

The Village of Columbia Heights was formed on March 14, 1898 when it separated from Fridley township. With 1696 acres, 100 citizens and 20 houses, paths became roads, traffic patterns emerged and a city began.

The city name was selected by contest. Possible reasons for the selection are:

- Named after a city it resembled in New York state
- Proximity to Columbia Park
- Heights - 47th Avenue NE & Stinson Blvd. is the highest point in Hennepin, Ramsey and Anoka Counties

On July 21, 1921 the Charter of the City of Columbia Heights was adopted and the city was formed. City parks of Prestemon, Gauvitte and McKenna were all named for members of this first city council. Ava Ostrander, first woman elected to the council in 1924 also has a park named for her.

Business Development on 40th Avenue

In 1923 the Maciaszek family opened a meat market at 40th and Jackson. The original building served as the town library, Anoka County Relief distribution point and in 1965 as a TV repair shop. Unfortunately the building fell into disrepair and was demolished in December 2001.

Liquor Operation

1935-With the lifting of prohibition in 1934, the city began liquor operations.

1956-The City built a second liquor store on University and 52nd Ave NE.

Post Office

1941-the Post office moved into its "new site" at 41st and Central The current post office is on 44th just east of Central Ave.

Parks

By the time parks were considered, most of the high ground was taken, leaving low lying areas for parks. These areas were filled in and parks developed.

Sullivan Home

The original farm house of John and Mary Sullivan , (built circa 1863) is still at 5037 Madison St. and continues to be a single family home.

City Hall

The original Fire department was built in 1919 on 40th Ave and 7th Street. An addition to this

facility was built in 1942 with W.P.A. (Works Progress Administration) funding and another addition was built in 1959.

1940-City offices moved to the "field house" now known as Murzyn Hall.

The current City Hall was built in 1961, remodeled in 1973 and then a major expansion in 1978 gave the fire department its current facility.

Bruce Nawrocki was elected Mayor in 1965 and served continually to 1986. He was reelected and served as council member 1990 to 1994. During those years a new municipal garage was built and city hall was enlarged. An addition to city hall includes the current council chambers, the exterior hall entrance to the chambers and the elevator.

Murzyn Hall

The field house was built in 1939 by the W.P.A. and was later renamed Murzyn Hall for John Murzyn Sr., who served as the City's Park Superintendent from 1947 to 1979. It is the center of the parks and recreation activity and is located at the northeast corner of Huset Park.

Huset Park was the first Columbia Heights park and was originally called City Park. It was renamed for a Lutheran minister, Elmer Huset of First Lutheran Church and city manager for a time. He went to the state legislature and secured 60 acres for the city in 1939 for \$10,000. About 30 acres of that land became park and the other acres became industrial land.

The Jefferson pavilion building was constructed in 1959 on the eastern portion of Huset Park.

Beach

The property surrounding Silver Lake was mostly private owned and had a privately run beach. In 1920, when a man drowned in the lake, the lake was dynamited in an attempt to find the body. This destroyed many of the natural springs, and water levels dropped greatly. A pipe was laid to the lake from the Minneapolis reservoir since it was felt this was too valuable a resource to allow it to become a swamp. Apparently, some of the springs have reactivated and with storm run-off, the lake levels have remained adequate without additional pumping of water into it.

Schools

Columbia School was built in 1894 at 41st and Central. In 1911, the south portion of the school was built. This building was razed in 1967.

Oakwood school was built in 1915 and closed as a public school in 1974. It is now the home of Oak Hill Baptist Church.

Silver Lake School built in 1922, closed in 1981 and became the new home of First Lutheran Church.

In December of 1926, Columbia Heights High School on 41st Ave between Jackson and Van Buren became the first high school in Anoka County. It became the Columbia Heights Junior High School in 1961 and in 1981 it was sold to the Northwestern Electronics Institute and operated as a technical college until NEI merged with Dunwoody in 2002. The City purchased the vacant building and land, and demolished the building in 2004, clearing the way for future redevelopment of the property.

In 1961 the current high school was built on 49th near Johnson St., along with Highland elementary

1965 Central Middle School was built on the south side of 49th Avenue near Jackson St. as a Junior High school.

In 1978, a major expansion of City Hall gave the Fire department its current facilities. Also added were an elevator and a council chambers on the west end of the existing building.

[Independent School District 13](#) serves all of Columbia Heights.

[Historical Society](#)

For more information on the history of Columbia Heights see [Columbia Heights: Bootstrap Town, a social history by Irene Parsons](#)