

## CHAPTER XI

### THE DEPRESSION

1930-1940

The depression of 1929 was one of the most important events which had happened in the generation and the results of its damage were to remain with the people of St. Louis Park for almost a decade. For a time after the stock market crash of 1929, jobs were available and most people had work, but as the implications of the financial disaster spread, the factories shut down and men were out of work. Some were fortunate and had savings on which they subsided or had relatives on which they could depend. But as these savings were used up appeals were made to the government for aid. Herbert Hoover had asked local governments to aid the distressed, hoping that the calamity would be of short duration, but it was not long until local resources were largely exhausted.

In St. Louis Park there were a number of cases which came to the attention of the village government. There had always been a few poor who had at times drawn upon the village treasury but when numbers came for aid the problem was becoming serious. Especially during the winter was the problem acute, when rents became due, gardens did not produce food, fuel was needed, and children became needful of clothing. In February of 1931, eleven people asked for and received aid from the council through the poor committee. With the shortage of money, taxes were not as readily collected as previously and the budget had never called for an extensive poor relief program, trustee H. E. Brown reported at a special meeting in November that the village had spent \$800 on welfare work during the year. This may not seem like a great sum but it was nevertheless, when one considers that many people did not have an income of more than \$1,200 in normal times. Furthermore, there was available a measure of private charity but in February of 1932, Trustee Brown told the council that the Community Fund had all but depleted its resources. But the number of needy increased with the season which caused more fortunate people to give as much aid as possible. The El Patio Cafe offered free Christmas dinners to less fortunate families if the village council would but indicate who they were.

Pressure was put upon the federal government for some type of financial aid, and it responded with a directive to the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, instructing that lending agency to make loans to states and municipalities in addition to loans to business. Several states, and many Minnesota counties, had expended all available resources and were approaching bankruptcy by the spring of 1932. The village council was likewise pressed for funds and in order to relieve unemployment requested the state highway department to expedite road building in the village.

Likewise the council spent all unmarked funds for projects which could have been deferred, mainly for the purpose of giving something to do for the unemployed. At virtually every meeting of the council in 1932 and in early 1933, there were passed bills

which were labeled "make work." By February in 1933, the council was forced to ask for outside aid and resolved that because the village could provide no longer for poor relief the village officials were to give to state and federal authorities information of circumstances and conditions. Six months later the State Board of Control allotted \$1,500 to St. Louis Park for welfare and relief.

Meanwhile, there had been a change of administration in Washington which dedicated itself to a program of relief, recovery and reform. In the first "hundred days" it had created a number of agencies and appropriated money to aid the needy. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration was given one-half billion dollars which it would give to states, counties or municipalities on the basis of the local government provide three dollars to the federal government's one. This agency, which had been created in May of 1933, found a counterpart in the State emergency Relief Administration. Local authorities were to decide whether the funds should be spent on work projects or given outright as dole. In general, the latter was preferred because most local governments had no project in the blueprint stage, and furthermore, it was cheaper administratively to give the dole. St. Louis Park was declared a distress area and was not required to contribute to the costs of the operation of F.E.R.A. Another agency created in the first days of the new administration was the Public Works Administration,, which was supposed to be a pump priming device which would give aid to heavy industry. With three and a third billion dollars it was to be federally administered. Harold Ickes headed the agency and hoped that worthwhile local projects would be found on which money could be expended which in turn would give a "shot in the arm" to the construction trades. His careful scrutiny of many of the projects, to be certain that full value was received, delayed the program somewhat and some of the funds were used .by other agencies. Being a private operation, the unemployed were referred to private contractors for work. The officials of the village did not certify men to P.W.A. work.

