

Northfield Making History with Podcast Tours

By Amy Acheson



Photo courtesy of the Northfield Historical Society

Bridge Square has served many purposes over the years in Northfield, but has always been revered as the town's center. Photo circa 1890.

Archives of books, documents and photos—years in the making—have been gathered and researched at the Northfield Historical Society to create a state-of-the-art podcast walking tour. The town itself becomes a museum as one explores the treasures of Northfield's historic buildings and open-air community spaces with the aid of modern technology.

The high-tech history tours were initiated by the Northfield Historical Society in partnership with the City of Northfield Heritage Preservation Commission who secured funding through a Certified Local Government Grant from the Minnesota Historical Society. The City of Northfield and the Northfield Convention and Visitors Bureau joined in as community partners for the project, while both St. Olaf College and Carleton College assisted with the research, writing and development of the podcasts.

"The goal of the project was to document Northfield's history in a way that it hasn't been done before," shared executive director

Hayes Scriven of the Northfield Historical Society. The podcasts focus on the town's early history and how it developed and grew. "It's a good two-hour snippet of Northfield history, where you get a real good understanding of the people and the town," Scriven added. The project showcases 12 stops in Northfield's downtown with a total of 16 different podcasts, each with its own story to tell. The podcasts are accessible to everyone and free to use by checking out an iPod from the Historical Society, downloading the podcasts on your own device or simply viewing online.

A benefit of this style of tour is that it can be done however you want. It's not highly structured like most group tours, Scriven explained, so you can go at your own pace. Plus, you're able to view historic photographs that you wouldn't normally have access to on a tour and compare them to the current places you visit. "It helps a person get transported or reconnected with that time," shared Steve Edwins, one of the founders of the program and also a board member

of the Northfield Heritage Preservation Committee.

"The project was very useful for gathering information," added Edwins. The researchers collected accurate dates and names like who used to run buildings, etc. "There's a lot of content there that people don't even realize is the way things developed. Just having that is going to be really useful for more purposes down the road," he added.

"The benefits are far reaching," Edwins commented. "In the long term we would like to expand to more buildings in the downtown, the colleges, historic home tours, and historic rural areas and woodlands. The podcasts are intended for a multitude of purposes: visitors, educators, downtown businesses and on digital libraries and web sites."

For Northfield townspeople, the tours help them connect to where they live and to understand how the community has been shaped overtime. It's more than just interesting architecture; it gives you a

I Bridge Square (Mill Square)

Has served as a center for business and community activities since Northfield's founding in 1855.

II Scriver Building, 408 Division St.

Site of the failed 1876 bank raid by the James-Younger Gang, built in 1868 by Northfield's first mayor Hiram Scriver.

III Central Block, 401 Division St.

Northfield's tallest building, built in 1893 by merchants Louis Tschann and Frank DeGross.

IV Ames Mill, 326 Water St.

Built by Captain Jesse Ames in 1869 on the site of an earlier mill built by Northfield's founder John W. North. John Campbell purchased the mill in 1925 and started Malt-O-Meal.

V Ebel Block, 305 Water St.

A typical and well preserved 19th century commercial building built in 1894 by William Ebel, a local hardware store owner. It replaced a wood-frame building built in the 1860's by Ebel.

State Bank Building, 311 Water St.

Built in 1910 and was designed by noted Minneapolis architect Harry Wild Jones in the Egyptian Revival style.

VI Archer House, 212 Division St.

Northfield's oldest hotel, built in 1877 by James Archer.

VII Northfield Public Library, 210 Washington St.

Built in 1910 with a \$10,000 grant from the Carnegie Foundations, and local gifts.

VIII Ware Auditorium (The Grand Theater), 316 Washington St.

Built in 1899 by A.K. Ware, was Northfield's 'first class' opera house when it opened.

IX Lyceum Building, 109 East Fourth St.

The Historic District's oldest wood framed building, built in 1856 by Northfield's founder John W. North.

X Lockwood Opera House, 421 Division St.

Built in 1872 by Ephraim Lockwood. Site where the Articles of Incorporation for St. Olaf College were drafted.

XI Scofield Building, 503 Division St.

Built in 1868 of stone by Dr. John Scofield. It burned ten years later and was rebuilt in brick and cast iron with a fine sheet metal cornice.

XII Bjoraker Building (Bierman's Furniture), 420 Division St.

