



Built to Last

THE HISTORIC SPANGENBERG FARMHOUSES

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Just beyond the stone wall that marks the western end of Jefferson Avenue in St. Paul, a steep path angles down to a tiny beach on the river and then returns to the top of the bluff further south. Offering adventuresome hikers along Mississippi River Boulevard an opportunity to climb down to the river, the narrow path is a remnant of a primitive road that was carved out of the embankment by a farmer who owned this land long before it became part of the public domain.

The road would serve many practical uses over the years, but its initial purpose was to quarry limestone from

the bluff. The hand-hewn stone that was harvested here has been traced to a pair of historic houses, one less than a quarter of a mile away and the other surprisingly far afield. The houses are the legacy of two German immigrants, Frederick and Charles Spangenberg, who came to Minnesota in the mid-1800s from Central Europe, where land ownership remained beyond their reach. Like thousands of others who have come to Minnesota over the years, they came to pursue dreams they could not fulfill in their homelands. While their aspirations for establishing

farms that would remain in the family for generations were not fully realized, they left behind two remarkable houses, one of which is arguably the best-preserved pioneer-era limestone farmhouse in Minnesota.

IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY Europe, many peasants in the region we now know as Germany (then a loose association of 38 states) lacked adequate resources to support themselves and their families. They subsisted by either farming small, worn-out tracts or competing for low-paying jobs in overpopulated cities. Land—and therefore political power—was largely controlled by the aristocracy. Widespread discontent with the largely autocratic political structure of the German states culminated in the revolutions of 1848–49. These uprisings, however, failed to achieve meaningful reforms, and the realization that their status was not likely to improve soon drove many Germans to seek a better life in America.

Frederick Spangenberg residence, 245 Mount Curve, St. Paul, as seen in the 1960s.

Concurrently, Minnesota Territory was opened for white settlement. Glowing accounts of Minnesota's rich farmland, natural beauty, and healthful climate, published in German newspapers and described in letters from North America, began to attract thousands of German-speaking immigrants, primarily motivated by the availability of land. By 1860, roughly 16,000 Germans were living in Minnesota. Among these immigrants were Frederick and Charles Spangenberg, who longed for the opportunity to establish farms that would sustain their families in the short term and for generations to come.¹

The Spangenberg family lived in Limlingerode, a small farming village in the Kingdom of Prussia's Province of Saxony. Limlingerode had changed little since the medieval period. Essentially a cluster of half-timbered buildings lining a loop off the main road, the village was surrounded by a patchwork of small farm fields and common areas for grazing animals. Eighteen miles to the east lay the city of Nordhausen, a historic center of trade that had reached its peak of economic activity during the later Middle Ages. The Spangenburgs also would have been acquainted with two other medieval cities that were situated about 60 miles to the south: Erfurt, a major crossroads in Central Europe, and Weimar, a center of literature and the arts.²

The details surrounding the Spangenberg brothers' decision to emigrate to Minnesota are a matter of speculation, but based on what is known about the family's history combined with the collective story of German immigrants who came to Minnesota in the middle of the nineteenth century, the following scenario is plausible: Torn between attachment to their homeland and despair over the ongoing struggle to make ends meet, the Spangenburgs

Frederick's own house would later incorporate the same details that he observed on the sturdy little limestone houses in St. Paul.

began to take note of the reports and letters from the New World. Frederick, the oldest of six Spangenberg children, was especially intrigued by the availability of cheap land in the new Minnesota Territory. He had been assisting his father on trips to Nordhausen to sell the cattle the family raised in the common fields outside of Limlingerode. As soon as his brother Charles was old enough to take over for him, Frederick began to look for ways to help support the family, while weighing his options for the future. With few opportunities in Limlingerode, he considered moving to Nordhausen or Erfurt, which were beginning to industrialize. He could look for work in factories there, but the competition for jobs was robust, the pay was low, and the working conditions did not appeal to Frederick, whose family had always lived close to the land. Weimar was not much farther away than Erfurt, but moving there would be complicated because it was located in a different state, the Grand Duchy of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach.³

While exploring these options, the prospect of owning land in Minnesota continued to captivate Frederick's imagination, and soon Charles shared the dream of owning a farm there. Eventually the Spangenburgs agreed on a plan: Frederick would go to Minnesota first, and, after he was securely settled, the rest of the family would follow. By 1855, Frederick, who was now 22, had saved enough for the voyage, but his plans were put on hold when his mother died in childbirth that year. Now 17, Charles could take care of himself, but Charlotte (12),

Ernst (9), twins Albert and Robert (7), and newborn baby Emma were too much for their father and Charles to handle by themselves. Frederick postponed the trip to America for a couple of years until all the children were older and Charlotte was mature enough to care for the baby and manage the household.⁴

When Frederick Spangenberg came to St. Paul in late 1857, Minnesota Territory was in the process of ratifying a constitution and electing officials in preparation for statehood status, which was attained the following year. Frederick and other newcomers to the city would have witnessed a flurry of building activity and observed piles of limestone rubble and ashlar as St. Paul hastily replaced its first buildings with durable, fire-resistant structures more befitting a city that aspired to be the capital of the new state. This effort relied heavily on Platteville limestone, which was locally available, plentiful, and easy to excavate.⁵

In addition to the buildings under construction downtown, a number of modest houses and stores built of limestone rather than wood were going up in the neighborhood near what is now West Seventh Street, where bedrock was less than one foot below grade in some places. Crafted by Irish and German immigrant stone masons, the limestone buildings synthesized Old World masonry traditions and American colonial architectural details. The thick, stone walls would have seemed familiar to Frederick, but not the details. In early St. Paul, window openings in masonry buildings typically had flush

limestone lintels and projecting sills; pitched roofs usually had wood shingles and boxed eaves; and virtually all buildings had multi-light, double-hung sash windows rather than casement windows, which were standard throughout Continental Europe. Though these details may have initially seemed odd to him, Frederick's own house would later incorporate the same details that he observed on the sturdy little limestone houses in St. Paul.⁶