The dole was not a satisfactory system in the eyes of many people including that of Harry Hopkins, administrator of the F.E.R.A., and it was thought that work relief would be preferable from a psychologic viewpoint. To provide work relief the Civil Works Administration was established and began operation in October of 1933. By January, four million Americans were on the payroll. In St. Louis Park about 186 received aid from this agency having been transferred to this work from relief rolls. The C.W.F.A. was the branch of C.W.A. which employed women. Being designed only as a temporary relief measure, it was discontinued in the spring of 1934 after helping many through the winter.

Despite the increasing confidence in the spring of 1934, confidence that the country was headed out of the depression, there were still many men unemployed. B. M. Smith of the Hennepin County Emergency Relief Administration wrote letters to the various municipal councils asking for their general cooperation in finding work for the unemployed. Many men could not buy groceries, pay rent, or buy clothing, to say nothing of paying taxes if they owned their own homes. In general, homeowners received no work relief. In one case, a man came to the council asking for work so that he could earn enough to pay his taxes. About the same time the St. Louis Park Workers Protective

Association was formed by former C.W.A. workers for the purpose of furthering and protecting interests and rights of its members and workers in St. Louis Park. Any worker under the jurisdiction of the village was to be eligible and the life of the organization was to be as long as twenty members wished to continue. Officers were E.D. Dahlquist, L.P. Rorrison, R. M. Porter, and E. J. Lewis, What the association requested of the council is not precisely known but at the August council meeting the association was requested to meet with the council for a conference as to mutual interests and harmony with good will. Herbert Carleton, who was recorder of the village council, was a rather large property owner in the village and doubtless resisted efforts to create new work projects, the materials of which would come out of the tax revenue. The Workers Protective Association, on the other hand, seemed to favor the creation of many projects in order to provide work. In October, the association brought a complaint, Martin Olson vs Herbert Carleton, to the attention of their grievance committee. A committee from that organization requested (the council minutes put the word "demand" in parenthesis beside the word "requested") that the council cooperate with Mr. Olson to secure a suitable tenement for him for which Olson would work out the rent, and in addition Olson would work out the ten dollars rent paid to A. F. Blanchard during July and August. The council faced a difficult task in that it could hardly expect men who could hardly pay taxes to be taxed more heavily to provide new projects while at the same time there were village needs and unemployed men. It made several requests of the state for relief of special groups. Though the federal government had shifted the load of unemployables back to local government it was found that the burden was too great. The council asked the state legislature to care for the relief of disabled veterans. When the Workmens Protective Association asked for additional projects beyond relief work it was sent to federal officials. There were about six hundred persons unemployed living in the village.

Besides the aid from the village there were others who tried to help the needy. When Highway 7 was built through the area, a great number of trees had to be removed. The owners of the property, especially the Walker family, rationed the wood to indigent to be used for fuel. The Community Fund, in which Mrs. Renner was a prominent leader, collected funds yearly by making a house to house canvass to request help. Between five and six thousand dollars were collected annually which was used, at first, to help the needy with the elementary necessities of life while in later days it was used to provide the things required which could not be secured from relief agencies - things like glasses, medical care, special aids and at times, it paid hospital and doctor bills.

Within the first hundred days of the new administration, another agency the Federal Surplus Commodities Commission was established in order to take some of the agricultural surplus from the market and distribute the goods to needy families. Both farmers and the indigent would benefit by the program, which had spent thirty million dollars before November 1934. St. Louis Park received a carload of flour in 1933 which was to be distributed monthly to the needy in 25, 50 and 100 pound bags depending upon the size of the family. In 1934 the village council established gardens throughout the area on which it paid certain needy men for their work in cultivating the plot. About thirty-five acres was secured on which no rent was paid. One plot was secured from the Fletchers, others were located in Oak Hill and others could, be found in nearly every section of the

village. The produce from the gardens was sent to another needy group which canned the fruits and vegetables, which in turn were distributed to poor families.

