

Brainerd's Hidden History: A Tour of Historic Buildings and Homes of North Brainerd

**Ann M. Nelson
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Overview

Nearly all of the buildings on the tour were built in the 1880's or very near the turn of the 20th Century; the second Episcopal Church was completed about 1930. While there are many very fine houses included on this tour, the houses were selected primarily because of the contributions of their earliest residents, the stories associated with them and because I think it's important for interested current citizens to learn more about some of our city's pioneers. Significant architectural details and styles have been noted where possible. Please refer to the map on the last page which shows where the buildings are located.

NOTE: All of the residents of the homes on this tour are buried in Evergreen Cemetery.

Kingwood Street

Ferris House-601 Kingwood Street--MAP #1

William A. and Beulah Ferris

William Ferris and his wife, Beulah, arrived in Brainerd in 1872. This house was built in 1887 by Beulah Ferris, widow of William Ferris, who, along with George Holland and several others, established the Bank of Brainerd in 1880. In 1881 this bank became the First National Bank of Brainerd. Mrs. Ferris was one of the few women of her time who retained the position of major stockholder and member of the board of directors of the bank for many years. In 1893, her twenty-seven-year-old son, Allen, was elected bank president, a position he held until dying of a burst appendix in 1903. Ferris served as a state representative from 1894 to 1902 when he was elected to the state senate, serving eight months in that capacity until his death at the age of thirty-eight. In 1901 Allen Ferris and George LaBar headed a committee of Brainerd businessmen who funded and built the Park Opera House, which eventually became the Paramount Theatre.



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Note: Much of the original interior of this house remains intact including its original woodwork.

North Fifth Street

Ingersoll House-224 North Fifth Street--MAP #2

Newton H. and Hattie Ingersoll

Newton Ingersoll, the senior partner of Ingersoll & Wieland, purchased the weekly *Brainerd Dispatch* in June of 1883 which he edited and published until his untimely death in 1918. Besides being the editor and publisher of the *Dispatch* for thirty-five years, Ingersoll was appointed postmaster in 1900, a position he filled for fourteen years. It became his responsibility in November of 1900 to institute free mail delivery in the city of Brainerd. In order to take advantage of this service the city had to have its houses and places of business properly numbered and the names of the streets placed at each corner. In January of 1901 the street committee of the city council was instructed to lay out a plan for numbering houses and places of business. Even though an ordinance was passed requiring homes and businesses to be numbered, a large number of citizens had still not complied by April. A postal inspector was dispatched to Brainerd to make sure the city was in compliance with the postal service requirements. The result of his survey was a report noting that the street signs were not in place and many business places still had no numbers, thereby delaying implementation. Finally, in November 1901, mail began to be delivered directly to the homes and businesses of Brainerd. Three mail carriers were hired at a salary of \$600 a year and they *only* worked eight hours a day. Throughout his tenure at the *Dispatch*, Ingersoll was a strong advocate and promoter of Brainerd. He pushed for the dam to be built, sidewalks to be installed, streets to be paved and sewers to be installed. This house was built in 1880.



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North Fourth Street

First Crow Wing County Courthouse-224 North Fourth Street--MAP #3

The contract for the new courthouse was let to Charles F. Haglin & Charles



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Morse, very prominent contractors and builders of Minneapolis, for \$31,018, in June of 1882. This courthouse was built in the Richardsonian Romanesque style



ca. 1883

and completed in August 1883 on the southeast

corner of Kingwood and North Fourth Streets. A new sheriff's residence with its attached jail was built next door, south, at the same time. On July 23, 1896, John Pryde, confessed murderer, was executed by hanging. Since Mr. Pryde was housed in the county jail, attached to the sheriff's residence, he was provided the



Sheriff's Residence and Jail



Sheriff's Residence

opportunity to watch as the specially constructed, temporary building housing the scaffold, rose outside his jail-cell window. Mr. Pryde's last meal consisted of fried chicken, fruitcake, apple pie, peach sauce, and a bowl of cream. Sheriff Henry Spalding was in charge of the execution and Pryde was buried without ceremony in an unmarked grave in the potter's field of Evergreen Cemetery. After the Brainerd High School burned on March 30, 1928 the courthouse building was refitted for use as a temporary high school until the new high school was opened in 1930. In 1933 the County Commissioners offered the courthouse and sheriff's residence with its attached jail for sale. Apparently there were no acceptable offers for the sheriff's residence and attached jail and at some point both were demolished. Much of the original character of the courthouse, the conical top of the tower, the mansard roof and dormers have all been removed and the roof has been flattened. The building was allegedly built with Brainerd cream brick from the Schwartz brick yard in northeast Brainerd.

