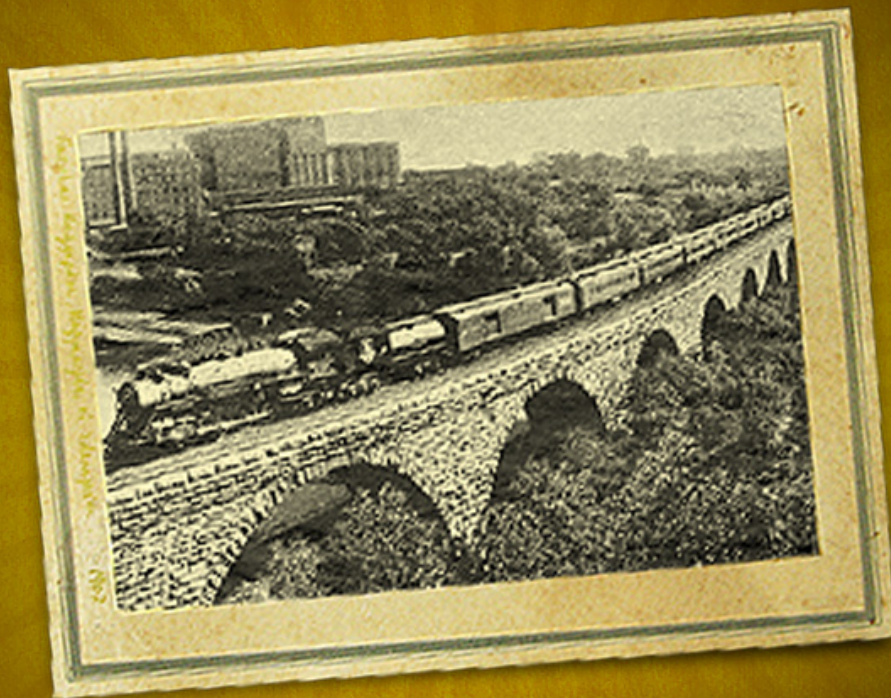

JJ HILL AND THE STONE ARCH BRIDGE



OKABENA
MEDIA



INTRODUCTION

In 1880, Minneapolis was a blossoming city of over 45,000. Just eight years had passed since the city had merged with St. Anthony, its sister city on the east bank of the Mississippi River, and during that short period of time the population of the combined cities had more than doubled. Yet little had been done to bind the two parts of Minneapolis together.

The main business hub of the city, like today, was located on the west side of the river, as were most of the city's flour and saw mills. On the east bank, one could find a few smaller mills, scattered shops and hotels, and less than twenty percent of the city's total population. This sense of urban schizophrenia was compounded by the fact that the city's main railroad links, so crucial to urban growth in the 1880s, were also located on the underdeveloped east side of the river.



As the main Mississippi River crossing open to Minneapolis pedestrian and passenger traffic, the Hennepin Avenue suspension bridge was of vital importance. Yet this structure, while only twenty-five years old, had fallen into a state of disrepair. “We do not believe there is a city on the civilized globe outside of Minneapolis which would permit a bridge of the importance of this – forming the connecting link between two great divisions of the city – to get into such a shameful condition of dilapidation,” wrote the editors of St. Paul’s Pioneer Press (April 20, 1882).

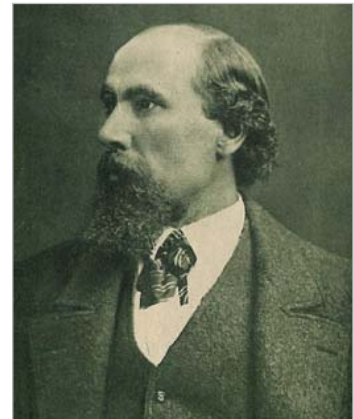
According to the Pioneer Press, travelers arriving at the rail depot on Minneapolis’s east side were taking their lives into their own hands by even crossing the bridge. “A swamp corduroy (road) is a delightful pleasure drive compared with the holes, the ruts, the pitfalls and the snares which the rotted pine blocks in this thoroughfare constitute,” the article added.

Although the Pioneer Press’s description of the bridge was undoubtedly exaggerated, the availability of ready transport into central Minneapolis was of great concern to the city’s business community. Management of the Hennepin Avenue suspension bridge was, it seems, a bit of an embarrassment to the city. The structure was a toll bridge under control of the mayor’s office. Although the bridge had been completely refurbished in 1876 at great expense, the condition of the structure remained deplorable. Consequently, many of the city’s business leaders came to believe that the bridge’s renovation funds had been squandered by city officials. (1)



The fact that various mayors treated the suspension bridge as an item of personal property didn't help matters either. One mayor had gone so far as to allow the penniless widow of a former crony to move into the bridge's tollhouse where the destitute woman resided until her death. (2) What was needed, in the eyes of Minneapolis businessmen, was a new bridge – one not in the hands of the politicians – that would bring railroad passengers directly into the central business district of Minneapolis.

