

Excelsior Heritage Preservation Landmarks



1) **Excelsior Blvd. – Oak Hill Cemetery**

The cemetery occupies a high wooded ridge of land with views of Lake Minnetonka and the village core. The last section added to the cemetery is at the west end at the base of the hill. The earliest recorded burials date from 1855. The cemetery has been owned by the City of Excelsior since 1955 and continues in use. Among its notable features, in addition to grave markers, monuments, and memorials, are the cast-metal Civil War memorial, moved to its present location in 1962, and stone storage vaults in the hillside. The cemetery remains a tangible reminder of Excelsior's historic settlers and ongoing family history.



2) **175 First Street (1870) – Porter/Dillman House**

This house, the only Excelsior home in the French Second Empire style, has been owned by two prominent citizens. The builder was Captain Hamilton H. Porter, master of the pleasure steamer "Hattie May" that sailed Lake Minnetonka. The second prominent owner, Willard Dillman, was for forty-seven years the publisher of the *Minnetonka Record*. He purchased the house shortly after his arrival in Excelsior in 1902. His second wife, Daisy, owned the house until 1957. Since then the house has been set on a higher foundation, the location of the front entrance shifted, and other additions and modifications made. Despite alterations, this property is locally significant because of its architectural style and associations with Porter and Dillman.



3) **180 First Street (1897) – Enoch W. Dyer House**

This Queen Anne-style house was built in 1897 for Enoch W. Dyer, a member of a family of Excelsior boat builders. He was the proprietor of the Wilbur House Hotel on First Avenue North in Minneapolis and an active yachtsman. The house itself is a fine example of Queen Anne design and it retains its historic integrity. This house is significant because of its associations with Dyer and its architectural design.



4) **217 First Street (1903) – Catholic Mission House**

This house is associated with two prominent Excelsior citizens. It was built by the Rev. Joseph F. Busch, pastor of St. John the Baptist Church and director of the Diocesan Mission Board, as a residence for himself and two other missionary priests. Rev. Busch directed the Catholic mission work throughout the territory under the jurisdiction of the diocese of Saint Paul and Bishop John Ireland. (Busch became the bishop of Saint Cloud in 1915.) In 1911 it was sold to the J. E. Hennessy family, owner of the Hennessy Lumber Company, an important Excelsior business. For about forty years starting in 1938 the building was in use as a nursing home. Because of its size, scale and large sloping site, this house stands out in the historic residential area of Excelsior. *Because of its associations with Busch and Catholic mission work, this house is recommended for National Register listing under Criterion A.*



5) **The Excelsior Commons (1852)**

When Excelsior was settled in 1852, thirteen acres along the lakefront were set aside as a public ground, designated the Excelsior Commons. This beach and parkland has been changed over the years and has been home to a wide variety of local activities, including swimming, team sports, picnics, pageants, circuses, patriotic celebrations, and festivals. The band shell was constructed for the 1976 Bicentennial celebration. The Commons is historically significant for its tangible evidence of Excelsior's early and subsequent history.



6) **170 Lake Street – Little Brown Cottage**

The two-story section of this house was built in 1878 as a summer cottage with vertical board-and-batten siding for Joseph Puckett of Winchester, Indiana, and his family. Puckett's son Carl served on Excelsior's Park Board in the 1880s and was the first commodore of the Excelsior Yacht Club. It was called the "Little Brown Cottage" because that was its color for many years. The house retained its original form until 1996, when the large three-story section to the east was built. The exterior fabric and windows of the two-story house were also changed at that time. As a result, the house has lost its historic character.

Because of the recent unsympathetic addition to the house, it is recommended that



- HPC designation be removed.*
- 7) **262 Lake Street (1885 with later additions) – Kalorama Cottage**
Mrs. Henrietta F. Tucker built Kalorama Cottage in 1884 as a double cottage for summer rental, then enlarged the following year into one large boarding house. At the end of the summer season, Mrs. Tucker added servant's quarters. In 1934 Peter R. Johnson, one-time superintendent of the Elbow Lake, Beltrami, and Lyle school districts, and real estate assessor for the village of Excelsior, bought the cottage and made it his private home. During the Johnson tenure the front porch was enclosed and other changes were made. It is still owned by a member of the Johnson family and is used as a duplex. This building was designated for its historic use and associations.



