

AUGUST



Photo © Patricia Bour-Schilla

AUGUST

*In two weeks (Good Lord!), Labor Day!
One more summer—drifted away.
BE BOLD! Don't be cautious!
Have fun 'til you're nauseous
And feel sort of guilty—okay?
—Garrison Keillor*

Downtown Saint Paul Farmers' Market: Saturdays and Sundays
through October

Music in Mears Park: Every Thursday 6–9 p.m.

MMAA Patio Nights: Every Thursday 7p.m.

Nine Nights of Music Series: August 4, 11, 18, 25

Music and Movies, District del Sol: Every Thursday 7p.m.

Irish Fair: August 7–9

Japanese Lantern Lighting Festival: August 16

Circus Juventas: Dates to be announced

Minnesota State Fair: August 27–September 7

Fourth Friday at the Movies: August 28

See pages 288–310 for more information and more events

↳ “Life is essentially a cheat and its conditions are those of defeat; the redeeming things are not happiness and pleasure but the deeper satisfactions that come out of struggle.”—F. Scott Fitzgerald, Saint Paul writer

AUGUST

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	1	2	3	4	5

3 MONDAY

4 TUESDAY

Nine Night's of Music Series

5 WEDNESDAY

6 THURSDAY

Music in Mears Park
MMAA Patio Nights
Music and Movies, District del Sol



Children swimming at the public baths on Harriet Island, 1912

7 FRIDAY

Irish Fair

8 SATURDAY

Saint Paul Farmers' Market

Irish Fair

9 SUNDAY

Saint Paul Farmers' Market

Irish Fair



Photo © Minnesota Streetcar Museum

Grand Avenue streetcar at Prior Avenue

MEMORIES OF GRAND AVENUE

Andrea Taylor Langworthy

For the first four and a half years of my life, my family lived in the upper half of a stucco duplex on Grand Avenue one house east of Prior. My aunt and uncle lived downstairs with my cousins. Kitty-corner across Grand from Thomas Liquors was a corner grocery store with a long wall of windows that faced our side of the street. The streetcar ran down Grand Avenue between the store and our house. We often rode it downtown with our mother to shop at Schuneman's or the Golden Rule.

My year-younger sister must have loved those shopping trips because she used to slide down the front hall steps lickety-split and toddle out to the street, where she would plop herself down on the streetcar tracks before my mother even realized she was gone. It wasn't that Mom wasn't paying attention, but my speedy sibling got going so fast that the grocer had scooped up and was carrying her along the sidewalk at the same time my mother was about to run out the front door in hot pursuit of her tiny toddler.

We moved across the Mississippi to Minneapolis when my brother was born. The two-bedroom duplex had gotten too tight for the five of us. Plus, Dad would go to law school, so we could afford to buy a whole house—with a back yard so my sister could scurry outside and sit on the bricks of a patio instead of a busy street. I wonder if Mom wished the grocer could come with us to keep an eye on her wandering child.

Years later, when we were older, Dad drove us to Saint Paul to visit his sister at the duplex. He gave my younger sister and me money so we could walk across the street with our cousins to buy treats at the corner grocery store. "What will it be, girls?" the grocer asked. Once we'd pointed to our choices, he scooped up penny candy from the case—just as he had scooped up my little sister years before.

BEAUMONT STREET

Mary Legato Brownell

When the Italians came, gardens held their
Secret worlds, and the grace of what was grown
To save became something no one could turn
Away by choice. In each of these lives were
Cracks fissured by pale, slipped roots in summer
Until their bright blood leapt, would awaken,
Not for remembered olives and lemon,
For small seeds and stems, but for dark pepper,
Zucchini, fresh basil, for the low-pitched
Thunder of thick vines rising carefully.
For weeks at a time the thin sky lowered.
The sougning of the white wind steadily
Rustled the ways they loved. From this I learned
To hold the strong hands of my family.

↳ *Asian Business & Community News* became the first Asian-American publication in Minnesota in 1982. It was renamed *Asian American Press* in 1990.