Note: Haglin & Morse also built the magnificent Hennepin County Courthouse in Minneapolis in 1888.

Hemstead House-303 North Fourth Street--MAP #4

Dr. Werner and Margaret Hemstead

Dr. Hemstead arrived in Brainerd in 1882 as the Assistant Chief Surgeon at the Northern Pacific Hospital. He served two terms as mayor of Brainerd and two terms in the Minnesota House of Representatives. In 1900 Dr. Hemstead purchased three lots on the northwest corner of Kingwood and North Fourth Streets. Shortly after the lots were purchased, Frederick Kees, a Minneapolis architect, was engaged to design the house in the Classical Revival style. Alonzo Everett, a local contractor, built the house, which would cost over \$5,000 when completed in about 1902. It is the only



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privately built house in Brainerd on the National Register of Historic Places and is one of only two buildings in Brainerd built in the Classical Revival style featuring a symmetrical temple-like facade and a portico with four Ionic columns supporting a pedimented gable. (The Carnegie Library is the other.) A porte-cochère is located on the south side of the house, which allowed guests to enter the home through a side-door by stepping directly from their horse-drawn carriages, thereby being protected from the weather. Upon completion, Mrs. Hemstead and nineteen of her friends, including their daughters, hosted an elegant reception for several hundred Brainerd women. On the third floor a full orchestra entertained the guests and every room in the house was profusely and elaborately decorated with flowers.



Brainerd Tribune 1910

Spalding House-403 North Fourth Street--MAP #5

Henry and Isabelle Spalding

Henry Spalding came to Brainerd with his family in 1872 at the age of fifteen and for several years he was a very popular conductor for the Northern Pacific Railroad. After it was discovered in 1888 that the man who had been elected sheriff was actually a citizen of Canada, Spalding was appointed Crow Wing County Sheriff, serving several terms in that capacity. He was responsible for the execution by hanging of John Pryde in 1896, a duty which he found very distasteful, since he did not believe in capital punishment; he did not run for re-election. Built in 1910 and still standing in Crosby is the Spalding Hotel, named after Henry. Isabelle was considered a very fine cook and kept the prisoners in the county jail well supplied with good food.



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Wieland House-407 North Fourth Street--MAP #6

Fred and Lucy Wieland

In June of 1883 Newton Ingersoll and Fred Wieland entered a partnership to purchase the *Brainerd Dispatch*. Wieland was the junior partner. Ingersoll and Wieland jointly operated the *Dispatch* until 1918 when Newton Ingersoll died unexpectedly. Fred Wieland then operated the *Dispatch* until he sold the paper in 1931 to the W. D. Junkin and Henry F. McCollough families. This house is located just north of the one occupied by Henry Spalding and is one of a row of five brick houses built on the west side of



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North Fourth Street in the mid-to-late 1890's by W. D. McKay, builder of the Columbian Block in 1893, and one of the builders of the Iron Exchange building in 1910-1911.

North Fifth Street

Clark House-501 North Fifth Street--MAP #7

Daniel M. and Rosalie Clark

A prominent businessman and undertaker, Clark built his business into the largest purveyor of hardware, furniture and other household goods in the city. He began his business in the Sleeper Block, later moving to the newly built Columbian Block where he conducted a mammoth store advertised as being able to furnish



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everything needed to establish a household from cellar to garret. In 1895 Clark established an undertaking department; embalming was done in the basement of the store in the Columbian Block until the building burned in a spectacular fire on October 28, 1909. There were about 100 pounds of dynamite stored at the rear of the store at the time of the fire; fortunately, it was removed before the fire reached it.



