

Our goal is that you will find this tour to be an enjoyable outdoor activity, and educational as well. A tour, such as this, would not be possible without our research volunteers. We thank them for their hours of time and dedication.

We have many volunteers who do a variety of tasks. If you would like to learn more about volunteer opportunities, or how to become a member of SCHS, please contact us.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!**

*Stevens County*  
**HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM**

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*making history come alive*

**West Side, Morris**  
*Self-Guided Walking Tour*

Some of the best historical artifacts are right before our very eyes. Take a walk back into time and learn a little bit about the people that helped structure Stevens County as we know it. The homes on this walking tour were built by many of the folks who began businesses, churches, community organizations and were influential in helping Morris and Stevens County become a thriving place to live.



**PLEASE DO NOT ENTER PRIVATE PROPERTY AND OBSERVE ALL SAFETY RULES REGARDING PUBLIC STREETS AND ROADS.**

# 1 116 West 6th Street

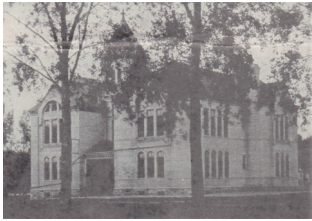
Stevens County is one of the sites that received a gift from Andrew Carnegie in 1905. He built over 1600 libraries across the nation, and Morris received one of the 66 buildings in Minnesota. The Carnegie buildings were built in a Greek design suggesting a "Temple of Learning". This particular building



was built by Frank Hancock who became a well-known building contractor in Western Minnesota. The Morris Public Library built a new library building on the east side of town in 1970 on the site of the former National Guard Armory that was destroyed by fire. The Stevens County Historical Society then leased the Carnegie building to house historic records and artifacts that were salvaged from the armory. In 2005, SCHS built an addition onto the existing Carnegie building, receiving two significant awards for the preservation of the integrity of the original building. This addition created enlarged exhibit space, as well as enhanced collection space in the lower level.

# 2 801 Nevada Avenue

Longfellow School was built in 1885 on the current site and enlarged in 1894 ( It was called "West Side" school until 1897 when it became Longfellow) It was first used as a high school and then became a grade school in 1914 (left). It was replaced with the present building on the same site in 1934 (right). The Longfellow school is now used as office space by the St. Francis Health System.



**10****302 West 6th Street**

Built in 1891, this Queen Anne and Stick Style house was originally owned by Sylvester and Augusta Stewart. The Stewarts came to Stevens County in 1879



to farm two sections of land in Horton Township, then entered the grain and machinery business in Hancock and later in Morris and Alberta. He is best known as the proprietor of Stewart's Mill. He was also well known for giving unsolicited gifts to the needy. Guests of this house are greeted by the letters 'S' 'S' etched on the glass paneled doors in the vestibule. The letters stand for Sylvester



Stewart. This house was later known as the "Arneson House", as Dr. Arthur Arneson and his wife, Karine, resided there for many years.

**3****202 W. 10th Street**

This house was built by B.J. and Sadie Benfield in the 1920's. At that time, there were two theatres in Morris competing



against each other, neither very prosperous. B.J. Benfield purchased both the Orpheum and the Strand theatres and closed the Orpheum, except for an occasional traveling cowboy show. In 1937, B.J. Benfield announced plans to build an 811 seat theatre building that would include three large apartments, two retail spaces, a luxurious lobby, and all the latest movie house features of the day. The Morris Theatre we know today opened in October of 1940 and the Strand was closed.

**Theatre crowd 1942**

4

## Wells Park

Harry H. Wells was born in Canada and arrived in the Morris area in 1872, at the age of 21, just as Stevens County was forming. Harry went into business with H. B. Wolff. For 10 years they had the leading store among the pioneer business establishments. He also had a merchandising business in Hancock named Wells, Helgeson & Company. Over the years he also had businesses in Evansville, Herman, and Graceville. In 1882, he established the Stevens County Bank and focused on banking. Through the years of banking and running his stores, Harry became interested in handling grain and had faith in the vast agricultural expansion of the prairie. He began Wells Investment Company, years after the stores and bank closed. Harry Wells was also very active in public service. In 1881, he was elected to the state legislature and two years later to the state senate. He was a member of Federated Church and a member of the Golden Sheaf Masonic Lodge.



West Side Park in Morris was established in 1915 with a gift of land from Mr. Wells to the city and officially named Wells Park, in his honor, shortly after. Harry H. Wells and his wife Clara (pictured left) lived on Park Avenue. He died in 1936.