Family lore notes that Frederick took a temporary job cutting cordwood on the grounds of Minnesota's first capitol building, at Tenth and Cedar Streets, prior to finding permanent employment on the Knapheide farm in Ramsey County's Reserve Township (now part of St. Paul west of Dale Street and south of Marshall Avenue). The township was so named because it was initially set aside solely for the use of soldiers

stationed at Fort Snelling. Friedrich Rudolf Knapheide, who in 1854 had been one of the first white settlers to purchase land in the Reserve after it was opened up for sale following the 1851 treaties of Traverse des Sioux and Mendota, owned about 160 acres in the area, which was now beginning to play a major role in supplying the rapidly growing city of St. Paul with fresh food. Anna Sontag, whose family had recently come from Muhlhausen, Germany, was working for the Knapheides when Frederick was hired. She and Frederick married in 1858. The couple began to purchase land priced at \$36 an acre from their employer. Frederick and Anna would eventually own an 80-acre farm and operate a prosperous dairy business with the help of hired hands and their eight children.⁷

A federal census of Reserve Township taken in July 1860 recorded that the "Spankens" were still living with



Frederick and Anna (Sontag) Spangenberg, taken about 10 years after they married in 1858.

the Knapheide family. Frederick's brother Charles, who had immigrated to St. Paul the month before the census was taken, was also listed in the household; both men were identified as farm laborers. In 1863, by which time Frederick and Anna had started their family, Charles went back to Germany and returned to Minnesota with his and Frederick's siblings and father. All members of the newly arrived family settled in the general vicinity of St. Paul. Frederick Sr., who had been a cattle dealer in Germany, and his two youngest sons, twins Albert and Robert, now 15, made their way to the area southeast of Lake Como, where they raised livestock. The rest—Charles, Ernst, Charlotte, and Emma—settled in Woodbury Township, where Charles and Ernst went into farming like their eldest brother Frederick, who had continued to purchase land from Knapheide. In 1863 Charles married Anna's sister, Elizabeth Sontag. The couple would eventually have 11 children, nine of whom survived past early childhood, six boys and three girls.⁸



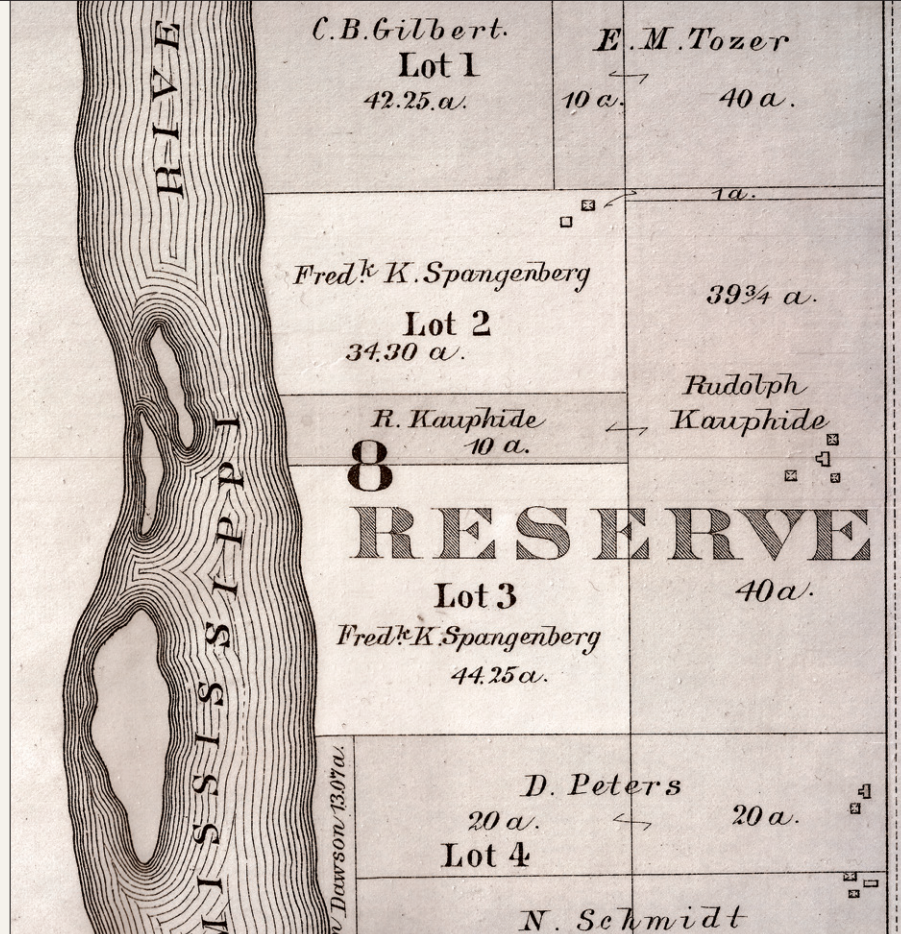
The Justus Ramsey House (ca. 1852, seen here in 1960) at 252 West Seventh Street, is one of the sturdy limestone houses that Frederick Spangenberg may have taken note of upon his arrival in St. Paul.

THE HOUSES THE BROTHERS BUILT

By the early 1860s, Frederick and Anna had a dairy farm of their own and were selling milk, butter, and eggs in the city. Initially, they owned 44.25 acres which, in terms of today's street grid, were bounded on the north by Randolph Avenue, on the east by Cretin Avenue, on the south by Hartford Avenue, and on the west by the Mississippi River. In 1864, they purchased an additional 34.30-acre parcel to the north that was separated from the first by a 10-acre tract that Knapheide held onto, presumably so he could maintain access to the river.⁹

Frederick apparently chose the second parcel for the rich supply of limestone on this stretch of the river, because here is where he began to quarry stone for his permanent house. The hand-hewn stone was hauled from the bluff at the foot of present-day Jefferson Street to a nearby wooded knoll on stone boats pulled by a yoke of oxen. It took three years to build the house, which was finally completed in 1868. Meanwhile, Frederick and Anna moved the dairy operation and their family to the con-

A 1955 St. Paul Pioneer Press article featuring the Frederick Spangenberg House included a photo of the complete farmstead as it appeared from the southeast in about 1870.