To embark on such an undertaking, Minneapolis business leaders turned to St. Paul's up-and-coming railroad entrepreneur, James J. Hill. Hill eagerly plunged into the task and, within a few short years, managed to bring the venture to completion. Known to critics as "Hill's Folly" at the time of construction, the resulting bridge still stands, as solid today as on the day it was completed in 1883. Known simply as "the Stone Arch Bridge," this 2,100-foot-long, 100,000 ton structure helped usher the railroad age into Minneapolis. The eye-pleasing design of the bridge, with its twenty-three gracefully curving arches, soon became a landmark of the city, adorning numerous postcards and the letterheads of countless Minneapolis corporations.



In all likelihood, "Hill's Folly," perhaps the oldest major structure in the city of Minneapolis and the second oldest bridge spanning the Mississippi River, (3) will remain intact for a second century; perhaps even a third or fourth. This, then, is the story of James J. Hill's Stone Arch Bridge, one of the most remarkable pieces of nineteenth-century architecture still in existence in Hennepin County.

THE MAN

In the early 1870's, James J. Hill was considered something of a buffoon by many Minnesota businessmen. When the area around Winnipeg, Manitoba was first opened up to white settlers in 1858, Hill had managed to make himself a small fortune in what many regarded as a wildly lucky business venture. A few of Hill's business associates had purchased two dilapidated Mississippi River steamers in St. Paul, which they dismantled, loaded on oxcarts, and hauled all the way across the state to the Red River country.



The steamers were then reassembled and put to work hauling much-needed Red River freight from the oxcart trails in Minnesota to the booming settlements around Winnipeg.

Jim Hill, recognizing a fantastic business opportunity, acted as purchasing agent for much of this Winnipeg-bound freight. When rail lines were pushed through to Breckenridge and Moorhead, Minnesota, settlers flocked to Manitoba and Hill dreamed of a business empire in the north. But river steamers were a seasonal form of transportation, and during the long winter months Winnipeg was accessible only by dog sled.



Hill, who had made this grueling journey on numerous occasions, dreamed of a more practical means of exploiting the growing market in the north.

Jim Hill soon had his eye on the St. Paul and Pacific Railway Company, a pretentiously named bankrupt line whose tracks barely reached the Dakota border. Years earlier, a \$13,800,000 bond issue had been floated to fund this supposed trans-continental line, yet only five hundred miles of mostly unusable track had ever been laid. A classic case of nineteenth-century railroad looting, most of the St. Paul and Pacific's capital had been siphoned off to a number of dummy construction companies and shadowy managers, leaving the bondholders – mostly Dutch venture capitalists – with “two streaks of rust and a right of way” for their trouble. (4)

The line was in such dismal condition that when it went bankrupt in 1873, the receiver had to inspect some of the company's property by handcar because the line's single, rickety locomotive was unable to negotiate many of the poorly constructed stretches of track! This was the railroad Jim Hill dreamed of acquiring.



Convinced that the St. Paul and Pacific could be a money-making operation, Hill ignored his critics and moved to acquire the bankrupt line. In a complicated stock transaction, Hill and a group of Montreal financiers managed to gain a controlling interest in the line. Critics howled with laughter, yet Hill had the last laugh. The rechristened St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway, or the “Manitoba Road” as it was more commonly known, almost immediately became a profitable enterprise.

Hill’s first major chore was to replace the Manitoba Road’s existing track. He steadily replaced the original low-grade iron rails with rails of high-quality steel, and the Manitoba Road soon became known as a quality road. By 1880, four of the major railroads serving the Minneapolis/St. Paul market used Hill’s track when they ran their trains between Minneapolis and St. Paul.

A union depot was eventually constructed in downtown St. Paul for use by these lines, and it rapidly became one of the busiest and most efficient rail terminals in the country. When Minneapolis business leaders expressed interest in building a similar union depot in downtown Minneapolis (with a viaduct connection to the Manitoba Road’s track on the opposite side of the Mississippi River), Jim Hill was the man to whom they naturally turned.