Brainerd Tribune 1910

Fleming House-515 North Fifth Street--MAP #8

Judge William A. and Florence Fleming

Born in New York in 1848 Judge Fleming arrived in Brainerd in 1882. He served two terms in the Minnesota House of Representatives, five years as the County Superintendent of Schools, four years as Brainerd Municipal Judge, two years as Crow Wing County Attorney and a year as Brainerd City Attorney. Judge Fleming was instrumental in convincing the voters to accept the proposals to bring the Northern Mill from Gull River to Brainerd and to bring the Brainerd & Northern Railroad, which eventually became the Minnesota and International (M & I), to Brainerd in 1892. In 1901, after working tirelessly for six years, he was finally successful in securing a pardon and the release from prison of a man unjustly sentenced to twenty years in prison for indecent assault in 1895. This house was built in 1888



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and on September 25, 1888 the newly married Mr. and Mrs. Fleming, a former Brainerd teacher, moved into it. In 1899 the Flemings sold the house to Daniel M. Clark who later built the house we just visited.

Anderson House-523 North Fifth Street--MAP #9

John P. and Christine Anderson

John P. Anderson, as did many millions of other immigrants, came to this country in search of a better life. He was born in Sweden in 1869, coming to the



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United States in 1881 and later to Brainerd, where for five years, he was a machinist apprentice in the Northern Pacific shops. He spent several years traveling in the employ of various railroad companies, and in 1899 returned to Brainerd and again entered the employ of the Northern



Brainerd Tribune 1910

Pacific. Anderson was promoted to superintendent of the shops in 1904, which position he held until dying unexpectedly in 1930. He was employed by the Northern Pacific Railroad for forty-five years. The house was built about 1909 by Anderson. This house was once the childhood home of Brainerd historian, Carl Faust.

Bluff Avenue

Camp House-403 Bluff Avenue--MAP #10

Dr. James Camp

Dr. James L. Camp, a life-long bachelor, arrived in Brainerd in 1883, in 1901 he purchased this home on Bluff Avenue from Joseph Slipp for \$3,000; the doctor lived in the house until about 1909. Dr. Camp owned and operated the Lumbermen's Hospital in northeast Brainerd from 1890 to 1893. In 1893 he moved the hospital to Bluff Avenue and in 1900 he sold the property to the Benedictine sisters of Duluth for \$9,000; they renamed it St. Joseph's Hospital. In September of 1901 the sisters broke ground for a new hospital building which would cost in the neighborhood of \$22,000 when completed.



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Note: The house sits far back from the sidewalk and has an addition on the front that hides the part of the house that is original.

McClenahan House-423 Bluff Avenue--MAP #11

Judge William S. and Rosalie McClenahan

William S. McClenahan arrived in Brainerd in 1882 from Baltimore. He served as city attorney for twelve years. For years, a controversy had been raging over whether the city owned a parcel of land known as Gregory Square or whether it belonged to the Lake Superior & Puget Sound Land Company, a subsidiary of the Northern Pacific Railroad. In 1888 a suit was brought in the United States Circuit Court against Lyman P. White, agent of the railroad's land company, in order to establish ownership. A long legal battle ensued, the outcome of which seemed to favor the city, so in May of 1891



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the land company offered to deed one-half of Gregory Square to the city. McClenahan advised the city council not to accept the offer and in January 1892, because of his able and skillful prosecution of the suit, the Circuit Court decreed the ownership of the parcel of land to rest fully in the name of the city. Mr. McClenahan had stood alone, for years, in court against the Northern Pacific Railroad and the Lake Superior & Puget Sound Land Company and

single-handedly secured Gregory Park for the city of Brainerd. He was elected 15th Judicial District Court judge in 1901 and remained on that bench until he retired in 1930. Shortly after being elected, he ordered the sawdust removed from the floors of the various courtrooms and had cuspidors installed for the use of tobacco chewers; he also ordered the lawyers, members of the jury and spectators to keep their suit coats on while in his court. During his term of service on the bench, he was extended an invitation to become a member of the Minnesota State Supreme Court which he declined.