Needless to say, there were many youths and young men who could not find jobs while great numbers of needy family heads were unemployed. For these the federal government provided the Civilian Conservation Corps which was to give work on useful projects to 300,000 men: 250,000 unmarried men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, 25,000 World War I veterans, and the same number of experienced woodsmen. The men were to receive about thirty dollars monthly of which five-sixths was to be sent home to their needy families. From St. Louis Park about one hundred men were sent to camps in the various parts of the state and northwest. No C.C.C. camps were established in St. Louis Park. The agency no doubt did some needed conservation work in addition to providing work for many young men, and relief for their families.

Up to this time there were many who thought that the unemployment crisis would end rather soon and most relief measures were at best only temporary aids. However, it became evident that it required more extensive and better planned projects to fill in the gap left when private employment failed to use all available men. There were perhaps, about ten million men who did not have jobs. For this reason the Works Progress Administration was begun in 1935. Those who could not work were to be returned to local aid or F.E.R.A. while the able bodied were to be used in constructing worthwhile public projects. The work was to be paid for out of a five billion dollar appropriation. In St. Louis Park the work done by the W.P.A. was largely on schools, roads, sewers, water mains, and sewing projects. Connected with the W.P.A. was a rehabilitation program for the disabled who generally were the last to be hired by private industry, if at all. About three hundred men worked for W.P.A. at some time or another for which the unskilled received about fifty dollars monthly while the skilled and professional people received higher pay. The program was cut off in 1942 because of the war.

One illustration of the type of work done by one group will be sufficient. In Oak Hill, the sewing project was composed of a number of women who used sewing machines purchased by nearby cities or municipalities. In one period from January 8 to March 26, 1935, the group produced 66 sheets, 157 quilts, 287 pillow cases, 233 terry towels, 35 huck towels plus about 75 mattresses, all of which were to be distributed to the needy. In some cases, individual residents offered to pay for materials to be used in construction of water mains and the like, if the W.P.A. would but provide the labor to lay the mains.

Despite the W.P.A. program there were always men who could not qualify for work because of debility or disability. For them, emergency relief was provided during the entire depression. About 1934, the Rural Hennepin County Welfare Board was established in order to differentiate between those needing aid within the city and those in the suburbs and rural areas. When all subdivisions had voted appropriations for the fund the state would request a matching appropriation from the federal government. In 1935, St. Louis Park was required to raise \$4,800 and about the same figure was raised in other

years. Nevertheless, the burden was heavy and the council protested several times that they had no funds which the federal government could match.

During the depression period one group or another aspired to speak for the workmen on the various jobs. The Workman's Protective Association wrote the council in 1936 that there was dissatisfaction among W.P.A. because of their foreman. They said that his actions and attitudes hindered the work. The council felt that they ought to write to the director, Mr. Christgau, to solicit his aid in handling the matter. Likewise in 1937, that militant union, Local 544, made demands upon the village to increase the budget for relief work. But one cannot get blood from a turnip – nor can one get taxes from impoverished property owners and the request was refused. Recorder Ellison said that he would not vote the village into bankruptcy.

There were troublesome days for both village officials and for recipients of aid. The latter did not want aid if private employment were available and the former did not want to press too hard upon the depleted resources of the community. Many who received aid can recall incidents today only with a certain amount of pain while village officials cannot recall the many incidents which were heartrending and ensaddening. Said one official, "There were so many things, and so many demands that recollection of individual cases is almost beyond memory."

While the problem of relief of poverty was the most important event of the 1930's there were certain gains through the use of the relief program, especially things like the construction of public buildings and utility systems. As early as 1926 there were many who knew that the village would someday require a water system but did not feel that it could afford it. In 1926, the council made plans to begin construction of the water system which would call for an outlay of \$40,000. In September, the proposal was submitted to the electorate and was defeated 547 to 403. The first contract for water mains, made about 1930, provided for about twenty-eight miles of mains, and was one of the largest contracts let west of Chicago. However, the need to provide work for unemployed brought the water system extension plans before the council again. In 1934, the water tower was constructed, and wells had been dug. Many customers thought that the water was of poor quality and protested and the council sent questionnaires to customers and found that most of the 156 were satisfied. Most of the water system was constructed with W.P.A. help. In one case a well which was dug was found to contain creosote water which apparently came from the marshes near which the creosote company was located. This water was not completely fit for human consumption but the output of the well was used for fire purposes and the oldest tower was filled with this water. By 1938, the village had built a water system which served eight hundred families and two additional miles were under construction. In 1937, about fifty million gallons of water were used. The system was largely financed by revenues from the sale of water though part had been secured through bonds which had to be refinanced. By 1940 the city could boast of one hundred and fifty miles of water mains and a pumping system which could deliver artesian water from three wells.