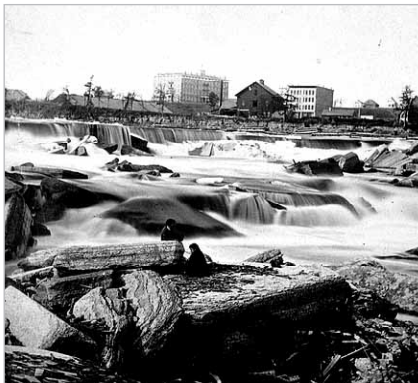


THE PLAN

On November 28, 1881, James J. Hill and several Minneapolis businessmen met at the old Nicollet House Restaurant to discuss construction of a downtown rail terminal and a short-line railroad linking that terminal with the Manitoba Road's St. Paul-to-Minneapolis line. The men organized the Minneapolis Union Railway Company for this purpose and formally incorporated the company on December 1, 1881.



On January 9 of the following year, the company held its first stockholders meeting, and James J. Hill, as owner of 232 of 250 shares of stock, was elected president. Col. Charles C. Smith was appointed chief engineer of the project, the Central Trust Company issued \$3,000,000 worth of bonds (guaranteed at 6% per annum by the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway Company), and a contract was entered into with Edward Darragh and Michael Haviland to construct a stone-arch viaduct across the Mississippi River. (5)



Hill had originally proposed to build an iron bridge across the Mississippi River at Nicollet Island, just upriver from the existing suspension bridge. The river reached its narrowest point at that location and he believed construction costs could be kept to a minimum. Such a location would also provide the most direct route into downtown Minneapolis where Hill wanted to build his union depot. But Col. Charles C. Smith, Hill's West Point-trained engineer, believed the massive stone pillars needed to support a railroad bridge might create a choke point in the river, causing ice and log jams.

Smith also feared that any major construction on the Mississippi riverbed above the Falls of St. Anthony might cause a destabilization of the falls.(6) Year after year, the sandstone layer underlying St. Anthony Falls was steadily being eaten away by erosion. This erosion was causing the falls to gradually "migrate" upstream. Smith feared that punching through this sandstone layer with bridge piers might fracture the entire foundation of the river floor, accelerating the migration of the falls. This, in turn, would result in wholesale disruption of the water power upon which the flour and lumber milling industries of Minneapolis depended.



A similar break-up of the falls had occurred in October 1869 when a tunnel being dug between Nicollet and Hennepin Islands collapsed. Millions of gallons of river water gushed through the tunnel, taking large segments of the two islands with them. Workmen labored frantically to plug this huge leak, but the Herculean task wasn't accomplished until the following spring. No one, least of all Jim Hill, wanted to see a repetition of that disaster. Col. Smith's answer, then, was to build below the falls at considerably greater expense.



Smith proposed to construct a solid stone bridge cutting diagonally across the Mississippi River. The west end of the bridge would lie just below the St. Anthony Falls mill district and the east end would lie 500 feet downstream from the Hennepin Avenue suspension bridge.

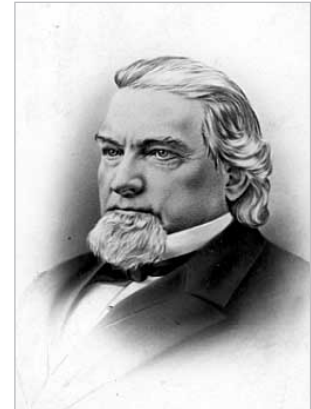
The proposed double-tracked bridge would terminate at a union depot located between Nicollet and Hennepin avenues. Believing that the project would be of "direct and immediate benefit" to the mill owners, Hill hoped "to have the fullest and most earnest cooperation of the people at the falls on both sides of the river."⁷ But Jim Hill soon learned that the benefits of one party often conflict with those of another.

To build his bridge, Hill needed to acquire certain tracts of land along the river. He had begun this process eighteen months earlier when he purchased the St. Anthony Water Power Company for \$425,000. The sale was widely reported in the press, as was Jim Hill's motive in making the purchase. No one believed Hill had the slightest interest in getting into the water-power business. That Hill needed to acquire the necessary right of way for his proposed railroad bridge was readily recognized.



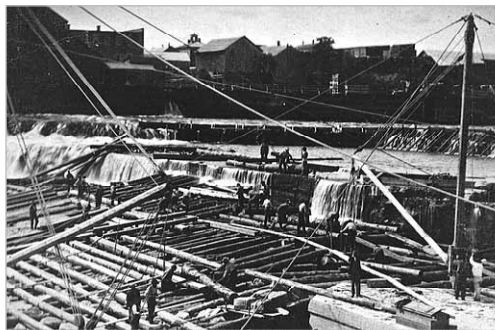
But two parcels of land along the proposed bridge route lay beyond Hill's immediate grasp. The first of these, located on the St. Anthony side of the river, was occupied by the Morrison Sawmill Company. The second, a piece of land at the foot of Hennepin Island, was occupied by the Farnham & Lovejoy Sawmill Company. Dorilus Morrison, Sumner Farnham and James Lovejoy, the proprietors of the businesses in question, were aware of Hill's plans. The three men drove hard bargains when Hill sought to buy them out. The Farnham & Lovejoy operation was initially offered \$35,000 to surrender their site, but the pair scoffed, demanding \$150,000. The Morrison Company was equally adamant.