- 8) **152 Maple Street (1890-1891) – Smith/Sampson House**
This Queen Anne-style house was built between 1890 and 1891 by a man named Johnson. By 1908 Sherman S. Smith, proprietor of the Smith & Son Feed Store and the S. and S. Cash Grocery, had acquired the house. His daughter, Edna Sampson, and his son, Charles, were to remain in the house until 1966. Edna had married Frank Sampson of the family that owned the Sampson House, a tourist hotel on Second Street east of Water Street, for many years. The barn at the rear of the property is a rare survivor of this building type in Excelsior. Smith Street, which extends along the property on the east, was named after the family. This building was designated for its historic associations with the Smith and Sampson families.



- 9) **201 Mill Street (1887) – Wyer/Pearce House**
This large and imposing house is a notable example of the Queen Anne architectural style that occupies a prominent location near the road entrances to Excelsior. It is associated with James J. Wyer II, an Excelsior merchant, and Fred Pearce, who became the owner of the Excelsior Amusement Park. The house was later converted to a duplex and then operated as a bed-and-breakfast facility. In recent years, the owners sought to redevelop the house and surround property. As a result, the house has been converted into two condominium units, and a complex of condominium apartment buildings has been built around the house. These have been designed to be compatible with the original house. A preservation easement has been placed on the property to ensure its long-term future.

Because of its architectural and historical associations, the house was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1977 and has been a local HPC site since 1981.



- 10) **108 Second Street (1893) – John Mattox**
This Queen Anne-style house was built between 1892 and 1893, along with 122 Second Street, for Walter Milnor, a real estate developer and at that time the mayor of Excelsior. Milnor had built his own house at 6 Third Street a few years earlier. He sold both houses on Second Street for use as summer cottages to a woman from Minneapolis. This house was designated for its architectural character. In addition, it is a good example of a summer home for a Minneapolis resident.



- 11) **193 Second Street (1880s; ca. 1900; ca. 1925) – McGrath/Arey House**
This Victorian Gothic house was built in several stages. The central section was built in the 1880s for Robert B. McGrath, one of the first settlers of Excelsior and an early builder in the town. The McGraths enlarged the house around 1900 and built the cobblestone wall along the sidewalk in 1904. Following the death of Mrs. McGrath, Dr. Hugh Arey and his wife Mabel moved in from their house across the street. The Areys added the enclosed porch and a west wing. The current owners have added the gabled entrance to the porch. This house was designated because of its historic associations with two prominent Excelsior citizens, one of whom was a town founder. The architectural features have been changed over the years, yet the house retains its nineteenth-century character.



12) **200 Second Street (1921) – Captain Johnson Home**

This Arts and Crafts house was built for Capt. John R. Johnson on the site of a house that was moved to the adjoining lot at 220 Second Street. Johnson, a Norwegian immigrant, came to Excelsior in 1881 and eventually acquired a fleet of excursion boats. After selling his boats to the streetcar company in 1905, he established a company to dredge lakes in the metropolitan area. Stylistically, the house is a more elaborate version of the popular Craftsman bungalow that was frequently built during this period. This house was locally designated because of its associations with Johnson and its architectural design.



13) **201 Second Street (1915) – Bennett/Studer Residence**

This is a particularly fine example of an Arts and Crafts bungalow, a popular style for Excelsior residences in the period around World War I. It was built by Harley Bennett, owner of the Bennett Bros. Livery, and his wife Mary Hempher Buck, widow of A. W. Buck, on the site of the earlier Buck house. In 1920 the Bennetts sold the house to the E. A. Studer family, who owned a thriving road construction business active throughout the Upper Midwest, Northwest, and into western Canada. This house was designated because of its associations with Bennett and Studer and its architectural design.