Along with the development of the water system was the construction of sewers, though they came several years later. There had been private systems established in Sunset Gables area which was about one and one-half miles long. The sewer system here was connected to the Minneapolis system. Claude W. Rossman and his associates did not draw upon public funds for construction and included the sewer and water assessments which normally would have been made, into the lot prices. The village system got under way about 1935 and was constructed by use of special assessments. And concomitant with the building of the two complementary systems was the need for plumbing ordinances which were passed in 1930 and 1931. Sewer districts were created in which the new lines were to be constructed; Brookside, District #3, for example, being established in 1937. The council voted to pay for half the costs of materials for the sewer while relief labor did most of the work. No sewer filtration plant was constructed, however, because in 1930 the village made a contract with the city of Minneapolis to dump into the larger system. With the expansion of the sewer system in St. Louis Park during the 30's, there was a greater volume of refuse which the Minneapolis system had to treat. In 1939, the assistant attorney of the city of Minneapolis recommended to the Minneapolis Council that the contract between the two municipalities be changed because the village was not paying its way. Furthermore, the village was delinquent on its payments for two years. Early in 1940, the two municipalities drew up a new contract which provided that St. Louis Park would pay \$5,000 annually which would pay the delinquency in five years plus pay the costs of disposal. Thereafter the payments would be \$3,700 yearly which would decrease until 1968 when about \$92,000 would be paid in. In addition, the village would have to pay one dollar per connection to help pay for maintenance of the disposal plant. Thus, by the end of the decade, St. Louis Park had laid the basis for a water and sewer system which would need to be expended as the population made its great increment in the next decade.

Most of the civic building in the period before World War II was geared to the relief program and the parks and playground development was no exception. To be sure, the village council did provide skating or hockey rinks at various places but the costs were small because about all that was required was flooding an area, and hydrants needed periodic cleansing anyway. In mid-decade the council resolved to create a park system in order to remedy unemployment and because the village needed playgrounds and parks. Two areas were designated and the Park Board set to work to draw plans and make estimates of costs. The W.P.A, was expected to help with the construction, Nevertheless, the electorate could not see the expenditure of any sum of money for such purposes, probably because it would be illogical to spend upon public recreation what could not be afforded privately. In 1937, the vote on the bond issue was 870 to 837 against bonding. At the end of the decade Harold Field gave to the village twenty rather marshy acres of land and the city appropriated \$4,000 and the construction of the park was begun. The park was named B. W. Carpenter Park in honor of Mr. Carpenter who had worked assiduously to get a -park system established.

The recreation program, which is intimately connected with both schools and parks can be said to have had its beginning in this period. In earlier periods there had been virtually no recreational program but one was begun by the W.P.A. under the aegis

of relief. The Oak Hill area had a playground supervisor in 1936 who was paid a salary of ten dollars monthly. During the next summer the same playground supervisor was paid twenty dollars monthly for ten weeks. But the lack of equipment was critical and when the supervisor came to the council and asked for some, her wish was granted. Shortly afterwards, Fern Hill made similar requests and it appeared that others would follow. These contributions, though small, would require considerable funds if every community in the village requested them. After the legislature passed a law in 1937 allowing villages to tax themselves for recreational purposes, St. Louis Park established a Recreational Planning Committee. The recreational program was to make a great expansion of activities after the war when the population had grown and the number of children was larger.