Brainerd Tribune 1910

Note: A fire occurred in this house some time in the Fall of 1986. After the fire the floors in the kitchen and in the first and second floor bathrooms were replaced. The porch was once screened and the screening was removed. Later, a second door to the kitchen was closed up, the original upstairs bathroom window was removed and the original pillars on the porch were replaced.

North Eighth Street aka Broadway

Sleeper House-501 North Eighth Street--MAP #12

Judge Chauncey B. and Sarah Sleeper

This house was built sometime in the early 1880's by Dr. Jasper E. Cheney, a prominent Brainerd physician. In 1883 he sold the residence to Chauncey B.



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Sleeper, a lawyer, who arrived in Brainerd in 1872 with his family. Over the years Sleeper held a number of city offices and was elected mayor in 1887 after which he immediately resigned to accept the appointment of judge of the Fifteenth Judicial District Court, the office he held at the time of his death in 1888. In 1881 Sleeper built the Sleeper Block on Front Street from which the first *Brainerd Dispatch* was published in 1881. In 1907 the

Sleeper Block burned down. In 1883 Sleeper, along

with a few others, was responsible for building the gigantic Sleeper Opera House mid-block on the east side of South Eighth Street between Front and Laurel Streets. It had a seating capacity of a thousand and opened in November of 1883; with its opening, Brainerd had one of the finest opera houses on the line of the Northern Pacific Railroad.

Early in January 1898 it burned in another of Brainerd's spectacular fires. In 1884, sixteen-year-old Maud, one of the Sleeper daughters, was married in a largely attended evening ceremony; afterward the guests were invited to the Sleeper residence where they were seated at banquet tables on the lawn lighted by locomotive headlights and Chinese lanterns. The house is notable for its mansard style roof which slopes inward from the exterior brick walls, contains dormer windows and allows for a second floor to be built without the use of bricks. The house was allegedly built with Brainerd cream brick from the Schwartz brick yard in northeast Brainerd.



ca. 1888

Note: This house is no longer a single-family dwelling, has been 'remuddled' and stuccoed, but still retains the mansard roof and dormer windows. The roof is one of the few, possibly the only, type of its kind remaining in the city.

Halsted House-423 North Eighth Street--MAP #13

Andrew J. and Louise Halsted

After purchasing the *Brainerd Tribune* newspaper in April of 1884, Halsted operated it for thirty-seven years, selling the paper in 1921. Perhaps the most widely-known person in northern Minnesota during his lifetime, he was elected to four terms as mayor of Brainerd. Sometime around 1900 he built this house, which remained in the hands of his descendants until his grandson, Zane H. Smith, retired Vice President of the First National Bank, sold it in October of 2001. Zane Smith was the last survivor of the Baby Face Nelson bank robbery, which took place on October 23, 1933; at the time, he was a nineteen-year-old bank clerk and messenger boy:



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“Zane Smith who, by the way, was the first of the regular bank employees to come in contact with the bandits as he entered the front door for work about 8:15 a. m., was slow in realizing what it was all about and one of the bandits hit him on the jaw,



ca. 1917

almost knocking him from his feet.” (*Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, 23 October 1933, p. 1)

North Seventh Street

LaBar House-324 North Seventh Street--MAP #14

George and Mayme LaBar

George LaBar arrived in Brainerd in 1882 at the age of sixteen; he was the



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orphaned nephew of George Holland, one of the founders of the First National Bank. In 1883 LaBar was put to work in the First National Bank’s collection department as a clerk and



Brainerd Tribune 1910

messenger and worked his way up through the various departments under the tutelage of his uncle. After the death of Allen Ferris in 1903, LaBar ascended to the bank presidency and was affiliated with the bank in some capacity for fifty years.

In April of 1901 LaBar, along with Allen Ferris, headed an association of Brainerd businessmen interested in building the Park Opera House, which eventually became the Paramount Theatre. LaBar was the chief promoter of the new opera house enterprise; due to his efforts, \$20,000 was raised from Brainerd citizens, through the sale of stock, to build the opera house, the total cost of which, when completed, was about \$26,000. On the gala opening night the auditorium was packed with Brainerd citizens dressed in their finest formal attire and everyone in attendance pronounced the new opera house a “perfect gem.” He was president of



Park Opera House 1905, Postcard

the First National Bank on October 23, 1933 when it was robbed by the Baby Face Nelson gang, although he was not in the bank at the time of the robbery, he arrived a few minutes later. Mayme Mitchell LaBar married George on October 3, 1900. She was the well-known soprano of the local Aeolian Quartette which performed at numerous functions held in Brainerd and its surrounding area in the late 1890's. This house was built and furnished by George in 1900 as a wedding gift for his new wife and is located directly across the street from where the Lyman P. White house once stood.