14) **634 Third Ave (1873 – 1880) – Latham House**

This house exemplifies a vernacular architectural type known as the gable-and-wing form. The intersecting gable roofs have decorative trim at the roof eaves, the wing is fronted by a porch, and the gable-front section has a three-sided projecting bay. A. W. Latham was a nurseryman and horticulturist, who cultivated the land to the north and south of his house with grape vines and apple trees. He also served as town and village clerk between 1871 and 1893. The house is an interesting example of its architectural type and recalls Excelsior's historic past.



15) **6 Third Street (1890 with later additions) – Milnor House**

This Victorian house was built in 1890 for W. S. Milnor, who was mayor of Excelsior between 1891 and 1894. The original house had a square plan with a pyramidal roof and a two-story open porch facing the lakefront. A barn and a separate entertainment hall were later added to the grounds (both are now gone). In the early 1900s a circular tower and a two-story rear addition were added. Many other modifications and alterations have been made to the structure through the years. This house was designated because of its associations with Milnor, who made some of the early additions, but the character of the house has changed considerably since his tenure. *Because the house has lost much of its integrity, it is recommended that HPC designation be removed.*



16) **152 Third Street (1887; 1890 and later) – Willis Willard House**

This vernacular house initially was built as a cottage in 1887 for Willis Willard, a woodcut engraver and lithographer. Willard was one of the first engravers in Minneapolis. His work appeared in *Frank Leslie's Weekly* and local Minnesota publications. He devised the figure of the "Ceresota Kid" in about 1891, and in 1895 he joined the art department of the Savage International Stock Feed Company. By 1890 the cottage had undergone exterior additions to turn it into a more substantial house. Further alterations and additions were made in the 1950s. Extensive remodeling between 1986 and 1987 further changed the original Victorian character of the house.

The integrity of this house in relation to its association with Willis Willard is tenuous at best. Changes since its designation have further severed the connection. *Consequently, it is recommended that local HPC designation be removed.*



17) 205 Third Street (1881, 1886) – Michael House

This Victorian cottage was built in 1881 for Christian Michael, a Swiss immigrant, and his wife Irene Elizabeth Warren Michael. Mrs. Michael enlarged the cottage in 1886. The Weinholz Construction Company remodeled the inside of the house in 1937 after the installation of the city water and sewer system. When the house was designated as Excelsior's first landmark in 1980, it was still owned by Fern Michael, a granddaughter. An addition was constructed in 1991 at the northeast side of the house. This house was designated because of its date and its long association with a single Excelsior family.



18) 323 Third Street – Beehive/Sheldon Hall

This small apartment building was constructed between 1926 and 1927 using the structure of the first Excelsior school that had been built in 1857 and moved to this site in 1883. The addition of a basement and a two-story section in 1891 facilitated its use as a twenty-three room dormitory, "Sheldon Hall," for students of Northwestern Christian College. In 1898 the hall was sold to W.P. McDonald, and it became a boarding house managed by Mrs. Gust Wilson. In 1926 the boarding house was vacated so the structure could be rebuilt and converted to apartments. Because of the many occupants through the years, it became known as "the Beehive." In 1995, it was converted into a duplex. This is an example of a building designated for its historic associations that bears little resemblance to its historic significance, although it retains its architectural integrity as twentieth-century residential structure. Its nickname, "The Beehive," recognizes its history as a multiple dwelling.



19) 140 W. Lake Street (1895; 1913) – Palmer's Grove

Palmer Grove with its five buildings contains the last surviving group of summer cottages in Excelsior. The site was originally larger, extending to the north and south, and was known as Sturgis Grove after its owner, Lewis Sturgis, or Elm Grove. The Colonial Revival style house closest to the lake was built in about 1895 for Sturgis. The Sturgis family sold the property to a Mr. Clements in 1911, who added the other cottages in 1913 and split the property into two sections. All the cottages are simple vernacular types, although the one closest to the street is distinguished by its gabled roof dormer. Oliver Palmer purchased the group in 1923; the buildings are still maintained as summer rentals by his son John Palmer. The barn structure on Linwood Avenue, now converted to a garage, is also owned by Palmer and used by tenants of Palmer Grove.

As a rare surviving example of a group of buildings associated with a significant aspect of Excelsior's history, it is recommended that it be considered for National Register listing under Criterion C.