In desperation, Hill wrote to his business rival Cadwallader C. Washburn, president of the Minneapolis Water Power Company and former business associate of Farnham and Morrison, imploring him to assist Hill in acquiring the sites: “In lieu of the enormous amount we have to invest in the bridge and Union Depot and the fact that our resources wouldn’t be materially increased, I ask that you will consider the enterprise on our part, awfully beneficial to all property in Minneapolis, and that in asking a price, these facts will be borne in mind.” (8) Washburn had little influence over his former business associates. Eventually Dorilus Morrison came to terms with Hill, but Farnham & Lovejoy continued to hold out. In the end, Hill gave in, purchasing the pair’s property for \$112,000. This was one of the few occasions when Jim Hill was outfoxed in a business deal and the thought must have stung him. When he reported news of the deal to his lawyer, he sheepishly wrote: “I trust you will not consider that I was too free in making this purchase.” (9)



THE TASK

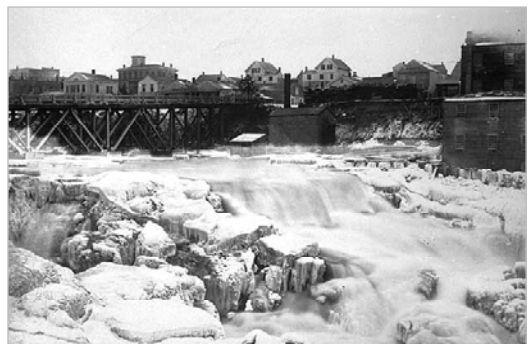
On a cold January morning in 1882, press reports indicated that ground had been broken and construction begun on “the great viaduct.” Although control of the two disputed pieces of property had not yet been resolved, Darragh and Haviland, the contractors on the project, began work in earnest. A small crew had been hired to begin the project and within days derricks, tool houses and steam-driven engines were assembled and put into place on both sides of the river. “The gentlemen comprising the firm are among the most successful and energetic railroad builders in the country,” reported the Pioneer Press on Jan. 13, 1882, “and before many days the people of Minneapolis will be enabled to see how much can be accomplished in a short time by concentrated and well directed energy.”



Within weeks, nearly 600 men were at work on the project. About 300 of these were employed as a day crew and 125 made up the night shift. Another 150 were set to work cutting limestone blocks from a quarry on the east bank of the river. The workers were paid \$1.25 a day for their labors and most certainly earned every nickel of it. While heavy construction has always been grueling work, in 1882 it could be brutal. On February 21 of that year, the Pioneer Press noted that “twenty or thirty men were busy up to their

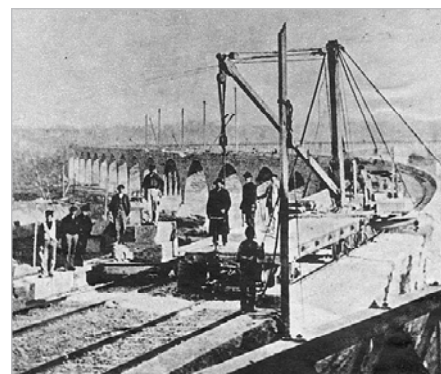
waists in the icy waters.” These laborers were constructing a number of coffer dams – circular structures in the middle of the river from which the water could be pumped with steam-driven centrifugal pumps. When completed, these dams allowed workers to prepare the necessary foundations of the bridge upon the temporarily dried floor of the river.

While the workers were provided with “great rubber boots,” said to be “necessary for the amphibious character of the employment” (Pioneer Press, Feb. 18, 1882), it is hard to imagine that the work was anything but torture. Yet, the icy waters were only one of the dangers that the river posed for these men. During the winter of 1882, those hardy souls who braved the icy chill of the Mississippi River also struggled with its raging currents, currents capable of sweeping a man to his doom.