Carnegie Library-206 North Seventh Street--MAP #15

Carnegie Library

In February of 1901, Henry I. Cohen, prominent merchant and long-time library promoter, wrote a letter to Andrew Carnegie, steel magnate and philanthropist who was funding public libraries at the time, asking for a donation in order to build a public library for Brainerd. In January of 1902 Carnegie offered to provide \$12,000 toward building a library if the city would donate a suitable site and contribute \$1,200 annually toward the building's maintenance. In September the city accepted Carnegie's offer and in November the citizens voted to pay for building maintenance. Through public donations a thousand dollars was



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raised with which the site was purchased and deeded to the city in 1903. In August, Ralph D. Church, a Minneapolis architect, who also designed Carnegie libraries for the cities of Anoka, Litchfield, St. Peter and Worthington, was engaged to design the building. The building is built of brick and granite in a one story Classical Revival style with a raised basement; the front of the building features a portico with four Ionic columns supporting a pedimented gable. (The only other building in Brainerd built in the Classical Revival style is the Hemstead house.) The symmetrical, temple-like facade is a common characteristic of Carnegie libraries. The most unusual feature is the dome projecting from the flat roof, it is the only domed roof in Brainerd. This building was completed in 1904 and was added to the National Register of Historical Places in 1980.



Carnegie Library 1910, Postcard

SIDELIGHTS:

Congregational United Church of Christ

This church is one of the earliest in Brainerd, dating its organization from August 13, 1872. The first church, a gift from J. Gregory Smith, president of the Northern Pacific Railroad, was erected in the summer of 1872 and burned in January of 1881. By May of 1881, \$4,000 had been raised through donations and

the current building was erected in the summer of 1881 at a cost of \$13,000; it was dedicated in September of 1883, and contains the finest stained glass windows in the city of Brainerd. One of the primary forces in the building of this church was William Ferris, husband of Beulah, and one of the founders of the First National Bank.

Episcopal Church

The first church was built in the fall of 1871 and the first wedding ceremony in Brainerd was conducted here in November of 1871. The last service was conducted in the original church on July 9, 1922 during Brainerd's fifty-year homecoming celebration. The current church was built beginning in 1922, the cornerstone was laid in 1930 and the first service was held in January 1931.

Notes

The information used in this document was primarily gleaned from the 1883-1901 issues of the weekly *Brainerd Dispatch*.

The photos labeled *1910 Brainerd Tribune* were found in *Brainerd - The Hub of the Continent*, an article edited by A. J. Halsted, publisher of the *Brainerd Tribune*. This article is online at the City of Brainerd History web page (see next page).

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More Information and Pictures about Brainerd History Can be Found Here

Crow Wing County Historical Society Website

<http://www.crowwinghistory.org/>

- **Buildings & Parks of Some Historical Significance to Brainerd**

<http://www.crowwinghistory.org/buildings.html>

- **Bridges, Dam, Jumps, Steamboats and Ferries**

http://www.crowwinghistory.org/brainerd_structures.html

- **Early Accounts of Brainerd and its Surrounds**

http://www.crowwinghistory.org/early_accounts.html

- **Brainerd: City of Fire**

http://www.crowwinghistory.org/brainerd_fires.html

- **A History of the Northern Pacific Railroad in Brainerd**

<http://www.crowwinghistory.org/npr.html>

Evergreen Cemetery Burial Records

<http://www.brainerd.net/~evergreencem/dotd.html>

Crow Wing County USGenWeb

<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~mncrowwi/>

City of Brainerd Historic Newspapers, Maps, etc.

