 31, 1860, April 8, 1861. The only extant financial records seem to be some reports of the treasurer, comptroller, and city clerk in "Petitions," and a journal of the city treasurer for 1855-66 and two ledgers for 1867-72 in the custody of the Minnesota State Archives commission, State Office Building, St. Paul.

	GENERAL TAX	SCHOOL TAX	CITY BONDS	SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND SITES	EDUCATION BONDS	FALLS IMPROVEMENT BONDS	TAX RATE BY WARDS			
							1	2	3	4
1855	5 MILLS	"								
1856	5 "									
1857	5 "									
1858	5 "									
1859	10 "									
1860	5 "	1.5 MILLS								
1861	5 "	2.5 "	2.5 MILLS							
1862	MILL	RATE MISSING								
1863	5 MILLS	2 MILLS	2.5 MILLS							
1864	5 "	2 "	2.5 "							
1865	15 "	2 "	2.5 "	10 MILLS						
1866	10 "	2 "	10 "	10.5 "						
1867	13.5 "	2 "	6.55 "	4.65 "	5.6 MILLS					
1868	MILL	RATE MISSING								
1869	15 MILLS	5 MILLS	8.5 MILLS	9 MILLS		3.5 MILLS				
1870	4 "	5 "	2 "		9 MILLS		12 MILLS	12 MILLS	15 MILLS	15 MILLS
1871	4 "	9 "	2 "		11 "		15 "	15 "	15 "	15 "

TYPES and rates of taxation, St. Anthony, 1855-72

for general city purposes, the charter and its amendments authorized a road and a school tax and special assessments for street and sidewalk improvement in 1855, a tax to pay interest and principal on bonds in 1861, a tax to pay Civil War bounties in 1865, and special taxes for bridge construction and school and ward expenses in 1870.³⁸

The accompanying chart shows the growth of taxation in St. Anthony and the shift in burden from one type to another. Although data for two years are missing, the trend is clear.³⁹

St. Anthony could not finance all its operations out of annual taxes. To enable it to make major public improvements and purchase equipment, the charter and special state laws authorized the city to issue bonds against its credit. The community made moderate use of this power. Between 1859 and 1870, it issued bonds to the amount of \$42,488.81. Most of them paid

an annual interest of ten per cent, but a few paid seven or eight per cent. They ran for terms ranging from one to fifteen years, the greater number covering from one to four years.⁴⁰

St. Anthony also borrowed on its credit by issuing scrip, usually at ten per cent an-

³⁸ *Laws*, 1855, p. 13, 14, 17; *Special Laws*, 1859-60, p. 8, 1861, p. 303, 1865, p. 138, 1870, p. 217.

³⁹ Tax rates are given in "Council Proceedings," August 13, December 3, 1855, August 12, 1856, July 20, 1857, July 26, 1858, August 15, 1860, November 9, 1860, November 6, 1861, October 8, 1863, August 5, 1864, August 23, 1865, August 18, 1866, August 24, 1867, August 28, 1868, August 31, 1869, September 6, 1870, September 6, 1871.

⁴⁰ *Laws*, 1855, p. 13; *Special Laws*, 1859-60, p. 8, 1861, p. 304, 1869, p. 182-187, 1868, p. 364-368, 1870, p. 217, 268, 305-307, 1872, p. 395; "Council Proceedings," May 6, 31, August 2, 11, September 6, October 4, 19, 1858, January 27, August 29, September 2, October 7, 31, 1859, February 25, April 23, May 7, 1860, November 6, 1867, February 8, 1868, March 16, 1869, April 21, October 15, 1869, March 7, 22, July 12, 1870, March 7, 1871, April 4, 1872; Bond Register, in "Petitions."

nual interest. Commonly in denominations of one, two, five, and ten dollars, it circulated in considerable volume, and it was not unusual for the council to report that sums as large as five thousand dollars were outstanding. At least one local bank, Curtis and Eaton, received city scrip on deposit and accepted it in payment for notes. It was inevitable that as scrip was issued in large amounts, its value depreciated, often dropping as low as sixty-five cents on the dollar. This resulted in a serious drain on the city treasury. Since people often paid their taxes in scrip, the city's real income declined; on the other hand, the size of the municipal budget increased because the city paid its bills in depreciated scrip.⁴¹

In an effort to save the city's credit, the council in 1859 entered into an agreement with S. W. Farnham and Company for redemption of the scrip. Although there is no information about the actual effects of the redemption scheme, it is evident that it did not solve the problem. The council continued to apply the brakes to scrip issuing. In 1862 when the group proposed to pay off the outstanding scrip by issuing bonds, sharp controversy arose over alleged speculation in scrip by those advocating the bond issue. The people, to whom the council submitted the question in the April elections, defeated the bond proposal by an overwhelming vote. Since aldermen and citizens periodically suggested methods of redeeming scrip, it seems to have been a problem to the end.⁴²

THE DAY that St. Anthony had long seen coming dawned on April 8, 1872. The alder-

men and mayor assembled in the Council Chamber to solemnly consider a procession of bills and reports. After the last word had been spoken, a motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and approved, and Clerk Solon Armstrong, with the words "Adjourned Sine Die," wrote the end to the city of St. Anthony. On the next day a new council—that of Minneapolis—met in the same chamber and formally launched the government of the merged cities under a union charter.⁴³ St. Anthony, bowing to its fate, became a part of the city of Minneapolis.

But as surely as a vanquished city marks its conqueror, St. Anthony impressed upon Minneapolis the stamp of its character. For years before political union, the enterprise and vigor of St. Anthony, first city at the falls, had flowed into the civic life of Minneapolis. St. Anthony had, with all its power of imagination, defined a future in which it would be queen city of the Northwest. What it had dreamed about doing, Minneapolis accomplished.

With civic pride that for years had outranked that of its neighbor, St. Anthony had joined wholeheartedly in projects to foster the welfare of the dual community—union boards of trade, joint committees to name streets, construction projects to save the falls, and plans to improve the navigation of the Mississippi River. Union came, and scarcely anyone denied that it was good. Still, within the corporate body of Minneapolis, the vanquished city retained a stubborn identity. Provisions in the union charter for maintaining an "East Division" in the school system caused city bookkeepers to furrow their brows for years. With pride akin to that which inspired the boosters of early years, East Siders retained the name St. Anthony in the titles of businesses and civic organizations; and the falls that gave Minneapolis its fame remained the Falls of St. Anthony, a reminder that for seventeen years a city bearing their name had stood on the banks of the Mississippi.

⁴¹ "Council Proceedings," November 17, 1857, April 19, August 2, October 4, 1858, September 8, 1860, January 2, 1861; *Republican*, December 11, 1857; *State News*, January 28, February 4, April 21, May 12, 1860, March 29, 1862.

⁴² "Council Proceedings," January 13, March 23, May 28, 1859, March 5, 1861, August 5, October 4, November 19, 1864, August 23, 1869; *State News*, January 21, June 3, 1859, March 22, 29, April 5, 1862.

⁴³ "Council Proceedings," April 8, 1872; *Special Laws*, 1872, p. 56-91.



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