If the problem of governmental finance was of great seriousness in the decade following the first World War, it was to give unimaginable amounts of trouble in the next decade. Not only were men unemployed, and thus could not pay rents, which in turn prevented landlords from paying taxes, but certain corporations and businesses found the tax burden heavy. The Pacific Investment Company, successor to the Minneapolis Land and Investment Company, owned hundreds of lots in The Park on which they felt that they could not pay taxes. In 1935, they proposed making some kind of a tax settlement compromise with the village but the council refused because they felt that a dangerous precedent would be set. The year 1933 was perhaps the worst year. Though the council resolved to borrow \$20,000 to finance either a fire barn, water filtration plant, or to gravel streets, it found that it had to refinance a sidewalk debt of \$29,000 because of a shortage of taxes collected. In 1932, the electorate by a vote of 282 to 74 approved a bond issue to refinance \$50,000 in warrants which the village could not pay. Likewise, the water system debt of about \$18,000, the warrants of which were held by the Northwestern National Bank, had to be refinanced. The next year, some \$34,000 worth of sewer bonds were refinanced with the State Board of Investment because of the existence of a \$3,605 deficit, and because of a deficit of special assessments, and a small likelihood of collecting enough taxes. The cost of government in 1934 was but \$53,750 of which \$3,000 went to the poor fund, \$750 into old age pension fund while the remainder was levied for the general fund. The next year the poor fund required about 10 per cent of the budget which rose to \$65,000. Though the village could say that it was the second wealthiest town in Hennepin County in 1936, its assessed valuation was but two and one-third million dollars, on which a total rate of about 111 mills was levied. At the end of the decade, the assessed valuation was close to three million dollars but it is said that though the mill levy was higher than Minneapolis and other municipalities, the assessed valuations were lower.

The tremendous expansion of the functions of local government in the village in the 1930's had serious effects upon the governmental system under which the village operated. The council had great responsibilities in spending money which was secured from taxes and bonds, and had to plan for new projects which were designed in part to reduce unemployment. The council was composed of men who had to make a living in addition to giving guidance in governmental affairs. Necessarily, then, it was but a part-time occupation. The routine functions of government were performed by a sort of a

bureaucracy but it had no executive leadership. Thus, there existed a gap between the council, which was trying to act as a policy making body and as an executive group, and the bureaucracy. This incongruity came to the attention of a group which organized the Better Government League for the purpose of securing higher efficiency in the operation of the village. It hoped to get certain professional aid in running the government. A further problem was the lack of records or at least a place in which to store records. After one change of administration the new officials found many records stored in apple boxes, while some of the letters had aged checks attached to them. A considerable amount of bonds were coming due with no plan for redemption. What seemed to be needed was more full time officials and fewer who gave but part of their time to government. To shorten a long story, it need only be said that the recorder's position was made a full time job and, while he was given but few new duties, he was expected to give more direction to the council, and greater attention to city affairs. In 1938, the citizens voted to transfer the old Lincoln School to the village to be used as a village hall. The vote was 117 to 57. Toward the end of the decade the Better Government League, in which Morton Arneson, C. L. Hurd, Erling Shursen and many others played important roles, was changing its objectives. In 1939, it wanted better zoning laws, adequate park and playground programs, and specific labor and relief policies. For mayor it was supporting William M. Martin who saw the main problems as a need for state auditing of municipal finances, strict law enforcement, gradual reduction of taxes, and an efficient handling of work relief to give St. Louis Park people preference. After Martin was elected mayor, the office was to be held for two years, instead of one, a program designed to give more continuity to civic policies.