On February 26, after just forty-five days of work on the bridge, the first casualty occurred. Joseph Schmidt, a young Prussian immigrant, met his death in the rapids below the falls. Schmidt was helping to build one of the piers on Hennepin Island when his foreman ordered him to take a message to a crew doing similar work on Upton Island. While maneuvering a small rowboat through the strong river currents, Schmidt apparently lost control of the craft and was swept into the rapids downstream. Once in the churning rapids, the small boat struck a large cake of ice, upsetting the craft and throwing the occupant into the river. Schmidt struggled for a few moments before sinking into the churning waters. When the victim's foreman was questioned as to the wisdom of sending a lone man to navigate a tiny rowboat through such waters, the foreman retorted: "Schmidt became thoroughly rattled and was drowned through lack of nerve and ordinary presence of mind" (Pioneer Press, Feb. 27, 1882).

By the spring of 1882, all but one of the bridge's twenty-three foundations were completed and the entire site was connected by a series of rickety wooden tramways. Horses were employed to drag huge stone blocks along these tramways, where equally rickety derricks swung the huge blocks onto the growing piers. Four sputtering steam engines provided the power necessary for some of the derricks to hoist the stone into place. But more often than not, the blocks were raised and lowered by means of horse-power. A number of windlasses were employed for this purpose – devices that permitted draft horses, walking in circles,



to coil thick ropes around wooden drums. On one of these contraptions, the bar passing through the shaft of the windlass snapped, causing an 800-pound block of limestone to tumble into the river. The weight of the limestone caused the windlass to be spun with "lightning rapidity" and a piece of the shattered windlass was hurled away with great velocity. The flying debris struck the operator of the device, a young immigrant named John Donovan, instantly crushing the poor man's skull, "Knocked into Eternity" read the newspaper headline (Pioneer Press, April 30, 1882).



In many respects, the technology used in building the Stone Arch Bridge had been around since antiquity. The very idea of draft animals and gangs of sweating workmen moving huge stone blocks into place brings to mind the Egyptian pyramids. But in spite of the primitive engineering techniques employed by Hill's men, the Stone Arch Bridge could have been built

during no earlier time period. While much of the limestone used on the bridge was quarried on the spot, thousands of tons of stone had to be shipped in, often from hundreds of miles away. The stone quarried at these diverse locations could never have been efficiently transported to Minneapolis without the growing rail network that existed in the 1880s.

The foundations for the bridge's piers were built of solid granite hauled in from Sauk Rapids, Minnesota. All exposed, work on the upper portion of the bridge was built of magnesium limestone quarried at Mankato, Minnesota and Stone City, Iowa. Marble, used for the trimming on the deck of the structure, came from Bridgeport, Wisconsin. Limestone, used for the unexposed portions of the bridge, was quarried on the site. In all, 100,000 tons of stone were needed for the project and the logistics of supplying such a huge amount of material was no simple matter. From June 1882 until November 1883, not less than five marble-laden railroad cars were contracted to leave Bridgeport each and every day. During the same period, 2,000 carloads of Mankato limestone were used. Hill, ever the stickler



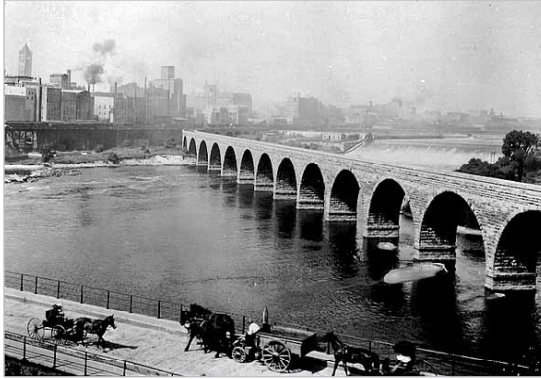
for derail, was a very quality-conscious businessman. When he became dissatisfied with the quality of stone being shipped from Mankato, he solved the problem in typical Jim Hill fashion – he simply purchased the Mankato quarry.

In order to bond such a huge amount of stone together, an equally large amount of mortar was required. In all, 30,554 cubic yards of various cements were used on the project. Because much of the masonry work was done during the winter, a method of preparing cement in subfreezing temperatures had to be devised. Col. Smith, the chief engineer of the project, came up with a simple solution to this problem. Eight quarts of salt were incorporated into each barrel of cement and then mixed with hot water. The salt content of the solution prevented the cement from freezing and, upon drying, the salt was simply absorbed into the pores of the stone.(10)

By the spring of 1883, the last of the foundations had been completed and the bridge's piers were rapidly rising above the waterline. The graceful arches of the bridge began to take shape. As they rose above the water, the piers curved outward on either side, forming the bridge's distinctive arches. The arches were designed to be of varying sizes, spanning from 40 to 100 feet. Like any self-supporting arch, they were incapable of standing without external support prior to completion. As a result, thousands of heavy timbers were used to prop up the unfinished structures. These creaking and groaning timbers shivered under the weight of the half-completed arches. Sometimes they collapsed, with tragic results. The third, and final, casualty on the project involved a young man who was crushed when a violent gust of wind caused the timbers holding one partially completed arch to give way. But when things went as planned and the two halves of an uncompleted arch approached very near to one other, the uppermost stone – the keystone – could be dropped into place and hammered home with huge wooden mallets. Once completed, the arches became as solid as the granite and limestone deposits from which they were quarried.