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S	M	T	W	T	F	S
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	1	2	3	4	5

10 MONDAY

11 TUESDAY

Nine Nights of Music Series

12 WEDNESDAY

13 THURSDAY

Music in Mears Park
MMAA Patio Nights



Western Sculpture Park at Marion Avenue and Ravoux Street

14 FRIDAY

15 SATURDAY

Saint Paul Farmers' Market

FREE SAMPLES

Mike Hazard

Among a giggling gaggle of girls one gal,
in front of the table loaded with chocolates,
laughs out loud, "Let's try them all."

16 SUNDAY

Saint Paul Farmers' Market
Japanese Lantern Lighting Festival

William Crooks was the first locomotive to operate in the state. It started running between Saint Paul and Saint Anthony in 1862.

ACCORDION HEAVEN

Jan Zita Grover

On a quiet stretch of lower Randolph in the West Seventh neighborhood stands a small, fortress-like business building. From its long, skinny dimensions, I imagine it was once a neighborhood tavern. But for the past twenty-five years, it has been Mahler Music Center, an independent accordion shop, instruction studio, and repair depot, and more recently home too to Accordion Heaven.com, a web store, all of these run by Ken Mahler.

The store, as you'd imagine, is filled with accordions, many of them retired, many of them in need of repair, most of them flashy in the mid-twentieth-century way of accordions. Mahler works on them when he can, which is to say when he isn't teaching would-be accordionists, tending to his website, and keeping up with the voluminous queries generated by his website and status as the only retail accordion shop in the five-state area.

A West Seventh boy ("St. Stanislaus") grown to affable middle age, Mahler stumbled into his unlikely calling early in life: "I wanted to learn an instrument when I was a kid, and finally my parents bought me a guitar. First I taught myself to play from the Mel Bay books, so then my parents tried to find me a guitar teacher. But they couldn't, so they sent me to Turlindi's instead. Turlindi's accordion store was where Five Points Hardware is now, across the street from Cossetta's.

"I took lessons, and then I started cleaning and washing Turlindi's windows. By the time I was in high school, I was teaching classes. One day I was outside washing Turlindi's windows, and I thought, *This is what I want; I want to have a store like this.*"

Mahler got his wish after Ed Turlindi died in 1981; after the estate closed in 1983, Mahler started his own business on lower Randolph. He had only three accordions as stock. He had learned to repair squeezeboxes from Ed Turlindi, and repairs soon became the major part of his business. The accordion's popularity, so great in the 1930s–1960s—"There used to be an accordionist on every block in Saint Paul"—was waning by the time Mahler opened his store; the schoolchild accordion bands many people now over sixty can remember had disappeared by then. "The kids just stopped. I don't know why, but they just stopped being interested by the 1970s." Until the dawn of the commercial Internet, Mahler's business was devoted mostly to repair; he also played in Mancini's house band until his recent retirement as accordionist.

Photo © Larry Schilla



The king of the accordion: Ken Mahler playing his signature Planet Squeezebox

These days, Mahler's sales are mostly to those long-ago child accordianists, now in or nearing retirement. "The majority of the Internet buyers live in New York, Florida, California, Nevada, Arizona"—retirement states, except for New York. "These people are buying good accordions; they know what they want. They're the bulwark of the industry. And as students, they are faithful to keeping up lessons." Accordion Heaven serves these dispersed buyers online, while Mahler Music Center caters to regional buyers, most of whom still drive to the store to choose their be-rhinestoned, chromed, multicolored beauties, often trading in instruments that have become too big, too heavy, or too in need of repair to play.

An accordion of Mahler's own manufacture is his middle-of-the-line, seventy-two-bass *Planet Squeezebox*. Mahler sought permission from the producers of *Planet Squeezebox*, a delightful two-CD compendium of world accordion music, to use the name, and received it. Then he embarked on what became an eight-trip quest to northern Italy to find the right parts suppliers and assemblers to produce his line of accordions.

And now they here sit in Saint Paul, *Planet Squeezebox* accordions, red-blue-white-black, patiently awaiting their new (old) owners.