Hopkins 1886 Environs of St. Paul, Plate 4, indicates the 34.30-acre parcel that Frederick and Anna Spangenberg purchased in 1864 from F. Rudolph Knapheide, one of the first white settlers in Reserve Township. This parcel was separated from the 44.25 acres that they had purchased from him earlier by a 10-acre tract that Knapheide held onto, presumably so he could maintain access to the river. The squares in the northeast corner of the north parcel represent the Spangenberg house and barn.

struction site, where they established temporary living quarters in a frame building that was later repurposed for storing farm equipment.¹⁰

Frederick surely had compelling reasons for undertaking such an arduous project rather than building his house of wood like the other set-

tlers in Reserve Township. He chose stone not only for its durable and fire-proof qualities, but also for subjective reasons. Stone was reminiscent of the medieval buildings that had stood for centuries in Nordhausen and Erfurt as well as the limestone houses that greeted him upon his arrival in St.



The house that Frederick built is a rare survivor of Minnesota's early era of white settlement.

Paul. Stone was also the ideal material for achieving the image of permanence he sought to convey on the house he was building for posterity.¹¹

Completed just over 150 years ago at what is now 375 Mount Curve Boulevard in St. Paul's Macalester-Groveland neighborhood, the house that Frederick built is a rare survivor of Minnesota's early era of white settlement. It is also a reflection of the rich geology of the Mississippi River Gorge between Minneapolis and St. Paul. The bluff forming the west boundary of his farm was one of the locations along the east bank of the river where a pale yellowish-brown limestone overlays the Platteville formation that underpins much of St. Paul. This yellow limestone, which geologists refer to as the Carimona member of the Decorah Shale Formation, has randomly spaced shale partings and tends to break into blocky units with broadly rippled surfaces.¹²

Taking advantage of the several layers of rock available to him, Frederick incorporated roughly hewn Carimona blocks with Platteville rubblestone that varied in size, texture, and color. True to the Germanic vernacular tradition, Frederick refrained from adding any decorative details. The main portion of the house is a two-story, rectangular structure with a gable roof, boxed eaves, and corbelled brick chimneys at each end. The masonry walls, which are 24 inches thick at the foundation and taper to 18 inches at the attic, are punctuated with regularly spaced windows finished with dressed (smooth) limestone lintels above and projecting sills below. Fenestration is held to the outside face of the

thick walls, providing the interior of the house with deep windowsills and jambs. The original six-over-six, double-hung windows were standard for the day, as were the operable, louvered wood shutters, which provided an important means of climate control before glazed storm windows became common in the late 1800s.

Typical of classical facades, the front of the house features five windows that are vertically and horizontally aligned around the central front entry. The chimney on the south side of the house is flanked by a pair of vertically aligned windows, and the north side of the house was similar prior to an addition. Frederick obviously placed less importance on the rear of the house, which is not symmetrical and has only two windows with simple headers rather than the

dressed lintels on the front and sides of the house.

The interior structural supports, which were hand-hewn from trees on the property, include eight-by-eight columns and beams. Two-by-ten joists support sturdy plank floors, now overlain with hardwood flooring. The interior of the house was originally devoid of woodwork and decorative finishes. The simple plan placed the stairway between the first and second floor at the center of the house. On the first floor, the stair originally separated a parlor and bedroom on the south from a large front-to-back multipurpose room on the north. Upstairs were two bedrooms on either side of the stair hall. While from the front, the house appeared to have a typical center-hall plan with entries at both ends, it was like a traditional German farmhouse in that the "back door" was actually located on the side of the house that faced the barn. Thus, family and hired hands entered the house on the north side into the



A one-story addition on the north side of the house (date unknown) matches the construction of the main portion of the house except that the lintels and sills at the windows are wood rather than stone. Adjacent to the dining room, this wing originally served as a kitchen—a typical addition for nineteenth-century German American farmhouses. The colonial revival vestibule added later was a typical addition to older houses during the 1920s and 1930s.

large multipurpose area that served as a dining-living room and kitchen as well.

A one-story wing, seamlessly added onto this north side at an unknown point, appears to be an early addition because of the well-matched stone and construction, which is similar to the main portion of the house except that the lintels and sills at the windows are wood rather than stone. Adjacent to the dining room, this added wing originally served as a kitchen—a typical addition for nineteenth-century German American farmhouses, in which the cooking function was relocated from the dining-living room to a separate space as time and resources allowed. Used for washing clothes as well as dishes, the kitchen wing incorporated features that provided a ready supply of non-potable water. A large cistern in the basement below the kitchen was fed by a system of gutters and downspouts that collected rainwater from the roof. Through a hatch door cut into the kitchen floor,



A view of the “bank barn.” At the west end of the barn, livestock could access the lower level on grade. Hay storage on the upper level was accessed from the top of the slope on the other end. Built on a stone foundation, the wood-framed barn was sheathed in vertical wood siding.

buckets were lowered to fetch water as needed for washing. The kitchen addition originally had two exterior doors, one that provided easy access to the well and pump on the east side of the house, and another that faced the barn to the north.

The typical German, two-story “bank barn”—so called because it was usually built into the side of a hill, or bank, in order to provide easy access to both floors—took advantage of a steep slope that traversed the site. At the west end of the barn, livestock could access the lower level on grade. Hay storage on the upper level was accessed from the top of the slope on the east end. Built on a stone foundation, the wood-framed barn was sheathed in vertical wood siding. Over the years, several outbuildings were constructed between the house and the barn. An article in the *Pioneer Press* in 1955 gave a rare glimpse of the complete farmstead (see p. 20).¹³



Family members on the south side of the Frederick Spangenberg house in the early 1900s. Anna Spangenberg is standing in front with two of her grandchildren. Just behind them is her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Albert Spangenberg. On the right are Frederick Spangenberg and three of his sons (l to r, William, Frederick Sr., August, and Frederick Jr.). The windows in the foreground (removed from one of the outbuildings) are either being washed or used to protect seedlings.

LIMESTONE FROM Frederick’s property along the Mississippi River bluff also provided the material for Charles’s house. In 1869, Charles purchased 160 acres in Woodbury Township, at what is now 9431 Dale Road. Stone boats loaded with limestone were hauled 15 miles to the site by a team of horses. Frederick helped Charles construct the house, completed in 1871. The consider-

Charles's house was elaborately detailed. Arched openings in the exterior walls held arched windows, and ornate woodwork embellished the exterior, reflecting the Victorian style that was becoming popular at the time.

able effort involved in construction indicates that Charles too was intent on building a house that future generations of Spangenberg's would be proud to call home. The house was built into the side of the hill, which allowed for a walkout on the east side of the basement. Charles and his family lived in this lower level while their house was under construction.

