

## Krank Building, St. Paul



EVEN BEFORE the building at 1885 University Avenue in St. Paul was complete, a rooftop sign declared: **KRANK'S: THE MARK OF MERIT ALL OVER THE WORLD.** The sign was not an exaggeration: the Alfred J. Krank Company, "Perfumers and Makers of High Grade Toilet Requisites," had offices or warehouses in New York, San Francisco, London, Barcelona, Mexico City, and Buenos Aires.

Alfred Krank (1866–1928) began his career working for a cutlery business, Christian Franke and Herman Schnell. After advancing to partner, then owner, he expanded the company's endeavors, adding manufacturing and wholesale and retail sales of more than 50 hair tonics, perfumes, and barber and beauty shop supplies, sporting names like Pine Hair Root Oil, Honey Rose Skin Food, Solidified Brilliantine, Pink Blush Massage Cream, and Lily Orient Toilet Water. Krank's also sold cut glass, carving sets, electric appliances, and many other items to "make people happy and homes more complete."

Krank joined other St. Paul manufacturers in moving his facility from downtown to the newly expanding Midway district. The Krank empire's proud new home was completed in 1926, a three-story, dark-brown-and-red brick building designed by the prominent firm of Toltz, King, and Day. It has been called one of the Midway district's finest and most

sophisticated industrial building. Its distinctive use of brightly colored terra cotta flowers and garlands is considered one of the best examples of terra cotta work in St. Paul. The building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.

The Krank building was opened with great ceremony in October 1926. Designating opening week to be "Beauty Week," the company offered lectures, demonstrations, and radio concerts to an estimated 7,000 visitors over four days. Hair bobbing, finger waving, and the "Dermatone Scientific Scalp Treatment" were among the demonstrations given, as well as tours of the company's extensive manufacturing process with its shampoo tanks, bottling, filling and shipping departments, and Krank's own box factory.

Krank, who apparently loved tennis and driving fast, died only two

years after his new facility opened. The headline of a front page article in the *Minneapolis Journal* on September 26, 1928, tells the story: "A. J. Krank Dies in Auto-Trolley Crash: Tries to Jump, Thrown Under Wheels."

The Krank Company continued on University Avenue until 1941, when the company merged with another one located downtown. Since then, building tenants ranged from Northwest Airlines and Control Data to small individual businesses. Although the interior has been extensively remodeled over the years, the exterior's pink, yellow, lavender, and green terra cotta flowers remain and seem appropriate for the building's current name, Iris Park Place.

—Linda James

*Krank's Manufacturers, 1885 University Avenue, St. Paul, 1928. Company founder Alfred Krank, 1925. (MNHS COLLECTIONS)*



**LINDA JAMES** works with newspaper and historic photos as a researcher for films, books, and photo exhibitions.



Copyright of **Minnesota History** is the property of the Minnesota Historical Society, and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or users or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission: [contact us](#).

Individuals may print or download articles for personal use.

To request permission for educational or commercial use, [contact us](#). Include the author's name and article title in the body of your message. But first--

If you think you may need permission, here are some guidelines:

#### **Students and researchers**

- You **do not** need permission to quote or paraphrase portions of an article, as long as your work falls within the fair use provision of copyright law. Using information from an article to develop an argument is fair use. Quoting brief pieces of text in an unpublished paper or thesis is fair use. Even quoting in a work to be published can be fair use, depending on the amount quoted. Read about fair use here: <http://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html>
- You **should**, however, always credit the article as a source for your work.

#### **Teachers**

- You **do not** need permission to incorporate parts of an article into a lesson.
- You **do** need permission to assign an article, either by downloading multiple copies or by sending students to the online pdf. There is a small per-copy use fee for assigned reading. [Contact us](#) for more information.

#### **About Illustrations**

- **Minnesota History** credits the sources for illustrations at the end of each article. **Minnesota History** itself does not hold copyright on images and therefore cannot grant permission to reproduce them.
- For information on using illustrations owned by the Minnesota Historical Society, see [MHS Library FAQ](#).