In bringing the village up-to-date, the reform movement did not overlook the fire department which had been operated as a volunteer organization for several years. In 1930, it was converted into a paid department, on duty all hours of the day. That same year a new thousand gallon LaFrance pumper truck was purchased for \$13,500 which reduced the insurance rate for the village. The rapid growth of population, despite the depression, required that the council buy a similar truck in 1938. if insurance rates were not to rise. Likewise, in the same year the electorate approved the building of a police and fire bam which cost \$6,433 and which had space for five fire engines and sleeping quarters for firemen. That same year the Civil Service System was established for police and firemen.. By the end of the period there were forty men working for the fire department which owned four pieces of fire fighting equipment. St. Louis Park had one of the best fire department ratings in the state outside of the first class cities.

The most significant thing in the operation of the police department in this period was the addition of police cars as an aid to law enforcement. The usual automobile purchased was a Ford which cost three to five hundred dollars each. A motorcycle was added to the enforcement division but was independent of the police until later. Furthermore, the police officers were put under civil service which tended to professionalize the force.

In the minds of many people, the traveling to and from their jobs is a problem of major importance. It is often evaluated in terms of time and cost. Because most of the

wage-earners in St. Louis Park worked in Minneapolis, it was necessary to commute back and forth by some means. The development of Highway 7, which was built by the W.P.A. and state about 1934, brought the city a few minutes closer to the village. Many discovered that they could drive into the city to their job, if they had one, quicker than they could get there by streetcar. The matter came to the attention of the council as early as 1934, when it authorized Flakne, president of the council to bargain with the trolley company for bus service and for better service. Three years later, after the highway had been constructed. D. J. Strouse of the Twin City Rapid Transit Company appeared before the council and asked to remove the trolley tracks and substitute buses. When the letter making the request had come a month earlier, the council called for a public hearing and a dozen people testified both for and against removal and the sense of the meeting indicated that the public wanted the trolley removed, which the council allowed and required of the trolley company when Strouse made his personal call. The council wanted buses substituted for the streetcars. It was announced in August of 1938 that the last streetcar would operate on the 27th and many people rode the last car from the village to the city and back. On the return trip many people took souvenirs from the car, bells, signs, bell cords, etc., and it is said that one exuberant rider tried unsuccessfully to burn the car. After forty-six years of operation, the car line was discontinued, and one of the oldest of the Walker enterprises ceased to operate.

The depression also saw the Walker land holdings reduced in the village largely because taxes were eating up their values. In order to save certain properties which were more valuable, the Pacific Investment Company had not paid taxes on a large number of lots located in The Park. Toward the end of the decade it came to the council and offered to give the village some twenty-seven acres in exchange for certain benefits. A small area which they were to keep was to be replatted into fifty and fifty-five foot lots, roads made, curbs and gutters built, water mains laid, and delinquent special assessments were to be paid. The reason the proposition was accepted, though it was refused a few years earlier, was because the village hoped to get properties back on the tax rolls. Furthermore, if the taxes were allowed to remain delinquent for longer time the state would get the property and no taxes would be paid on it. Walker and his holding companies had paid taxes for some forty years and some people thought that he had plowed enough into the land without getting a return, so that he deserved "a break." Nevertheless, opinions about Walker and his enterprises fall into two categories, either very much for him, or very much opposed, and this incident brought out those shades of opinion. When the area was retained was replatted and houses built upon it and sold, the Walker properties in The Park were virtually, all gone. By about 1940 the man (and his heirs) who gave the village its first dream of becoming important had very little property left there.

When the depression came upon the village it came at a time when the schools were slightly less than adequate for the school population. It is a characteristic of taxpayers that they pay interest rather than receive it and generally wait until needs are rather high before taxing themselves. There were about 1,200 pupils in school, with 475 in the junior and senior high schools. Over four hundred attended classes in a building constructed for 250. In 1930, a bond election for new buildings failed 680 to 502.

Another election was held a few months later at which the bond issue was defeated 784 to 675. Many felt that though the need for a school was great it could not be afforded and thus voted against the proposal. It was near the end of the decade that the addition to the high school was made.