The walkout basement, with a full-width covered porch above it, gives the house an imposing three-story appearance from the east. From the west, Charles's house rises only two stories above grade and, as originally constructed, closely resembled Frederick's, with five windows symmetrically arranged around a central entry.¹⁴

A walkout basement, with a full-width covered porch above it, gave the Charles Spangenberg farmhouse in Woodbury an imposing three-story appearance from the east. Charles's house was more elaborately detailed than Frederick's. As can be seen in this 1905 photo, decorative woodwork, such as the bargeboards in the gable ends, once embellished the exterior, reflecting the Victorian style that was becoming popular in the 1870s.

In most respects, Charles's house was constructed like Frederick's, with the same thick rubblestone walls, boxy shape, and gable roof, which originally had end chimneys; likewise, the windows on all sides aligned vertically and horizontally and have limestone sills. Charles's house was, however, more elaborately detailed. Arched openings in the exterior walls, constructed with wedge-shaped stones called voussoirs, originally held two-over-two, double-hung, arched windows, and ornate woodwork once embellished the exterior, reflecting the Victorian style that was becoming popular at the time. The interior of the house retains decorative details, such as arched doorways and a curved staircase with an ornate newel post.¹⁵

Frederick helped Charles build two other structures, a granary in about 1875, and a bank barn in about 1887, presumably when farming



operations switched from potatoes and grain to dairy production. The two-story, gable-roofed granary, which has a lean-to on either side, is constructed with mortise-and-tenon timber framing and vertical board siding. Now demolished, the gable-roofed barn was constructed in a similar manner and sat on a limestone foundation.¹⁶

PROXIMITY TO ST. PAUL HAS UNEXPECTED CONSEQUENCES

Both Frederick and Charles established substantial homesteads and prosperous farms, assuming they would stay in the family for generations. But the farms proved to be short-lived compared with those of other German immigrants who settled in tightly knit communities in southwestern and central Minnesota, where even today farms more than 150 years old are still in operation.¹⁷

Both brothers had large families, but as their children matured, most chose not to farm and left home. Several moved to St. Paul, which offered plenty of social as well as employ-

ment opportunities. The transition to the city was often facilitated by relatives who offered room and board and, in some cases, jobs. For example, by the early 1890s, the older sons of both Frederick and Charles were working in grocery and meat markets owned by their uncles, Albert and Robert Spangenberg.¹⁸

The lure of St. Paul proved to be especially problematic for Charles's fortunes. By 1895, sons Carl, Frederick, and William were out of the house and the two youngest sons, Alfred and Theodore, were still boys, which meant only son Edward, who was 20 at the time, was available to help Charles and Elizabeth manage the farm. After Elizabeth died in 1901, the family began to fall apart. Several newspaper notices indicated that Charles had altercations with his children and his brothers, some of which resulted in lawsuits. Alfred and Theodore ran away from home, aided by older siblings; Charles's attempts to gain custody of his son Theodore, who was just 10 at the time, failed. When Charles realized that his children weren't going to take over the farm, he sold the entire

property and by 1905 had moved to St. Paul. The property was purchased by Roman Czikalla, whose family continued farming operations into the mid-1950s.¹⁹

Frederick and Anna would experience similar disappointments when their three oldest sons—Albert, George, and William—also left home to make their livelihoods in St. Paul. But other developments soon posed even greater threats to the future of the farm. Initially well outside the boundaries of St. Paul, and bounded on the west side by the river, the farm may have seemed safe from encroachment when Frederick and Anna purchased the land back in the early 1860s, but by the 1880s the city was growing faster and circumstances were changing in ways they couldn't have anticipated. Of greatest concern was a proposal for a park and boulevard to run along the length of the river bluff, skirting the western edge of the farm. Mississippi River Boulevard, as it became known, was a key component of an elaborate park plan for St. Paul that was proposed by visionary landscape architect Horace W. S. Cleveland, who had recently designed a new park system for Minneapolis.²⁰

Frederick and Anna may not have heard about the boulevard when Cleveland first proposed it in 1872 because further discussion of the plan was abruptly curtailed by the depression of 1873. Cleveland's recommendations were resurrected when prosperity returned in the mid-1880s. In 1887, the Minnesota Legislature created a Board of Park Commissioners to spearhead a park plan for St. Paul, with an eye toward tying it into the park system in Minneapolis. The newly created board ordered a survey for the future Mississippi River Boulevard and directed the St. Paul Board of Public Works to begin condemnation proceedings

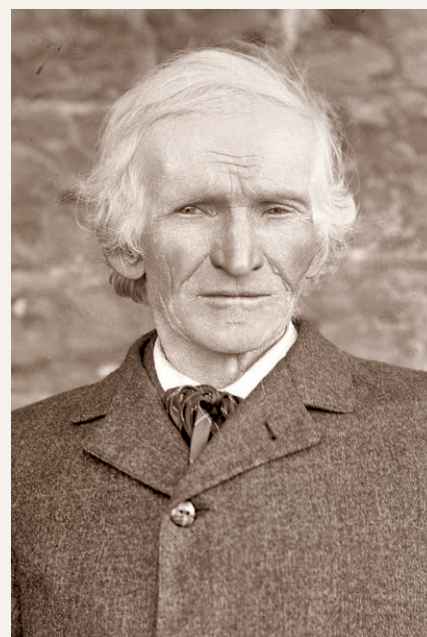


Frederick Spangenberg helped his brother Charles build a granary (right) in about 1875 and a bank barn (back) around 1887. The two-story, gable-roofed granary, which has a lean-to on either side, is constructed with mortise-and-tenon timber framing and sheathed with board and batten. Now demolished, the gable-roofed barn was constructed in a similar manner and sat on a limestone foundation. This photo was taken about 1977.

of private property required for the project. This could have been the first time Frederick realized that government entities in America could acquire private property for public use. Frederick and Anna were surely devastated when they learned of the boulevard project, which would have a serious impact on their farm. Forfeiting the bluff would mean much more than losing acreage; it would mean losing access to the river, not to mention the buffer from adjacent development it provided. They were no doubt relieved that for many years attempts to acquire private property for parkland failed due to widespread opposition from affected property owners. Implementation of

Mississippi River Boulevard would be postponed for almost two more decades.²¹

Another event that occurred in 1887 had an immediate impact on the farm. The City of St. Paul completed annexation of Reserve Township, which placed the Spangenberg and their neighbors within the city limits for the first time. This triggered several real estate transactions. Rudolph and Wilhelmine Knapheide sold their 10-acre tract that ran between the two parcels owned by the Spangenegs. The knowledge that their acreage south of Randolph could be separated from the rest by residential development may have prompted the Spangenegs to sell



Frederick Spangenberg Sr., ca. 1900.