"I want to help the accordion," Mahlers says somewhat plaintively. "I want to be a place where people can find answers."

↪ Fifty years ago, the Amherst H. Wilder House, a priceless piece of Saint Paul's architectural heritage on Summit Avenue, was torn down.

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S	M	T	W	T	F	S
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	1	2	3	4	5

17 MONDAY

18 TUESDAY

Nine Nights of Music Series

19 WEDNESDAY

20 THURSDAY

Music in Mears Park
MMAA Patio Nights

Photo © Tom Conlon



AUGUST

Looking westward on Fourth Street

21 FRIDAY

22 SATURDAY
Ramadan begins

St. Paul Farmers' Market

23 SUNDAY

St. Paul Farmers' Market

A century ago, St. Louis King of France Church, supported by French-speaking residents of Saint Paul, was built at 506 Cedar.

HOME DELIVERY

Judith Niemi

The Egg Man came on Thursdays, and for several years I arranged to be home then. It wasn't a convenience, I couldn't order online in advance—in fact, I never knew exactly what he'd bring.

This started when I read Patricia Highsmith's *Beastly Murder*: in one story, hundreds of chickens, crazed by life in tiny cages, escape—abetted by a human accomplice—and peck to death the greedy farmer. I love eggs, and the cholesterol thing doesn't bother me, but the story did. My qualms were aesthetic and maybe ethical, but I called it a health issue: "Eating eggs from psychotic hens cannot be good for me."

It wasn't so easy, not that long ago, to find eggs from free-range chickens, even at some farmers' markets, so I was happy to meet the people I'll call Larry and Allie. Their farm wasn't officially organic, just an authentic old-style place with a lot of different crops, and where chickens ran around and had real lives, and produced delicious eggs. When the market closed in fall, I said, "Now what am I going to do?" and they said, "Oh, we deliver." It started, I think, when they were coming to Saint Paul's West Side anyway, visiting aging relatives, and then it got to be a habit. Their customer list grew casually, as we told friends about them.

It was Allie I'd first chatted with, because she reminded me so much of my farmer aunt—warm, sensible, and wheezing from the chicken coop. For a while they both drove the route, until health and community work started to keep Allie home. Larry was the gregarious one, anyway; he loved the route.

There was no point being in a hurry on Thursdays. The old van would arrive, and Larry'd walk, a bit stiffly, up the stairs. We'd stand on the porch, talking drought and frost, township politics and national politics. Finally he'd take my order. It was a point of pride never to write it down. He just ticked things off on his fingers, disappeared into his van, and came back with eggs, and chickens, fresh and frozen, whole and cut up. Also apple cider, squash, Yukon Golds, onions. No steaks—"forgot 'em this week"—but a nice roast. He always added up the total in his head.

He was always adding new foods but often forgot to mention them. It started when a neighbor grazed a few Black Angus on the back pasture, and they cut a deal with the local butcher. One year they raised ducks. "Never again!" he swore, after the whole family spent days pulling pinfeathers. He tapped other sources for cheese curds, pepperjack, butter,

Wisconsin cranberries. Sometimes a neighbor would visit Florida, and then there were grapefruit.

One year the farm had two peacocks. Larry walked into the barnyard and there they stood. “Guess they escaped from one of those hobby farms,” he said happily. “I always sort of wanted peacocks.” He fixed them an apartment in the barn, and read up on peacock care, but they weren’t of hardy northern stock.

Larry delivered across the river, too, Crocus Hill and Mac-Groveland. (West Side prices, not Crocus Hill.) It was a very personal service. “Hey, do you think your sister’s home yet?” he’d ask. “Missed her last time.” “No, she’s working late today—give me eggs and a roaster for her.”

Gradually, though, visits became less frequent and then ended. You knew this was too good to last in this era, as gas got pricier and the hobby farms and McMansions spread. A developer bought the farm, named it something like Arcadia Hills, and bulldozed the hills. Allie and Larry took the greenhouse with them, and now grow flowers.

