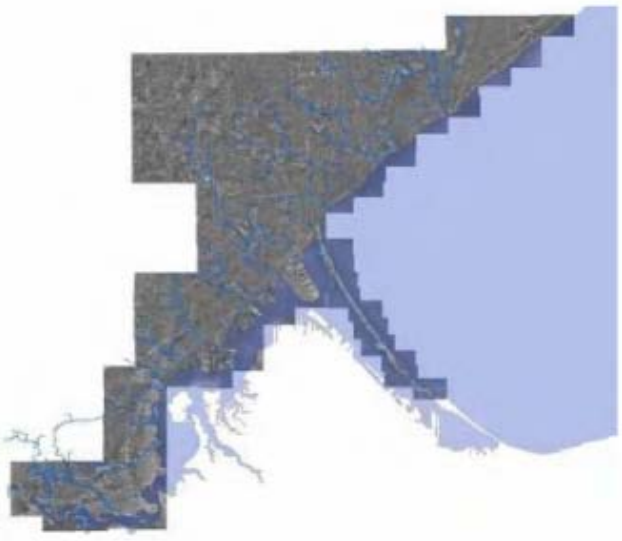
Duluth Past and Present

Todd Carlson
Water Quality Specialist
City of Duluth

April 2007

City of Duluth, Minnesota

- Provides service for 86,000 + residents
- 26 miles long, 8 miles at its widest point
- Lake Superior 602 ft above sea level
- Thompson hill 1,485 ft above sea level
- Elevation difference of 883 ft
- City was Established 1856



Sewers

- **Duluth has 2 Sewer Systems**
- **Sanitary sewer system**

Used to carry waste water from your home or business to the WLSSD treatment plant

- **Storm Sewer System**

Used to drain water off the roadways and surrounding land

Storm Sewer System in 2007

- 609 miles of road
- 300 miles of storm sewer
- 138 miles of ditch
- 16 sedimentation boxes
- 9000+ catch basins
- 43 named creeks/streams
- 10 Trout streams
- Wood pipe used until 2006

Storm Sewer System

•Duluth's storm sewer's date back to the 1880's

•Records before 1900 are somewhat incomplete

•Some creeks were piped to allow the city to expand, and roads and homes to be built

•As the City expanded, the storm sewer system was expanded, up the hill and along the Lake Superior

---

Stream crossing in early Duluth

- 1865 (9 years after Duluth became a City)
  - The Indian trail (Vermillion Trail) went from Minnesota Point to Lake Vermillion. This trail would ford Brewery creek at Washington Ave just (above?) below 1st St. approximately 7th Ave E
  - The trail forded Chester creek just above the falls near 14th Ave E (Chester bowl area)
  - The trail forded Tischer creek at Woodland Ave & St. Marie St. this was a shallow ford with a low banks (Mt. Royal area)

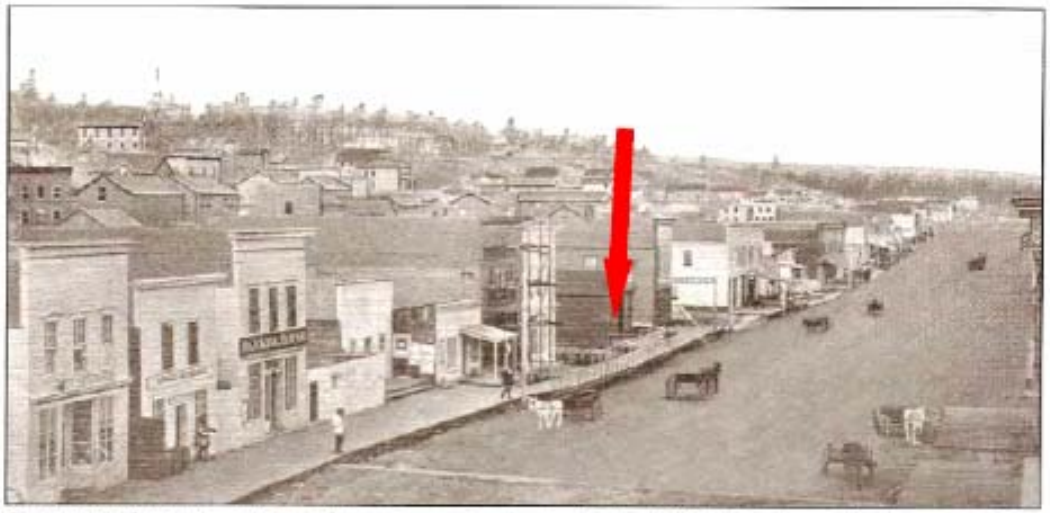
THE VERMILLION LAKE ROAD AND INDIAN TRAIL:
FROM MINNESOTA POINT TO VERMILLION LAKE
By Richard E. Carey