The old problem of liquor which had created so much acrimony in the past came up again in the 1930's with the legalization of liquor sales. The council granted nine licenses for non-intoxicating liquor sales in 1933 but before hard liquor licenses would be granted, Mayor Flakne insisted that an election should be held. The election, which was held in December of 1934, was overwhelmingly for license, 1,165 to 473. Five years later the election showed that the public still was for the license system, 1,463 to 1,018. Council ordinances were brought up-to-date and control gave less trouble than it did in the earlier parts of the century.

For a long period, since the Martin press had been moved to Anoka, St. Louis Park had been without a local newspaper. The Hopkins paper was used for official notices, but it was published in the next town and in some ways did not cover St. Louis Park news. About 1937, J. Linn Nash established The Spectator, a newspaper started earlier as the North Minneapolis Chronicle. With the new name, The Spectator endeavored to cover the news from two and sometimes three suburbs contiguous to The Park. It being a legal paper, the official village notices were published in its columns. The editor tried to run a "dry" newspaper but after a curious liquor case it did run a few liquor ads. Independent in politics it had a leaning toward the Democrats. The Spectator faced the same problems that all of the preceding newspapers had: scattered population by which is meant that there are too many different social groupings, and a particular scarcity of local advertising. - The road of the newsman in The Park is indeed a hard one.

Before concluding this chapter one ought to mention the social characteristics of the people of the village as revealed in the 1940 United States Census. The enumeration showed that there were 7,757 persons living in the area of which figure ninety percent were native born. Of 3,669 persons fourteen years and older there were 3,118 in the labor force, plus ninety-nine on public work and two hundred and eight seeking work. There were 481 men who were not in the labor force while 2,284 women did not consider themselves employed beyond their homes. Of the employed persons the greatest number, 860, were working in clerical or sales or some related employment. Proprietors or managers made up the next largest group with 466, while craftsmen comprised 377 persons. Next in order were the operatives with 355, and following was professional workers with 258. About ten percent of all persons twenty-five years and older had finished four years of college with the greatest number, 1,433 having finished four years of high school. Slightly fewer, 1,242, finished the eighth grade. The median years completed was 12.1, somewhat higher than comparable communities.

The 7,737 persons who lived in St. Louis Park in 1940 occupied 2,200 dwellings and there were ninety-one other units vacant. Owners occupied 1,774 dwellings, 80.6 percent, while in Hennepin County dwellings occupied by owners came to only 45 percent of the total. Ten years earlier, 72 per cent of the homes were occupied by owners

while Hennepin County figures showed only 49.7 percent were owner occupied. While the percentage of owner occupied dwellings was declining in Hennepin County in the decade, it was rising in St. Louis Park.

In what kind of homes did people live in St. Louis Park? Of the 2,291 housing units in the village, over 85 percent of them had running water, while 82 percent had a flush toilet in the structure, with a slightly smaller percentage having a tub or shower. Nearly 97 percent of the homes were of the detached type, that is, single family residences. Of the age of the houses, the bulk, 1,806, had been built since 1920 when the village began to emphasize the residential suburb idea, while only (422) remained despite, fire, storm, etc. from the industrial era of 1890-1919. In 1940 there still remained five which were built before 1860. One can see from the above two paragraphs that St. Louis Park is a different place in which to live when one compares it with either the city or a neighboring town, like Hopkins.

While all these things were happening in The Park, there were rumblings from distant shores of approaching war. To be sure, the nation seemed well on the road to recovery by 1939 when it was beginning to profit from war in Europe. Within a short time nearly everyone had jobs and W.P.A. was gone. Abroad nations were being pushed under by the ruthless might of the Wehrmacht, and Hitler seemed to be able to conquer all of western Europe. Some Americans could without emotion see the sister democracies fall but the vast majority knew that eventually the ugly ogre of war would come to our land. But a few knew that the Sunday in December would come as soon as it did, bringing subsequent events which would make the past seem comfortable when thinking of the present.