Charles Spangenberg farmhouse from the west, 1970s view.

this parcel, which may have been reserved for their sons, three of whom had meanwhile decided to make their livelihoods off the farm. The increasing value of the land may have been another factor. In any case, by 1888 the family no longer owned the 44.25 acres south of Randolph and their holdings were now reduced to 34.30 acres.²²

In 1900, Frederick and Anna were required to grant the federal government all of their land below 720 feet above sea level in preparation for the construction of a lock and dam near the mouth of Minnehaha Creek. Although they lost only a narrow strip of land at the foot of the bluff, this forfeiture was a reminder that more property could soon be taken from them. Plans for the boulevard had resurfaced the previous year, when Archbishop John Ireland donated riverfront land at the western end of Summit Avenue for the project. Featuring a dramatic overlook and a deep ravine with a hidden waterfall, the area had been a popular destination for several decades. In 1902 a road was constructed around the ravine and north to Marshall Avenue. The

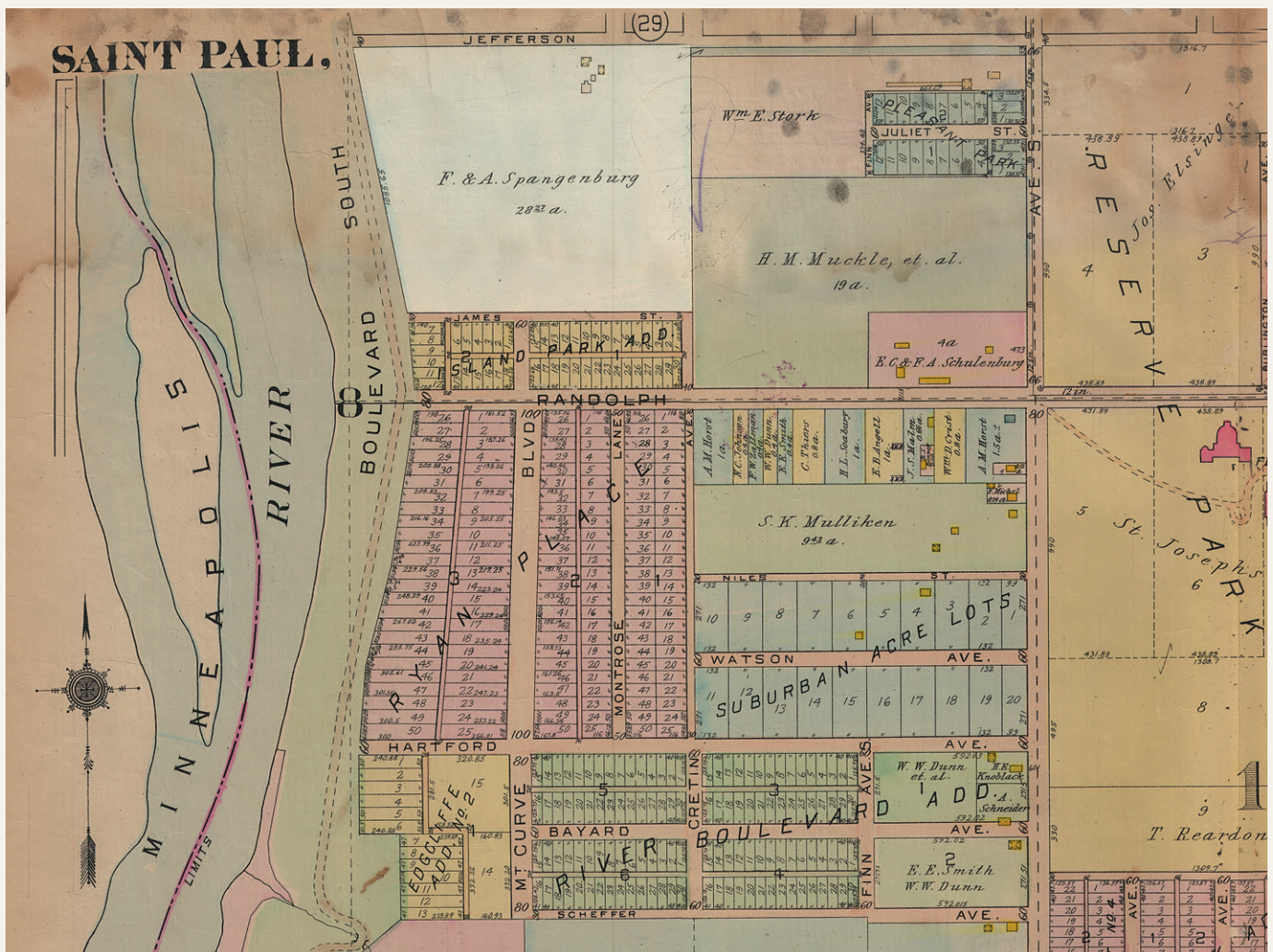
popularity of this first stretch of the road prompted others to donate river-front property, and by 1903, grading of the boulevard between Summit and Randolph had begun. In January of 1904, the City of St. Paul condemned the portion of the Spangenberg farm fronting the river, and Frederick and Anna were required to deed seven acres to the city for the project. The farm was reduced to 27.3 acres and would soon be cut off from the river.²³

When Frederick died in 1907, he must have realized that the farm's days were numbered. He had sold over half of his acreage in the mid-1880s, and adjacent land to the south as well as the north was platted for residential development. Automobile

Before long, the Spangenberg sons stopped resisting the changes occurring around them, sold the rest of their cattle, and accepted a developer's offer for their land.

traffic past his cow pasture was sure to increase now that the boulevard stretched from the bridge leading to Fort Snelling on the south to the city limits on the north. Changes in the dairy industry would make their small operation unable to compete with large dairy farms that were now growing up outside the city. In 1904, the St. Paul Daily Globe listed F. Spangenberg as one of only 16 dairy farmers

granted "licenses for the sale and disposition of milk within the corporate limits of the city of St. Paul." Just two years earlier, 43 individuals had been licensed to do so. Despite this trend, the Spangenberg sons August and Fred continued the dairy operation after Frederick Sr. died. Anna deeded the property to them in 1909 and continued to live there with them until her death in 1913.²⁴



Hopkins Plat Map of St. Paul, 1916, Plate 30, indicates that by this date, the farm was bordered on the south, as well as on the north, by land that was platted into residential lots, although none of this land would be developed as shown.