(written approximately in December, 1936)

Duluth, December 1870

A View of Duluth, Minnesota; looking waterward; taken December, 1870.
CREATED/PUBLISHED
1870 December, c1871.
NOTES Copyright deposit: Thomas Dowse; 1871

Gully, Creek or Storm Sewer? 1871



SUPERIOR STREET, 1871. This very early photo of the Duluth business district was taken looking east from about First Avenue West. Early businesses were wooden buildings with false fronts, very likely with residences on the second floors. The third building from the left with the sign "Banking House" was Duluth's first bank, run by George Sargent and George C. Stone for Jay Cooke. The church on the hill was the 1870 Presbyterian Church. The sidewalks in 1871 were four-foot wide boards which bridged the gullies. An early description of Superior Street claimed, "To walk it was hazardous in the daytime and sure death after dark," and to "actually cross [was] an act of recklessness, forfeiting your life insurance."

Images of America DULUTH MINNESOTA by Maryanne C. Norton and Sheldon T. Arubut

"Creek history by Todd"

- As the City was expanding and homes and business were being built, the creeks were used for a few different things, **recreation** and **as a way to remove storm water from roads and land**
- Many of the creeks had path ways to access the water, these creeks were used for Sunday picnic's, and as a way to cool off on the hot summer days and for other recreational activities
- As the city expanded, roads, cars changed how people used the creeks, people were able to go the other places to picnic and cool off and the parks and creeks were not viewed as important as they once were

---

Woodland @ present day Hartley Field

YMCA PLEASURE GROUNDS, WOODLAND. The Duluth street cars traveled up Woodland Avenue to a wooded park, on the site of present day Hartley Field. The park was a favorite picnic spot at the time of this photo in 1890.

Images of America DULUTH MINNESOTA by Maryanne C. Norton and Sheldon T. Arubut

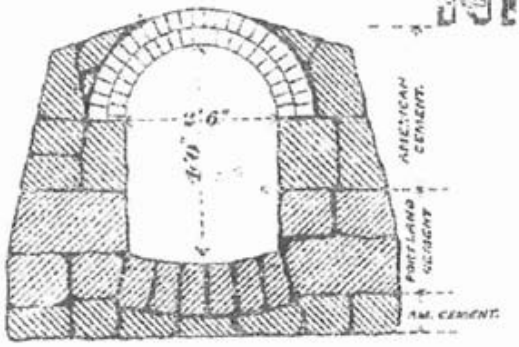
Images of America DULUTH MINNESOTA by Maryanne C. Norton and Sheldon T. Arubut

---

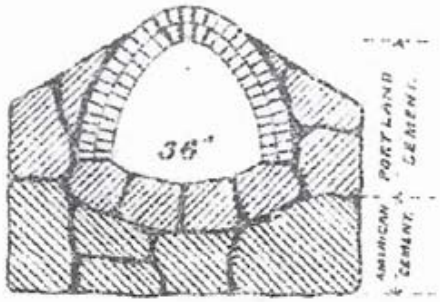
Eastern Duluth (Oregon Creek Watershed) around 1915