(20) 192 Second Street (1920)

This Craftsman bungalow is a significant example of the style, located near two other designated houses of a similar style. The home was built in 1920 by Excelsior builder Joe Weinholz, who also built a number of other Craftsman and Prairie style homes in town. The house is in a unique location within the city, in that the site is prominently located on the side of the second highest hill in Excelsior (after Oak Hill Cemetery). The house's unique location, distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style and period, and the value it adds to the heritage and cultural characteristics of the city, all support the designation of this property as a heritage preservation site. (Ord. No. 374, 2004)



(21) 228 Center Street (1891; 1934)

This site originally contained a Queen Anne style house built in 1891 for Walter Phillips by W.D. Clark. In 1934 the house was extensively altered to assume its present Colonial style by local carpenters Lincoln and Horace Aldritt. The client was William Nelson. The Colonial style was gaining in popularity in the 1920s and 1930s, but its use in Excelsior was relatively rare. This house is a good example of the Colonial style. The house's distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style and period, and the value it adds to the heritage and cultural characteristics of the city, all support the designation of this property as a heritage preservation site. (Ord. No. 383, 2004)

(23) **182 Third Street (1897)**

The historic Bennett-Hutmaker House was built in 1897 by local builder J.H. Clark for Melvin W. and Ella M. Bennett. Melvin and his brother Harley owned the Bennett Livery, a horse livery stable that is now a converted office building on Second Street. The foundation for the house was laid in 1891 but the house was not constructed until 1897. A two-story Victorian home, the Queen Anne type structure is similar in style to the earlier house built for Bennett's sister, Miriam, at 194 Third Street. The Hutmaker family moved to this house in Excelsior in 1949. "Mr. Jimmy" Hutmaker, a local celebrity, lived in the house for many years until 2004, when Mr. Jimmy moved to a senior assisted living facility in Excelsior. The current owners have renovated the original Victorian structure, restoring the original woodwork, stained glass windows and porch, while adding a rear addition and attached side garage that pay tribute to the visual character of the original house. Its identification with a person who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the city, its identification as work of an architectural or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the city, and its unique location, scale, or other physical characteristic representing an established and familiar visual feature of the city, all support the designation of this property as a heritage preservation site. (Ord. No. 387, 2006)



(24) **236 Lake Street**

The house was built as a summer cottage for Albert C. Hausman. The Mark family has lived in the house since 1965. It was noted that the history of the site can be traced to the original schoolhouse for the community that was located on the property and then the property was the location of the Long View House, a resort hotel that burned in 1891. The style of the structure is neither pure Craftsman nor Victorian, but an interesting eclectic character that embodies a transitional period in American architecture. Its location on the bluff overlooking Lake Minnetonka gives the site a unique visual location. The structure on the site is unique, since it features a well-documented turn-of-the-century house with surviving period blueprints. The house still contains significant windows, brackets, and other vintage exterior features. Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, period, form, or treatment, and its unique location, scale, or other physical characteristic representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, a district, the community, or the city, all support the designation of this property as a heritage preservation site. (Ord. No. 408, 2006)



(25) **635 Glencoe Road**

This imposing house, designed in the traditional gable-and-wing form with Queen Anne decorative detail, was built on a hilly site overlooking Glencoe Road. The intersecting gable roofs have decorative trim in the gable ends. A rear wing is fronted by a one-story porch. Another porch was originally located at the front of the house. The house may have been constructed by Rosa and Joseph Wright, who acquired the property in 1888 and took out a mortgage on the property in 1891. A house is shown on the 1898 Dahl map, and the form and stylistic details are characteristic of the 1890s. After the Wrights defaulted on their mortgage, the property was acquired by George and Louisa Raitz in 1901. Raitz was a grocery merchant in Excelsior and a Civil War veteran. The Raitzes sold the house to Francis and Ida Willis in 1908. Since 1958, the house has been owned by Chase and Sue Cornelius. Its identification with a person who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the city, its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, period, form, or treatment, and its unique location, scale, or other physical characteristic representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, a district, the community, or the city all support the designation of this property as a heritage preservation site.