Two of Frederick and Anna Spangenberg's sons, August Spangenberg (back row, left) and William Spangenberg (front row, right) with two of their nieces, Julia and Edith Winter, 1900.

While Frederick and Anna had succeeded in passing the farm down to the next generation, August and Fred would hold onto it for only another decade. Pressures on the property continued to mount, and by 1916, present-day Cretin Avenue, Montrose Place, and Mount Curve Boulevard had been extended north to the southern boundary of the farm. The farm was bordered on the south by platted, undeveloped land and on the west by Mississippi River Boulevard. Dominating 28 acres to the north was Stonebridge, the estate built between 1914 and 1916 by Oliver Crosby, the inventor and industrialist who cofounded American Hoist and Derrick, at the time one of St. Paul's largest employers. Immediately to the east lay two small farms, one owned by H. M. Muckle and the other by William E. Stork. When the Stork property was subdivided and a developer was lined up to buy the lots along the proposed extension of Jefferson Avenue, Fred Spangenberg filed a lawsuit against the Storks in an attempt to block the sale. After this

tactic failed, he opposed in vain the condemnation of a strip of land along the northern boundary of his farm that was required for the widening of Jefferson Avenue, upon which the Stork's sale was contingent.²⁵

Before long, the Spangenberg sons stopped resisting the changes occurring around them, sold the rest of their cattle, and accepted a developer's offer for their land. Subdivision of the farm occurred in late 1918 after August and Fred sold all but five lots, which contained the house, the barn, and a group of small outbuildings. All but the house were demolished between 1919 and 1921, when the city took easements on the property and constructed the street improvements that the brothers had resisted. The house now stood on less than half an acre surrounded by a platted but as yet undeveloped urban neighborhood.²⁶

With the proceeds from the sale of the farm, August and Fred made several improvements to the house, none of which compromised its architectural integrity. Exterior doors on the

kitchen addition that were oriented to the barn and outbuildings were replaced with a centrally located door on the rear of the main portion of the house. Rustic wood porches seen in early photographs were removed. The colonial revival vestibule added to the front entrance at this time was a typical addition to older houses during the 1920s and '30s. The original multi-paned double-hung windows were probably replaced at this time. Today there are multi-paned casement windows throughout the first floor and six-over-six double-hung windows on the second floor. On the interior, hardwood floors, lath and plaster, and millwork enhanced the previously spartan rooms. The old kitchen became a family room and a new brick fireplace replaced the cookstove. A small bedroom on the first floor became the new kitchen, which was furnished with wood cupboards and linoleum countertops. Upstairs, one of the four bedrooms became a bathroom. The entire house was brought into the twentieth century with modern plumbing and electricity.²⁷

The bachelor brothers subsequently lost the balance of the proceeds from the sale of the farm in a poor investment and were forced to take out mortgages on the property. After August died in 1932, Fred shared the house with two nieces, Julia E. Peters and Minnie C. Peters, daughters of his sister Emma and her husband, Louis C. F. Peters (whose family once owned the property just south of the Spangenberg farm). Julia and Minnie assumed the mortgage on the property when Fred conveyed the deed to them in 1934 with the provision that he could live out his life there. After Fred died in 1951, the two women deeded the property to their sister Gertrude (Peters) Yates and her husband, Hobart M. Yates, who lived there until they sold it in 1972.

The Yateses were good stewards of the old farmhouse, taking on a great deal of deferred maintenance, although Gertrude Yates credited her older sister Minnie Peters with being the one who saved the house by paying the bills during the 1930s and 1940s. Gertrude, the youngest granddaughter of Frederick and Anna, would be the last family member to live in the house. Since then, it has been cared for and protected by others who appreciated its historical significance.²⁸

THE IMPORTANCE of both Spangenberg farmhouses was recognized during the early days of the historic preservation movement, which started in the 1970s, fueled in part by the US bicentennial in 1976. The Frederick Spangenberg House was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976. It was also one of the first three properties to be recommended for local historic designation by St. Paul's Heritage Preservation Commission, in 1977. (Designation was finalized in 1979.) Recognized primarily as a local landmark, it perhaps has broader significance as the best-preserved mid-nineteenth-century limestone farmhouse in Minnesota. The exterior of the house is essentially the same as when it was completed in 1868, and except for kitchen and bathroom revisions, the interior is largely unchanged since its remodel by the family in the early 1900s. The Charles Spangenberg House in Woodbury was listed on the National Register in 1978. A two-story wing has been added on the south side of the house, the end chimneys have been removed, and two dormers have been added; these alterations, however, do not greatly compromise the house's vernacular character, which is still evident in its boxy shape, thick stone walls, and distinctive masonry.²⁹

Although Frederick and Charles did not succeed in passing down their farmsteads to future generations of Spangenbergs, they did leave behind two remarkable houses that are tangible evidence of their bold dreams. While their aspirations were similar to thousands of other German immigrants who came to Minnesota in the mid-nineteenth century, Frederick and Charles Spangenberg were among the few who left an enduring mark on the state's landscape. ▣

Notes

1. Kathleen Neils Conzen, *Germans in Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2003), 4–25; Virginia Brainard Kunz, "Promoters Waxed Lyrical in 'Selling' St. Paul," *Ramsey County History* 11, no. 2 (Fall 1974): 15–22.

