



Mill City: A Visual History Of The Minneapolis Mill District (Minnesota)

Shannon Pennefeather

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Dramatic first-person narratives and historic photographs bring to life the history of the Minneapolis riverfront, its industries, and its people.

St. Anthony Falls--the birthplace of Minneapolis--has a storied past. This astonishing work of nature drew the awe and admiration of explorers, its tremendous waterpower provided a basis for economic wealth, and the industries it powered offered settlers countless opportunities to make their living. Over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Minneapolis evolved from a tourist destination to a sawdust town to the nation's Mill City, firmly establishing itself as the premier city of the Northwest.

In MILL CITY, explorers, excursionists, early settlers, entrepreneurs, and laborers tell the story of St. Anthony Falls in their own words. Their vivid accounts are paired with historic photographs and artworks that bring their experiences to life.

St. Anthony Falls is the only significant waterfall along the Mississippi River. Nineteenth-century visitors were quick to note the waterpower potential of the cataract, and it wasn't long before sawmills and then flour mills were located along the shore. Drawing on energy generated by the cataract's fifteen-foot drop, Minneapolis was a leading manufacturer of lumber from 1848 to 1887 and the nation's leading producer of flour from 1880 to 1930.

This book includes accounts by the earliest European visitors to St. Anthony Falls, the children who played in the 1880s lumberyards along the banks of the Mississippi River, and workers in twentieth-century flour mills. Primary documents describe innovations in waterpower and the milling process that contributed to the successes of the Mill City. And witnesses to disasters along its shores--including the 1869 tunnel collapse that nearly destroyed the falls and the 1878 Washburn A Mill explosion that killed eighteen workers and leveled the west side milling district--provide vivid narratives of these events and the unity of purpose with which the Mill City's residents worked to ensure the survival of its industries.

Through stories and images, the history of Minneapolis is firmly connected to St. Anthony Falls, where it all began.

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