9

## 610 Idaho Avenue

This Georgia Revival Style home was designed for the Martin and Mary Torpey family in 1898. Because of Mr. Torpey's financial difficulties, the three adult children, Agnes, Maude, and Levi, shared joint ownership of the home. Agnes was a single, 36 year-old teacher when the home was built. She moved with her family to Stevens County as part of the St. Lawrence Free Homestead Colony in 1871. She was 9 years old, at the time. Agnes taught in the local country schools and taught 22 years in the Morris Public School. In 1910, she took the position of Librarian of the Morris Public Library, just 5 years after the Carnegie Library building was built. She held that position for 20 years. While Agnes owned the house in partnership with her siblings, she was the main occupant.



Agnes died in 1930 and the home was later acquired by the Olanders.

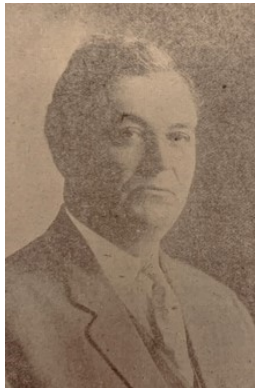
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### 210 W. 7th Street

In 1909, a prominent physician, Dr. Charles E. Caine, purchased 6 lots and a dwelling for \$4,500. He improved the house and added the large front porch in 1914. In 1925, it was announced that Dr. Caine was transforming his large residence on



West Seventh Street into a general hospital, which became the Morris Hospital. (Morris had had a five-room hospital from 1914-1920, but was closed by the county for being inadequate). He stated that the physicians of the community had been handicapped by the lack of a hospital and that the lives of many citizens had been unnecessarily endangered. Dr. Caine gave his home rent free to Mrs. E.V.Ferris, a nurse, to operate as a public hospital to the citizens of the community. The hospital received its first patient on October 22, 1925. In 1951, the Morris Hospital and the Stevens County Hospital were incorporated/joined into the new hospital and the old hospital buildings ceased to be used as hospitals. The Morris Hospital was later used as a group home, called Inisteige, for the mentally challenged. It later became a private residence.



# Park Avenue

Laid out in 1881, Park Avenue was the most prominent street to build on. Dubbed as “Piety Hill” and “The Drive of the City”, Park Avenue was the favorite street on which people would ride in their horse drawn buggies, or stroll on a nice summer evening.

5

### 1102 Park Avenue

This home was originally built for Ida Borrill, by H. H. Wells (Wells Park) . Ida worked for Mr. Wells and was also his



girlfriend. Ida’s family moved to Morris in the late 1870’s and she lived here the remainder of her life. It does not appear that Ida Borrill was part of the social organizations that were typical for women to participate in at that time. Shortly before her death, she fell inside the house and broke her hip. While recovering from that she had a heart attack and died in 1958, at the age of 90. Ida’s youngest sister, Nellie, also lived with her periodically.

## 6 907 Park Avenue

This home was built in 1881 by Lewis Stanton, son of President Abraham Lincoln's Secretary of War. Designed by an architect from the East Coast who knew that Minnesota would have cold winters, he included multiple open wood fireplaces. However, the house was very cold due to the drafts that these fireplaces created and dubbed "Stanton's Folly", by Mr. Stanton himself. The cost to build the house was \$21,000, which would be the same as \$550,000 today. This was much more than Mr. Stanton anticipated. The bricks are from Mankato, the glass shipped from back East, and the stones for the foundation were purchased from local farmers. Mr. Stanton also owned a stock farm north of Morris. He lived in this home until 1890 when he moved to New Orleans. This house is also known as "The Chimney's". It was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.



## 7 901 Park Avenue

This home was occupied for many years by David and Hazel Reiber. The Reibers moved to Morris in 1931 and lived, with their three children, in an apartment above the Morris Variety Store (510 Atlantic Ave.). David managed the variety store below. In 1934, Hazel designed a garter that would hold up stockings for her children, and birthed a business known as The Comfort Garter Company. As the depression worsened, the Reiber family could not keep the variety store afloat and moved into the La Grand Hotel on Pacific Avenue in June of 1937. The Comfort Garter Company took off and the Reiber family was able to move into this Park Avenue home in the spring of 1938. The Comfort Garter Company operated as a family business, employing many women who were able to sew from home. It managed to operate into the 1950's, until stretchable fabric and tights gained popularity. David was also city manager and later served a term as mayor.