2. David Watkin and Tilman Mellinghoff, *German Architecture and the Classical Ideal* (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1987), 261–63. Weimar became an influential center of science and the arts, as well as the birthplace of national literature, under Grand Duke Karl August of Saxe-Weimar (1757–1828), who drew prominent thinkers like Goethe and Schiller to his court. Weimar's neoclassical buildings may have influenced Frederick and Charles Spangenberg's aesthetic sensibilities.

3. Biographical and anecdotal material is derived from the author's correspondence with Gertrude Yates, Frederick Spangenberg's youngest granddaughter (hereafter, Gertrude Yates correspondence). Letters dated June 12, 1998, and Feb. 6, 2003, to the author from Yates, which enclosed her handwritten "History of Fredrick Spangenburg" [sic] and a copy of a genealogy she prepared for relatives (Frank Lamb and Margaret Nearma), are in the possession of the author.

4. Gertrude Yates correspondence.

5. Ira A. Glazier and P. William Filby, eds., *Germans to America*, vol. 11, Apr. 1857–Nov. 1857 (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1988), 400; Tom Schroeder and Bob Frame, PhD, "Limestone Properties of St. Paul's West Seventh Street Neighborhood Thematic Nomination," St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, 2015 (hereafter "Limestone Properties"). See also Paul Nelson, "Platteville Limestone," MNopedia, Minnesota Historical Society.

Frederick arrived in New York on Oct. 23, 1857, on the ship *Borussia*, which sailed from Hamburg. He was listed as "Spangenberg, Carl 23 M CL GR 000 USA." (Carl is the German form of Charles, which was his first name, but as was customary in many German families, he was called by his second name, Frederick.)

6. Frederick would have been thoroughly familiar with rubble masonry, which was ubiquitous in medieval cities like Nordhausen and Erfurt, and he likely was exposed to neoclassical buildings, which had become an expression of German nationalist sentiment. For examples of the neoclassical style, see Watkin and Mellinghoff, *German Architecture and the Classical Ideal*. "Limestone Properties," Part 2, describes Platteville limestone buildings that remain in St. Paul today, including five early limestone houses: (1) Justus Ramsey House, c. 1852, 252 West Seventh Street, (2) Anthony Waldman House and Saloon, 1857, 445 Smith Avenue, (3) Schillinger-Brings House, 1859, 178 Goodrich Avenue, originally located at 314 Smith Avenue, formerly Oak Street, (4) Martin Weber House, 1867, 202 McBoal Street, and (5) Christian Reinhardt House, c. 1870, 383 Goodhue Street.

7. Gertrude Yates correspondence; "Oxen Hauled Stone to Build Home on Mt. Curve Boulevard Before Civil War Ended," *St. Paul Daily News*, Oct. 13, 1929. For more on Reserve Township, see Donald Empson, "Highland-Groveland-Macalester Park: The Old Reserve Township," *Ramsey County History* 10, no. 2 (1973): 13–19. Knapheide's original plat was bounded by today's Jefferson Avenue on the north, Cleveland Avenue on the east, Hartford Avenue on the south, and the Mississippi River on the west. The Knapheides' house, located at what is now 2064 Randolph Avenue, still exists but is substantially altered.

8. Glazier and Filby, *Germans to America*, vol. 13, Aug. 1859–Dec. 1860, 242. Charles, who is listed as "Spangenberg, Carl 23 M Farmer PR 000 SP," arrived in Baltimore on June 27, 1860, on the ship *Uhlant*, which sailed from Bremen. *Germans to America*, vol. 14, Jan. 1861–May 1863, 450, documents that Charles and the rest of the Spangenberg family arrived in New York on May 22, 1863, on the ship *Borussia*, which sailed from Hamburg and Southampton. The passenger list identified the names and ages of family members as "Spangenberg, FR [Frederick, the father] 52, Carl [Charles] 25, Ernst 17, Albert 15, Robert 15, Charlotte 20, and Emma 7. Minnesota State Censuses of 1865 and 1875 documented where family members settled after they arrived in St. Paul. The *St. Paul City Directory* of 1875 records that Albert and Robert lived on Como Road near Kent and had a meat business downtown, Spangenberg and Bro., at 162 St. Peter. In an article in the *St. Paul Daily Globe* on Dec. 28, 1891, Albert was described as one of St. Paul's earliest butchers, who started his own shop in 1871 at 10th and St. Peter and "at first killed his own beef near Como swamp." Robert was also prominent in the meat market business. After working with Albert for a time, Robert started his own business.

9. L. G. Bennett, Map of Ramsey County, Minnesota, 1867. The map records the boundaries of the early farm but does not reflect a subsequent land purchase made by Spangenberg in 1864, even though a square on the map at the north-east corner of the parcel represents the two-

story stone house that the Spangenberg were building in that location. The purchase of 34.30 additional acres from Rudolph Knapheide in 1864 is duly recorded in the "Abstract of Title to Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 block 2, Mississippi View, being Auditor's Subdivision No. 59, St. Paul Minn.," which was prepared by the St. Paul Abstract Company (hereafter "Abstract of Title"). Plate 30 of G. M. Hopkins, *Plat Map of St. Paul*, 1886, indicates that the farm was split into two separate parcels that were separated by a 66-foot-wide, 10-acre corridor that stretched from Knapheide's property to the river. This tract, which ran along the north side of present-day Randolph Avenue, was unimproved.

10. A stone boat is a flat-bottomed sled used for transporting stones and other heavy objects. "Oxen Hauled Stone to Build Home." The four men hired to help with the construction were paid "high wages at the time—50 cents a day and board." According to Gertrude Yates, Anna and Frederick Spangenberg first lived in a log cabin located near the southwest corner of present-day Randolph and Cretin. Yates described the building the family moved into while their permanent home was under construction as a two-story frame structure with an exterior stairway to the second level.

11. The only other stone buildings known to have existed in Reserve Township in the 1860s were the mill and house that John Ayd, a prosperous German, had built just west of where present-day Jefferson crosses under 35E. See Donald Empson, "John Ayd's Grist Mill and Reserve Township History," *Ramsey County History* 11, no. 2 (1974): 3–7. Although native limestone was readily available in Reserve Township and was widely used for foundations and retaining walls, most of the limestone buildings being constructed were nonresidential, including Mattocks School (1871). See Rachel A. Bonney, "Closing of Mattocks School: End of an Era in Education," *Ramsey County History* 15, no. 1 (1980): 18–22. Both Rudolph Knapheide and Frederick Spangenberg served on "Reserve Town's" school board.