I really miss those chickens—the ones that ran around doing whatever chickens do to make life meaningful, and, at the point when I met them, tasted delicious. Dinner guests would ask, hopefully, “Is that one of Larry’s chickens?” These days you can find organic, omega-3, vegetarian-fed brown eggs all over—“cage-free” is still what I look for first. You can find really good chickens, too, at higher prices than Larry’s. But none of them come with weather predictions or news of wandering, free-range peacocks.

↪ A century ago, McGill-Warner, a printing company, constructed a new building at 225 East Ninth Street. It was recently turned into the Ninth Street Lofts.

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S	M	T	W	T	F	S
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	1	2	3	4	5

24 MONDAY

25 TUESDAY

Nine Nights of Music Series

26 WEDNESDAY

27 THURSDAY

Music in Mears Park
Minnesota State Fair
MMAA Patio Nights

Photo © 2007 T. R. Lacy



AUGUST

Étude II: Path near North Gate of Hidden Falls Park, Mississippi River

28 FRIDAY	Minnesota State Fair
29 SATURDAY	Saint Paul Farmers' Market Minnesota State Fair
30 SUNDAY	Saint Paul Farmers' Market Minnesota State Fair

In 1859, the Saint Paul Bridge Company constructed its toll bridge across the Mississippi, spurring development on the West Side.

DOCTOR GREASE MONKEY

Drew Tilsen

AUGUST

I do not remember where I heard this, but I find it amusing: “Doctors have it way too easy—they only have one make and two models.”

Your Saint Paul automobile technician, on the other hand, has to work on a wide variety of makes and models: pickups, minivans, sedans, coupes, SUVs, SUVs, and so on. Your more ambitious auto techs will take on dump trucks, tractors, RVs, snow blowers, and boats. Your auto tech has to work on inline three-, four-, five-, and six-cylinder engines. V6, V8, V10, and V12. Flat four and six engines, diesel, gas, electric, and CNG. Not to mention all of the different valve and computer configurations. If it were as easy as human—male or female—you could probably train a monkey to be a mechanic.

Would you go see a doctor with no education? What if you walked in your doctor’s office and saw no certificates or achievements hung proudly on the wall? What if the doctor was wearing a tee shirt and jeans, weighed you on a bathroom scale, and looked in your ear with a giant mag light? Would you still let the doctor treat you? Spend money on drugs you may not need or that are potentially harmful?

I think you should have to have a license to practice auto repair in Saint Paul. At least our vehicles should pass a safety inspection. With the potholes and rusty cars in Saint Paul, extra care has to be taken. Does your mechanic know what pressure your tires should be? Is everything as tight as it should be so when you swerve and brake, you can control the vehicle in an emergency? When you are done with your oil change, are you confident everything is okay at 80 mph?

In a lot of countries where people drive as fast as we do, your vehicle does have to pass a safety inspection. I would be willing to bet that over half of the cars and trucks out there would not pass a safety inspection in other countries. Does your mechanic inform you of potential safety issues, as your doctor does when you have high blood pressure?

Since we do not have emissions testing in Saint Paul anymore, who is responsible for keeping our vehicles running clean? You are! When your check engine light comes on, it is telling you that you are a polluter! Do not continue to drive around. Do not pass go. You need to get it fixed. It is part of your personal responsibility to take care of our environment.

Some health problems are directly related to smog. Your doctors would appreciate you keeping your car in good health so they don’t have to treat unnecessary diseases and broken bones when you crash.



Drew's Gutless Cutless

Are you and your mechanic doing all that is necessary to keep our air as clean as possible and the roads safe? Is your mechanic disposing and recycling the waste from your car properly? I can't be the only one on the road looking over at the car next to me and seeing a little orange glowing light on the dash, signifying a major polluter. I bet these cars would not pass a safety inspection either. Do you feel safe driving next to them when they lose their steering? Or do you drive behind them and breathe their smog? What should be done about this? I believe police should give tickets if they see the polluter light.