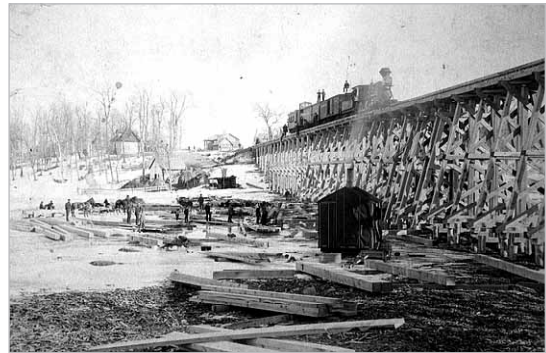
THE LEGACY



“Speed is the characteristic of American civilization; everybody is in a hurry, and no sooner is one device for overcoming time and space successfully put to use, than people find it too slow, and brain and money are drawn upon to start an improvement.” So reads the account in the *Pioneer Press* of the completion of the Stone Arch Bridge (Nov. 17, 1883). One of the most important features of Hill’s creation, it seems, was that it reduced travel time between Minneapolis and St. Paul to an astonishing twenty minutes.

Because the Minneapolis/St. Paul route crossed no city Streets, trains leaving one city could immediately put on full steam and rush through to the other. Even when crossing the new bridge, trains could achieve top speeds. The heavy stone walls on either side of the structure’s upper deck were said to be so massive that, in the event of a derailment, trains could neither jump over nor crash through them. (11)

This was quite different from most railroad viaducts. The typical railroad bridge of the day was a wobbly wooden affair over which trains literally had to creep. They were usually cut-rate structures, built of timbers felled on the spot, and intended to last only a few years.



Hill’s bridge, by contrast, was a \$650,000 stone monument built for the centuries. “Firmer than the earth,” is how the *Tribune* described Hill’s creation (Nov. 23, 1883). “More solid than the ground itself,” declared the *Pioneer Press* (Nov. 17, 1883).



While a union depot had yet to be completed, contractor George Brackett’s shovel brigade was said to be “tearing up the dirt at a brisk rate.” The original plans called for a depot between Hennepin and Nicollet avenues, but the site being prepared by Brackett’s men was located on the river flats beneath the Hennepin Avenue suspension bridge. Pedestrians leaving the new facility would climb a set of

stairs and emerge from the building in the middle of Bridge Square – the very center of activity in Minneapolis. In the meantime, a temporary depot was established at the end of Fourth Street, and travelers were able to step off a passenger train in the very heart of Minneapolis.

The Union Depot was completed in April 1885. The design of the building was said to be “almost severe in its simplicity,” but the Tribune insisted “one must enter the building to appreciate its beauty, convenience and spaciousness” (April 23, 1885). The Northern Pacific Railway; the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Railway; and the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway immediately joined Hill’s Manitoba Road in using the facility. Within a few years, the Chicago, Burlington & Northern Railway; the Eastern Railway Company



of Minnesota; and the Wisconsin Central Railway Company followed suit. Every passenger railroad then serving Minneapolis used Hill’s Stone Arch Bridge and Union Depot with one exception – the Milwaukee Road. Although officials of the Milwaukee Road entertained the idea, they just could not bring themselves to rent space in another line’s depot. Milwaukee Road officials eventually constructed

a passenger depot of their own a few blocks away. When the Rock Island Line and the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railroad (or the “Soo Line”) began serving Minneapolis in later years, they, too, used the Milwaukee Depot rather than the Union Depot.