12. John H. Mossler, "M-194 Bedrock Geology of the Twin Cities Ten-County Metropolitan Area, Minnesota" (2013). Malcolm P. Weiss, "Some Ordovician Brachiopods from Minnesota and Their Stratigraphic Relations," *Journal of Paleontology* 29, no. 5 (Sept. 1955): 759–62. Weiss describes the Carimona member, named for the hamlet of Carimona, located 4.5 miles west of Preston in Fillmore County, Minnesota, as a pale yellow-brown stone, very fine to fine grained, medium-bedded with smooth to broadly rippled surfaces. Weiss originally placed the Carimona member at the top of the Platteville limestone formation, where Minnesota geologists positioned it for decades, but it has recently been reassigned to the bottom of the Decorah Shale, Galena Group, to be consistent with neighboring states.

13. Kathryn Boardman, "Farmhouse in City Setting: Venerable Spangenberg Residence Lives

On," *St. Paul Sunday Pioneer Press*, Sept. 11, 1955, Roto Magazine, 7–9.

14. National Register of Historic Places Nomination form for Charles Spangenberg Farmstead, reference number 78001570 (hereafter, C. Spangenberg NRHP form).

15. C. Spangenberg NRHP form; Christie Denson, "A Couple Renovates a Historic 19th Century Farmstead in Woodbury," *Woodbury Magazine* (Nov. 2015).

16. C. Spangenberg NRHP form; an email message to the author from Monica and Mark Frazer, Feb. 23, 2018, provided the following additional information about the granary: A drive-through lane down the middle has doors at both ends. The three bays on either side accommodate a flexible system of grain bins, which could be configured as needed with removable partitions and boards. A chute in the center of each of these bays once provided convenient access to the grain stored on the upper level.

17. Fred W. Peterson, *Building Community, Keeping the Faith: German Catholic Vernacular Architecture in a Rural Minnesota Parish* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1998), chapters 5 and 7. See <https://fbmn.org/pages/farm-recognition> for a list of centennial and sesquicentennial farms in Minnesota, many of which are located in counties heavily populated by German Americans.

18. St. Paul city directories (1885–1920) document that several second-generation Spangenberg found employment in St. Paul meat markets owned and operated by Frederick and Charles's younger brothers, Albert and Robert Spangenberg.

19. *St. Paul Daily News*, Mar. 30, Nov. 2, and Dec. 3, 1902; 1905 Census of Minnesota; C. Spangenberg NRHP form. According to the 1905 census, Charles moved to 155 Ramsey in St. Paul, while son Edward continued to farm elsewhere in Woodbury Township.

20. Donald L. Empson, "A Grand Topographical Feature: The History of the Mississippi River Boulevard," *Ramsey County History* 49, no. 2 (2014): 13–22. For a complete discussion of Horace Cleveland's work in Minneapolis and St. Paul, see William H. Tishler and Virginia S. Luckhardt, "H. W. S. Cleveland, Pioneer Landscape Architect to the Upper Midwest," *Minnesota History* 49, no. 7 (Fall 1985): 281–91.

21. Empson, "A Grand Topographical Feature," 14–18. The 200-foot-wide boulevard was to include all land between the east side of the roadway and the shore of the river. For a discussion of eminent domain in Europe, see William D. McNulty, "Eminent Domain in Continental Europe," *Yale Law Journal* 21 (1912): 558–60. In 1888, property assessments to pay for a proposed park on St. Paul's West Side were appealed and a court ruled null and void the law that created the park board. Although reinstated under a new law in 1889, the park board continued to face opposition that frustrated its attempts to acquire private property for parkland.

22. Abstract of Title. The Knapheide tract was soon platted into residential lots but not built on until much later.

23. Abstract of Title; Empson, "A Grand Topographical Feature," 19–20. The parcels that Archbishop Ireland donated had been given to the University of St. Thomas, which Ireland founded in 1885. Those who gave the university the land still held the mortgages on the parcels and were not happy with Ireland's civic gesture. Ultimately, the land had to be condemned. For more information about the unique rock features of Shadow Falls Park, see "Bedrock Geology of the Twin Cities Ten-County Metropolitan Area, Minnesota" at the Equatorial Minnesota blog.

24. Empson, "A Grand Topographical Feature," 20; *St. Paul City Directory* (1910). Refrigeration and pasteurization made large-scale dairy operations in rural areas possible, and St. Paul residents started to buy milk in grocery stores.

25. G. M. Hopkins, *Plat Book of Saint Paul, Minn. and Suburbs* (1916); Minnesota Reflections, Rockford Area Historical Society Collections, Stork Family Papers, at Minnesota Digital Library. See Diary of Clinton Stork, Jan. 10 and June 28–30, 1916, and Diary of Florence C. Stork, June 29 and July 1, 1916. All four members of the Stork family kept daily diaries.

26. Abstract of Title. Jefferson was finally extended from Cretin to Mississippi River Boulevard, and Mount Curve Boulevard was completed between Jefferson and Randolph.

27. "Oxen Hauled Stone to Build Home"; Gertrude Yates correspondence.

28. Abstract of Title records that in 1972, Gertrude and Hobart Yates sold lots 3, 4, and 5 to George and Marjorie Dow and lots 1 and 2 to Carmella and Thomas Bohnen. In 1998, the author and her husband, Jeffrey Oertel, purchased lots 3, 4, and 5 including the farmhouse, from the Dows.

29. Comparison of historic photographs; Denson, "Couple Renovates a Historic 19th Century Farmstead"; *St. Paul Dispatch*, Oct. 5, 1977, 47; Saint Paul Minnesota, "Historic Districts and Sites," <https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/planning-economic-development/heritage-preservation/historic-districts-and-individual>.

Images on p. 17, 19 (top), 21, 22, 25 (top), 27, MNHS Collections; p. 19, Jack Boucher, Historic American Building Survey, Library of Congress; p. 20 (bottom), courtesy of author; p. 23, Collections of Washington County Historical Society; p. 24, 25 (bottom), Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office, Department of Administration.



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