If we got the word out in Saint Paul, we the people could set a nationwide standard for auto service and have no need for the government interfering with our everyday drives to work. Is it time to see your qualified automobile repair professional and ask about your pollution and safety? Please be responsible.

MISSISSIPPI MARINER

Diego Vázquez, Jr.

I was leaving the Bean Factory on Saratoga and Randolph in Saint Paul, when the small white car with a kayak on the roof bounced up to the curb. The driver of the car got out and reached for the roof to check for the tightness of the straps holding the kayak. We passed each other when he lumbered inside to order coffee, and I asked him if he could surf with that thing.

“Ha—I tell you what, I don’t need to get wet using this thing. But there are characters in this world who actually ride the surf on kayaks. I think my time has passed for that. Hell, I’m just trying to make it down river without having to take a nap.” His laughter was loud with pure joy. He carried the serious politeness of a good teacher. He reminded me of the best professor I ever knew: there was a gentle hospitality in their histories, this kayaker being so welcoming of a stranger like me, and responding to my humor.

I don’t know what turned us both around, but we sat down at a table and drank away hours with coffee and stories. Toward the end of our first meeting, John said that I could be the missing link, because he was in need of someone crazy enough to assist in his journey on a ten-mile stretch of the Mississippi. He had a solo kayak, and he needed to be dropped off to launch and then to be picked up at journey’s end. I agreed to be the kayak helper even before John could finish. John estimated about three hours on the river, which would allow me enough time to find the pickup spot. On the day when I dropped off John at the landing in Lilydale, he was just a month past his seventieth birthday.

Almost a year to the day after our first meeting at the Bean Factory, we both sat inside the coffee shop again, recollecting John’s fabulous journey through downtown Saint Paul on the river with a kayak.

On the morning of the launch, the boat landing was empty and the sun was warm. The river stretched quietly. For John, rowing with the current was a relief. The beginning mile or so was as calm as an afternoon nap, and he had yet to face into the wind.

The first bridge, officially known as Omaha Road Bridge Number 15, is an old railroad bridge that opens and closes periodically but remains mostly unnoticed by passersby. The earlier version of the bridge was one of the original fifteen bridges built over the Mississippi.

Downstream from Lilydale and to the left (starboard) is the old NSP plant. To the right is the Mendota Road stone arch bridge, another aged structure. Then comes the Smith Avenue High Bridge. The newer version is less than twenty years old. Up comes Harriet Island, home to many a



Mississippi kayaker John Murphy

winter carnival snow castle. Wabasha Street Bridge, Raspberry Island, the Saint Paul Union Pacific's vertical-lift rail bridge, Robert Street Bridge, the Lafayette Bridge. Then come the cliffs where the Indian Mounds oversee the passage of time. Pig's Eye no. 1 and Pig's Eye no. 2, Holman Field, and Saint Paul's downtown airfield, built for the 3M execs. The kayak came ashore shortly past the Wakota Bridge.

At the start of the ten-mile journey, I held onto the kayak after we had placed it in the river, while John drove his car back up to the parking lot. His most recent stroke had resulted in a more noticeable hobble, and he walked back to the river in slow motion, pointing out a barge hauling Mankato limestone. We decided that it was coming from Shakopee. Big rocks floating on the river and looking so pretty turned our thoughts to all the things that need water and the connection that every living thing on this planet has with water. Everything that lives, everything, needs water for survival. I am not surprised that John needs to float and row on it alone, using his favorite form of transportation for this epic journey. He knew that this would be the last time that he could do it on his own.

This time John saw his hometown in a way he never had before. Seventy years, and looking now at the downtown where he had made a living for many of those years with the Saint Paul Companies, and seeing it from the vantage point of being on the river in his kayak. The Landmark was a federal building. He knew it well because his father, who had worked as a federal prosecutor, had an office in the Landmark. When the feds handed the building over to the city, it almost became a parking lot. A friend of John's served on the local committee that decided the fate of the newly acquired building. The friend originally favored razing the old

structure to free up space for parking cars. Happy to have been wrong, he is now proud that the building survived. So is the city.