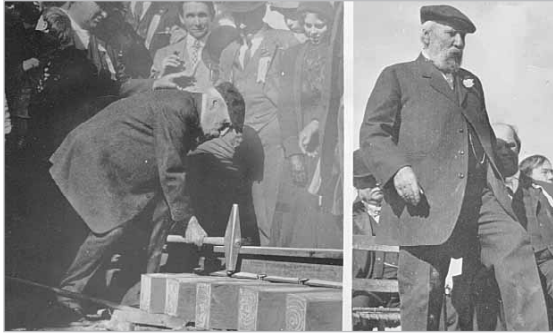


Nevertheless, the Stone Arch Bridge and the Union Depot were the pride and joy of the downtown Minneapolis business community. A group of

downtown businessmen held a testimonial dinner for Jim Hill and presented him with a massive silver tray as a token of their appreciation. The tray, a two by two-and-one-half-foot solid silver work of art, was inscribed with a detailed engraving of the Stone Arch Bridge, as well as eight smaller engravings representing significant developments in Hill’s career. One could see the oxcart trains crossing the Minnesota plains, a dogsled journey to Winnipeg, steamboats on the Red River. This beautiful gift was a creation of Tiffany & Company of New York City and is now part of The Minneapolis Institute of Arts’ permanent collection.

Hill’s partners in the Minneapolis Union Railway Company were also present at the testimonial dinner. They, too, had reason to feel proud. The company’s Union Depot was destined to become one of the busiest rail terminals in the country. Their Stone Arch Bridge was already one of the best-known landmarks of the city. Construction of both would certainly contribute to rapid growth for the city of Minneapolis.

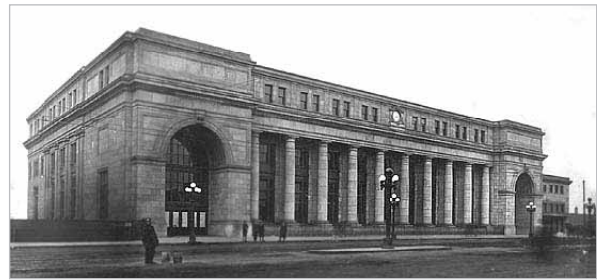




In later years, however, one thing may have pleased these men above all else – the Minneapolis Union Railway Company became an incredible financial success. Although the Union Railway Company owned no rolling stock and operated no trains – and while the total mileage of the company’s track amounted to less than two-and-one-half miles (stretching from present-day “Dinkytown” to the Hennepin Avenue terminal site) – the Union Railway

Company became one of the bluest of blue-chip railroad investments. In 1887, the company paid a whopping 38 percent dividend on its stock. The following year it paid 10 percent, During the next three years, the stock yielded 15 percent – each year. (12)

By 1910, rail passenger service to Minneapolis had outgrown the original Union Depot and the facility was bursting at the seams. A much larger terminal was needed, but the Minneapolis Union Railway Company, the builder of the original facility, had discontinued three years earlier. Jim Hill’s Great Northern Railway Company (formerly the Manitoba Road) had absorbed the property of the Union Railway Company, including the bridge and depot. The Great Northern had become a phenomenally successful enterprise with tracks stretching from the plains of the Midwest to the cliffs of the Pacific coast. Hill’s company agreed to provide funds for a new downtown rail terminal, but this terminal was



to be utterly unlike the original. The first Union Depot was plain and utilitarian. The second was to be ornate and grand.

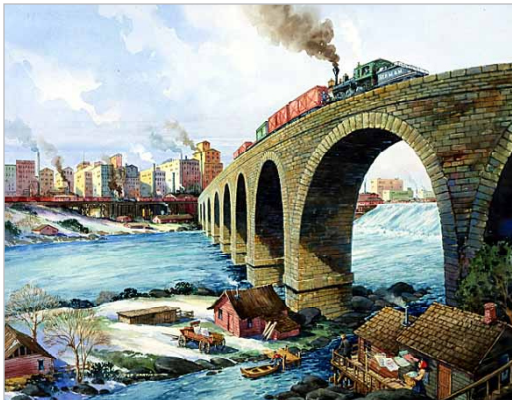


Lofty ceilings, ornate chandeliers, huge crystal windows, polished brass doorknobs and handrails, gigantic murals of Blackfoot and Kootenai Indian powwows, and ticket and baggage agents dressed in immaculately pressed uniforms – this was the type of facility Jim Hill wanted for his Great Northern

Railway. And this is exactly what he built. Completed in 1914, the Great Northern Depot was a veritable palace. The cost of the project exceeded \$1,800,000, but few complaints were heard. When visiting Minneapolis, the Stone Arch Bridge and the Great Northern Depot were very often the first glimpses visitors had of the city. They were invariably impressed.

THE END OF THE LINE

During the heyday of rail passenger service, hundreds of thousands of travelers passed over Jim Hill's Stone Arch Bridge each year on their way into, or out of, the city of Minneapolis. A time schedule from May 1948 shows 82 passenger trains, representing nearly a dozen rail lines, leaving the Great Northern Depot every day. Yet, by 1978 the number of departures had been reduced to just four. Those remaining trains were operated by a single rail carrier – Amtrak.



