

the Hillsider

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 02, 2006

➔ The Hillside's Hidden Streams: Brewery Creek



A story told to and recorded by Nancy Nelson

I am Brewery Creek. I've lived on Duluth's hillside for thousands of years, a lot longer than any of you folks have been here. I've carried lots of water down the hill to Lake Superior, and I've seen lots of changes over the years.

My territory includes a little more than a square mile. My western branch starts up by Central Entrance, in a little wetland behind Taco John's. I flow past the Marshall School, where my smaller eastern branch joins in. After I cross under Rice Lake Road by the MNDOT office the real fun begins as I race down the steepest part of the hill. The street you call Sixth Avenue East used to be my ravine. These days I disappear from view near the UDAC building, but you can see me again at the lakeshore just below Sir Ben's.

I had this place pretty much to myself for a long time, flowing free all the way from the heights to Lake Superior. Then around 150 years ago people started cutting down trees, making streets, and putting up buildings all over the hillside.

For a while these folks found me useful. Back in about 1859 Duluth's first brewery was built on my western bank between Seventh and



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Eighth Avenue East, just above what is now the "freeway." The brewery used my water for making beer, so folks started calling me Brewery Creek.

About 20 years later, there was a big rain storm, and I had to move a lot of water down the hill really fast. I was just doing my job, but I got a little carried away and washed out a piece of the hill under the brewery. Part of the building fell down and lots of beer got spilled. Mr. Fink, who ran the brewery, wasn't very happy about it, so he decided to build a new place down on the lakeshore. He sold that building a few years later to two men - Mr. Fitger and Mr. Anneke. I hear they still make beer there, although they don't use my water anymore.

Back in those days nobody had cars. Most things were moved around in carriages that were pulled by horses and mules. It was pretty hard for them to cross me, so bridges were built on some of the streets. As I remember it, there was a bridge on East Sixth Street and another one on East Tenth Street. I didn't mind the bridges because I could still see the daylight and talk to all the critters that came to visit me. But from East Fifth Street on down the hill to Superior Street, the engineers decided to cover me up completely so they could just build streets and not worry about bridges. They put me in big brick and concrete tunnels and covered the tunnels with dirt. Goodbye daylight!

It got even worse when people started driving cars. They got annoyed when they couldn't cross me at the streets that didn't have bridges. I was in the way of progress, so the engineers kept working. During the early 1900s they built more tunnels, which got longer and longer. Piece by piece, they put me in the tunnels and covered me up. By the end of the 1920s I was in the dark most of the way from Tenth Street to the lake. Eventually the folks living in the hillside forgot all about me because they couldn't see me. Some folks even built houses and gas stations right on top of me! Well, even though you don't see me any more, I still do my job of carrying water to Lake Superior.

I have more stories to tell, like all the fun I had in 1972 when three big storms came through the hillside. But I hear there's some rain coming, so I'd better get back to work now. I'll tell you more next time!

Posted by "[Hillside Newspaper](#)" at 11:45 AM 

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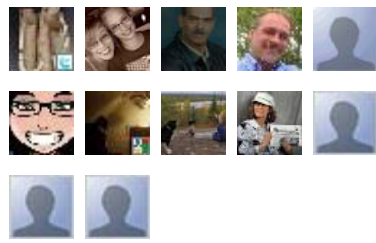
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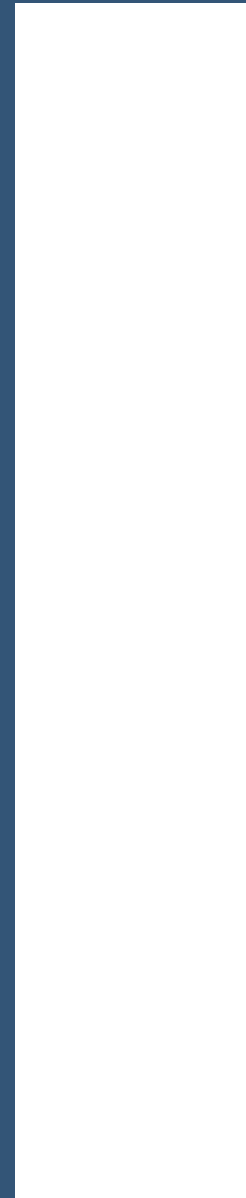
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