

JUST BEFORE NINE O’CLOCK on the night of Saturday, August 20, 1904, a powerful tornado—or cyclone, as it was called—swept through the heart of St. Paul. The storm left three people dead (two men and a 12-year-old girl), injured at least 50 others, and damaged or destroyed hundreds of buildings and houses. Its impressive swath of damage extended from the High Bridge (the five southernmost spans were dumped into the Mississippi), through much of downtown and Lowertown, and then on into the East Side.

The scene here was photographed along Eighth Street, probably near John Street, just east of downtown. This part of Eighth was, in 1904, still heavily residential, although its gentility was fast fading before the encroachment of commerce and the railroads. Within 20 years, the area would be dominated by commercial structures, including a huge freight terminal for the Great Northern Railway, completed in 1918. It’s not known whether the extensive storm damage contributed to this rapid changeover, but it can’t have helped.

Newspapers of the day quickly pronounced the 1904 tornado as the worst in the city’s history, and in all likeli-

hood that remains true to this day. Judging by contemporary accounts and, more importantly, photographs, the tornado may well have been an F3 on the Fujita scale of F0 to F5, a system for ranking twisters by wind speed.

Before it was demolished during the storm, a weather-bureau gauge atop the Pioneer Press (now Pioneer) Building at Fourth and Robert Streets recorded winds of 180 miles an hour. Photographs show that the tornado moved houses from their foundations, knocked down freestanding brick walls, and sheered off roofs and cupolas. There were also numerous accounts of large objects, such as heavy timbers, being hurled considerable distances.

In the years since 1904, twisters have danced all around St. Paul, but there have been no devastating strikes in the city. Still, tornados are notoriously fickle, and there’s no way of telling how long St. Paul’s luck will hold.

—LARRY MILLET

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JET LOWE PHOTOGRAPH, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

For 72 years it was a shoe store. Of Pipestone's extant buildings graced with relief carvings, this one is outstanding with its 14 light-colored Duluth sandstone images—including a lion, a court jester, the north wind, and Biblical-inspired renderings of Moses in the bulrushes and Eve and the serpent. The arches of two window openings also have keystone sculpture heads.

Like most American cities, Pipestone underwent urban renewal, and many buildings, including some featuring Moore's carvings, were demolished. Protecting the Moore Block's distinctive façade inspired Pipestone-area legislator Verne Long in 1971 to introduce a bill that became the basis for Minnesota's local preservation movement; it allows cities to pass their own ordinances aimed at preserving historic sites.

—LAURA WEBER

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MYRIAD BUILDINGS on Main Street USA are named after the bankers who built them. Then there's the Moore Block in western Minnesota's Pipestone, a building whose banker-owner, Leon H. Moore, also owned the quarry that provided the building's stone* and himself carved 14 gargoyle-like relief sculptures on its two facades. (He also created sculptures for, among others, a Civil War monument and Pipestone's old City Hall.)

Pipestone's main street has the largest concentration of quartzite buildings in the state. Abundant in

the Pipestone area, this stone was the only permanent building material available on the treeless prairie.

Quartzite is harder than granite and ranges from dark red to light pink. The contrasting hues, often used in checkerboard friezes, are seen in the pivotal 1890s-vintage buildings of Pipestone's historic district.

The 1898 Moore Block, at Pipestone's main intersection, occupies the corner of the town's most visually consistent block of quartzite buildings. It began as Farmers and Merchants Bank; later, it housed dry goods, groceries, and used furniture.

*Moore's quarry was north of town on the site now home to the annual reenactment of Longfellow's "Song of Hiawatha."

Sources: "Pipestone Commercial Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 1974, State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society; Joseph Amato, *Rethinking Home: A Case for Writing Local History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), chapter 9; *Pipestone County History* (Pipestone Historical Society, 1984), 76, 78; "Gargoyles in Pipestone," *Minneapolis Tribune*, Mar. 17, 1974.



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