Built before 1870, the Bjoraker Building is a well preserved example of a stone commercial building built before brick was easily obtainable locally. It has been home to Bierman's Furniture since 1934.

Please remember to return your iPod to the Historical Society

Northfield Downtown Tour Map

perspective of what was important in people's lives and their values. Come discover Northfield's past with the ease of today's latest technology—marking a new age in heritage tourism.

Websites:

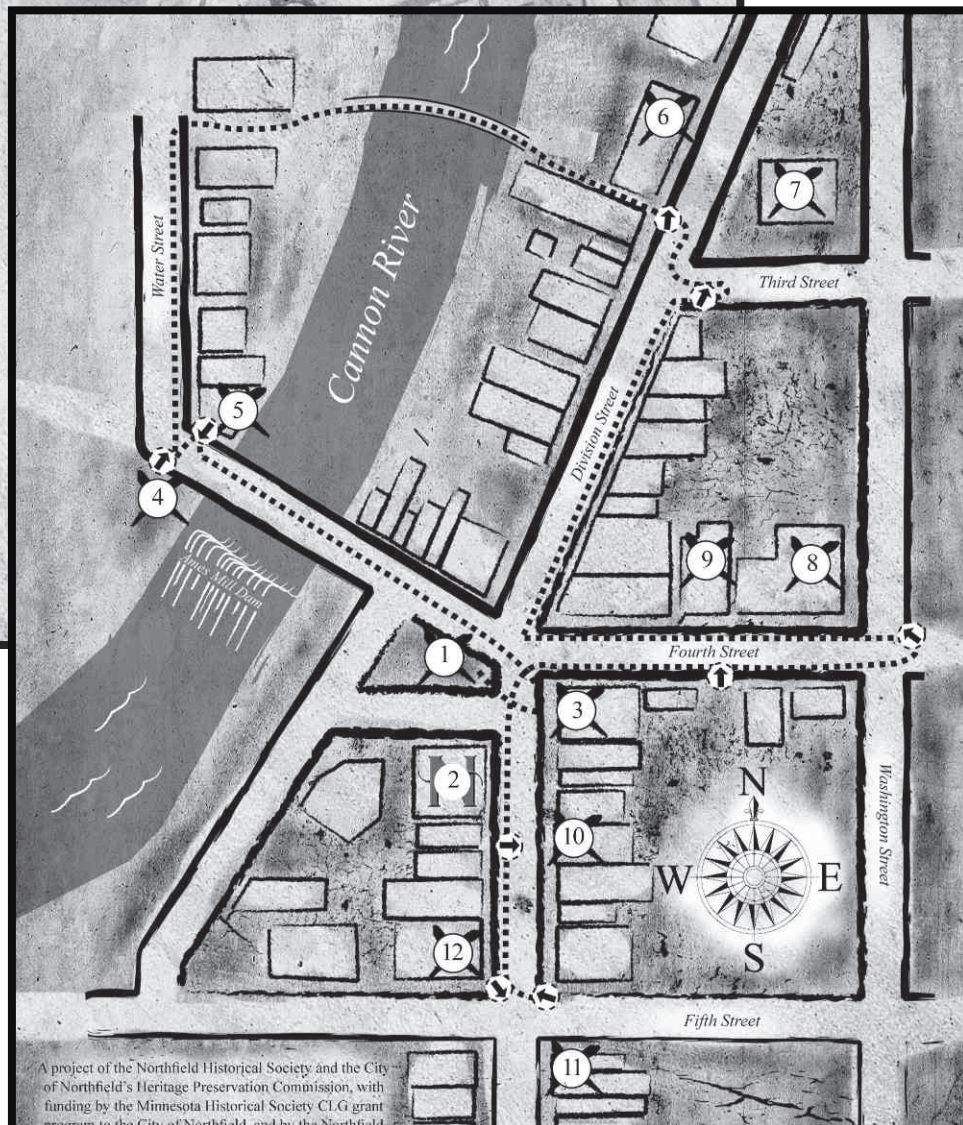
www.northfieldhistory.org

www.visitingnorthfield.com

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Northfield Downtown Tour Map

Discover our History Treasures



A project of the Northfield Historical Society and the City of Northfield's Heritage Preservation Commission, with funding by the Minnesota Historical Society CLG grant program to the City of Northfield, and by the Northfield