Early Storm Sewer Pipe

Tunnel Design



Brick Arch Pipe



Delta pipe

Oregon Creek

Entrance to the 4'x 5' Brick Arch Tunnel under 4th St at 22 Ave E

Oregon Creek
4' x 5' Brick Arch
Tunnel at 4th Street

43rd Ave E Creek

Constructed in 1920

43rd Ave E between
Superior St & London Rd

Clarkhouse Creek

At Cascade Park

1st Ave W & 6th St

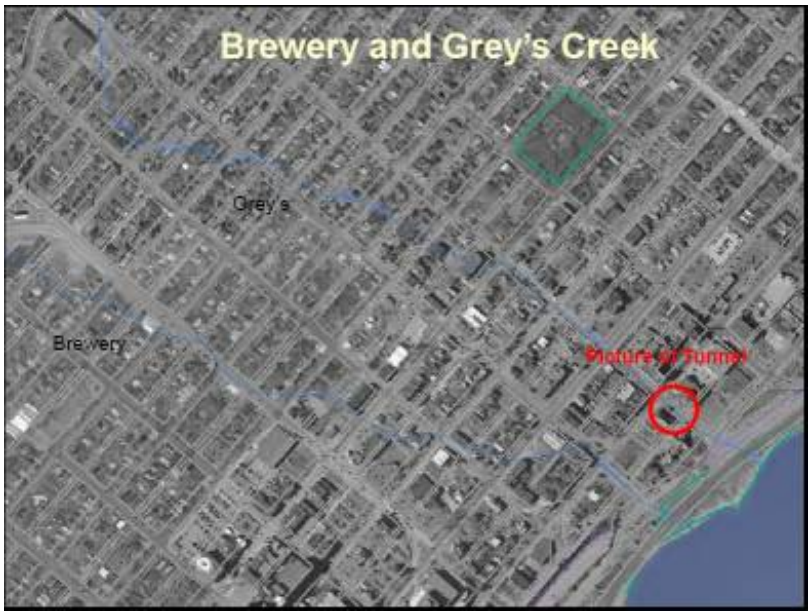
image courtesy of www.duluth-mn-usa.com

Lester River

At Lester Park

60th & Superior St

image courtesy of www.duluth-mn-usa.com



Grey's Creek 1891

9th Ave E at
1st St alley

2'6" x 4' Brick
Arch Tunnel

24 ft deep

Brewery Creek

Brewery Creek
going under an
apartment building

Brewery Creek
at Lake
Superior

Rain storms of 1972

- August 20, 1972 rainfall of 2.95" in 24 hours with 1.48" in only 1 hour
- September 20, 1972 rainfall of 3.77" in 12 hours

Summer 1972 floods

Brewery Cr. In tube on 5th Street

Duluth Rain Storms of 1972

A Memorable Northland Storm

[Compiled by the National Weather Service Duluth, MN]

- Flash Flooding, August 20, 1972
- ~ 3 inches of rain fell in less than 24 hours on already saturated ground.
- Storm sewers kicked up excess water and caused flooding washouts and power outages in portions of the East and Central Hillsides, West End and Park.
- Sidewalks and streets were ripped up and sent down the hill.
- President Nixon declared the area a Federal Disaster. Damage was $8.9 million (or $18 million, depending on the source).
- Another 3+ inches fell 30 days later, causing $22.5 million in damage.

Summer 1972 Floods

Brewery Cr. in tube at 6th St &

Washout along Skyline Parkway

Miller Cr. In Lincoln Park

Stormwater inputs to Buckingham Creek along Skyline Parkway at 9th Ave West

Washout due to runoff at First Ave. East

Buckingham Creek at 12th Ave. West

Washout of First Ave. East due to runof

Clarkhouse Cr. below Cascade Park along First Ave. West

What we are seeing today (2007)

Sargent Creek

We removed 256 tires in 11 days in August 2004

1 year later 2005

Duluth has 43 named streams

Take a few minutes and enjoy one

For more information visit

www.lakesuperiorstreams.org