On our day of recollection, sitting in a corner of the Bean Factory, we captured an audience who listened to the retelling of the kayak mission. Sorting through all of the nuances of the river trip, I told John that I was such a weak swimmer that I am always afraid of being on the water. My favorite activity on a river is being on the bank. Still, John talked about the episode as if we both had been on the river. “When *we* did the river trip, I hadn’t had the really bad stroke yet. I had some strokes that weakened me, but I had not yet had that really debilitating shot. I wouldn’t do it again now because I don’t have the stamina. I just don’t feel strong enough that if I capsized, even with a lifejacket and knowing that I am a good swimmer, I just don’t have the stamina anymore. I couldn’t.”

A few years ago, an organization sponsored river runs for nonmotorized vessels. John had planned on entering one of the ten-mile events, but by the time he decided to do it, the group had gone broke. The Mississippi Mariner solo ten-mile special for people seventy and over was John’s reaction.

He practiced for weeks, using short stretches of the rivers that are accessible from a Fort Snelling boat landing. The most noteworthy of the small runs was circumnavigating Pike Island on his seventieth birthday. On that day, John paddled the kayak on both rivers and the channel that connects the Mississippi and the Minnesota.

“I e-mailed a buddy of mine and told him about my circumnavigation. He wrote me back offering congratulations and confusion. He said, ‘John, for the life of me, why would a guy seventy years old want to get circumcised? And why would he want to get circumcised on Pike Island?’”

One of John’s friends, this one an important board member of a major corporation, had driven off the High Bridge and survived. “Can you believe that? I can’t recall all the particulars, but he actually drove off the bridge. The old one, before this new one was built. He must have driven off somewhere on the sides close to the banks, because the guy lived to tell about it. Don’t know of anyone else who has survived a fall off of that bridge.”

Another piece of history from John about the river explained why the great mansions that were built up on Summit Avenue deliberately faced away from the river: their owners disdained the people who worked the river. All river traffic ended in Saint Paul. St. Anthony falls is the only falls on the Mississippi, the only natural falls on the entire Mississippi, and there were no locks and dams to move vessels any farther north. The riverfront of Saint Paul bore the traffic of all commerce from the Red River oxcarts to the road and trails that would take over for the river.

John realizes there is a star in your eye when it is your turn to meet the river. He was seventy years old, and he knew that with his debilitating health, he needed to make the journey when he did. The kayak journey, the Mississippi adventure of ten miles solo through the heart of Saint Paul, was one of his finest achievements. A river runs eternally through his soul in a universal engagement with water.

Almost in a whisper, which is rare for his grand voice, John recollects, “I was so happy when I saw my daughter and my grandson waiting for me at the landing underneath the Wakota Bridge. You surprised the hell out of me. I never knew that you would think of bringing them along to pick me up. I tell you, that made the effort all worthwhile, to see them waving at me. Ha, I could barely move my arms anymore, but I knew they had given me back just enough inspiration to finish the voyage.”

The most enchanting view of the journey can be seen up on the cliffs where the downtown Saint Paul Holman Air Field’s beacon stands and where the ancients positioned their souls to rest on mounds that are eternally pointed toward the infinity of natural light. I am proud to know a particular soul that rests on the endless movement of this magnificent river, who on one particular day in September rowed on the ride of a lifetime.



Photo © Patricia Bour-Schilla

Working at the Saint Paul Farmers' Market

OVERHEARD IN THE MARKET

Mike Hazard

Once upon a time, it was all organic. Now, not.
Wow, I've never seen that before.
Holy buckets, look at those radishes.
Climate is what you expect and weather is what you get.
We're up to our eyes in groceries here.
Soda pop is liquid corn.
Paradise was a garden.
On a farm, everything is dangerous.
I love to watch stuff grow.
Plant your corn by the light of the moon.
A farmer farms soils and a writer farms brain cells.
If it was easy, you'd see it on every table.
I've known these Brussels sprouts since they were seeds.
Enjoy every blade of grass. Don't miss the miracle.