Hard times had fallen on the Great Northern Depot. The long wooden benches, once jammed with hundreds of waiting travelers, now stood empty. The elegant chandeliers were gone and a false ceiling hid the depot's once-ornate, now-crumbling roof. The walls of the waiting room were painted a dingy green, and the huge windows were coated with years of grime. Receipts from ticket sales simply did not justify the expense involved in maintaining the once-grand structure. On March 1, 1978, the last passenger train to cross the Stone Arch Bridge rumbled into the Great Northern Depot, dropping off the very last load of rail passengers ever to arrive in downtown Minneapolis. A grand age had come to an end. Within months, the Great Northern Depot fell to the wrecking ball, and the Stone Arch Bridge, itself surrounded by crumbling, abandoned flour mills, fell into obscurity.

When this bridge was completed in 1883, the Minneapolis Tribune had made a rather extraordinary prediction concerning the structure. "It is constructed to stand the rest of time," said the Tribune, "until the golden age shall arrive when the problem of aerial navigation shall have been solved, and the railroads and railroad bridges will be useless works of engineering" (Nov. 23, 1883).

RENAISSANCE



When the last passenger train pulled out of the Great Northern Depot in 1978, the area surrounding the depot was littered with crumbling mills, out-of-use factories and empty warehouses. The entire downtown riverfront had all but been abandoned. The old Stone Arch Bridge, once the centerpiece of the riverfront, had been fenced off, and the only people who ventured onto this once proud structure were transients looking for a secluded location to share a bottle of cheap wine, and local teens looking for a private place to engage in mischief.

Yet over the last twenty-five years, the Minneapolis riverfront has seen a remarkable rebirth. It began with the Riverplace and St. Anthony Main redevelopment projects. Soon Nicollet Island was rehabilitated. A new Hennepin Avenue suspension bridge was built, and modern hotels and condominiums have sprouted amidst the old mill ruins. The Stone Arch Bridge mutely witnesses these changes.



Finally in 1994, the Minneapolis Park Board acquired the bridge, rehabilitated it for pedestrian use, and once again made it the proud centerpiece of the downtown riverfront.



Today, staff members from the new Mill City Museum offer guided walking tours across the bridge, as well as to the adjacent Mill Ruins archeological site. Educational programs are offered to people of all ages, informing them of the significance of St. Anthony Falls, the old Mill District, and the Stone Arch Bridge to the city of Minneapolis.

Thanks to the preservation miracle pulled off by the Minneapolis Park Board, it seems more than likely that not only our grandchildren, but our grandchildren's grandchildren may one day stroll across the Mississippi River on Jim Hill's monument to the railroad age.

NOTES

1. See comments of various leading citizens of Minneapolis quoted in "The City," *Minneapolis Tribune*, April 22, 1885, p: 3, col. 1-5.
2. "Gone At Last." *Minneapolis Tribune*, Jan. 4, 1882, p. 6, col. 1.
3. Ralph Budd, President, Great Northern Railway. "Address Before the American Railway Bridge and Building Association. Oct. 19, 1927." James J, Hill Reference Library, St. Paul, Minnesota.
4. Joseph G. Pyle, *The Life of James J. Hill* (New York 1917) vol. 1, p. 164.
5. Organization and Corporate History, Minneapolis Union Railway Company, pp. 1-3. See also Board of Directors Notes, Jan. 9, 1882. Minneapolis Union Railway Company. Great Northern Railway Records, Archives and Manuscripts, Minnesota Historical Society.
6. Charles C. Smith, Stone Railway Viaduct, Oct. 19, 1920, pp. 1-2. Archives and Manuscripts, Minnesota Historical Society. See also text of speech by James J. Hill quoted in, "A Deserved Testimonial" (St. Paul Pioneer Press) and "A Gracious Gift" (*Minneapolis Tribune*), September 11, 1884.
7. James J. Hill to A. C. Morrill, Feb. 4, 1880, James J. Hill Papers, James J. Hill Reference Library, St. Paul, Minnesota.
8. James J. Hill to C. C. Washburn, May 20, 1881, James J. Hill Papers, James J. Hill Reference Library, St. Paul, Minnesota.
9. James J. Hill to J. Kennedy. Feb. 13, 1882, James J. Hill Papers, James J. Hill Reference Library, St. Paul, Minnesota.
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The following primary sources were particularly helpful:

The Great Northern Railway Company records at the Minnesota Historical Society and the James J. Hill Papers at the James J. Hill Reference Library.

Secondary sources that were especially useful included:

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