<http://www.ci.brainerd.mn.us/history/>

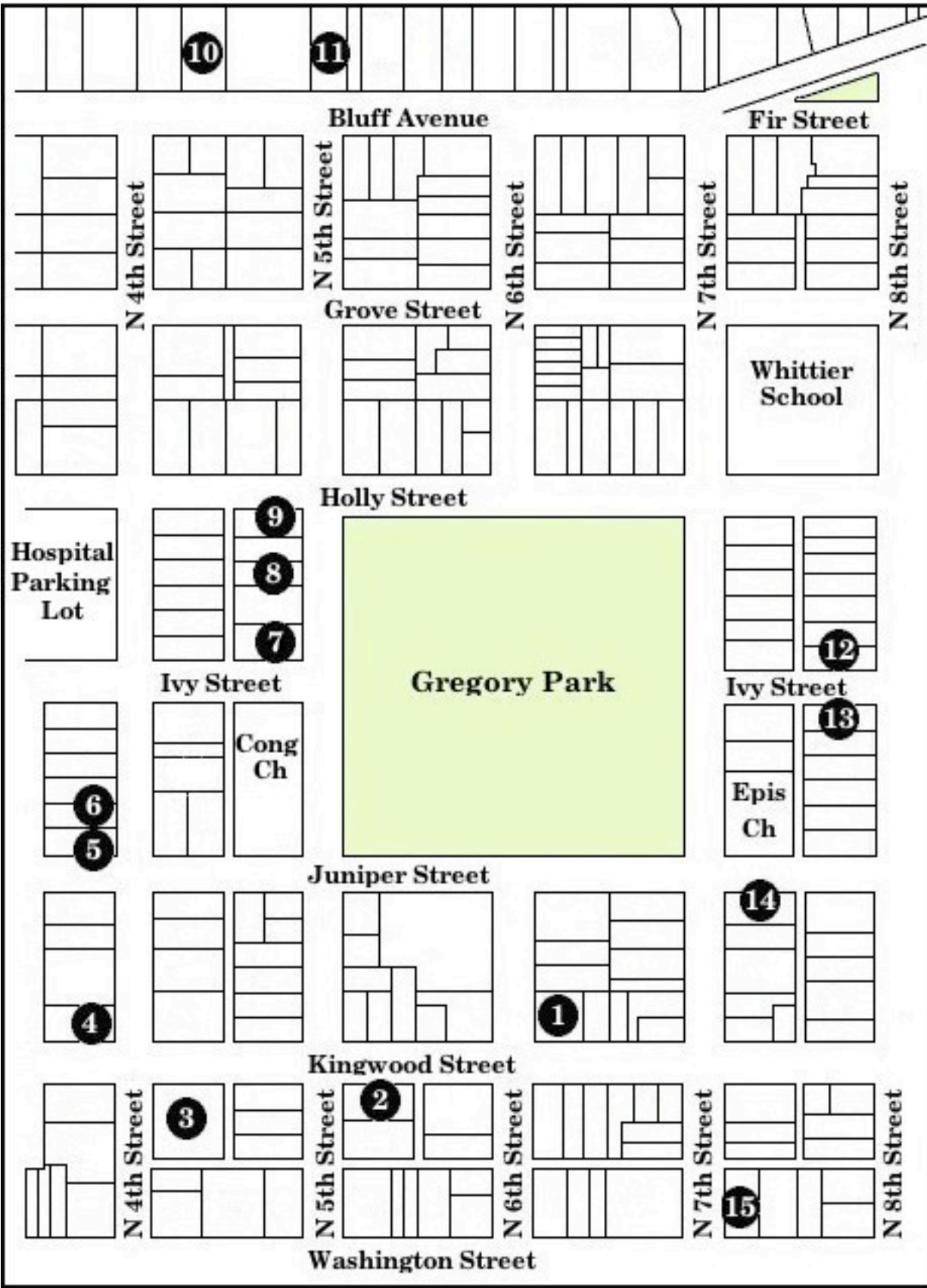
Brainerd History Group

<http://fertfaust.wix.com/brainerd-history>

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|-------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| 1-Ferris House | 6-Wieland House | 11-McClenahan House |
| 2-Ingersoll House | 7-Clark House | 12-Sleeper House |
| 3-1st Courthouse | 8-Fleming House | 13-Halsted House |
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