

WCCO: Finding Minnesota: A Peaceful City Retreat

Seen On

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Finding Minnesota: A Peaceful City Retreat



Ben Tracy (http://wcco.com/bios/local_bio_160185951.html)
Reporting

(WCCO) *Minneapolis* Milwaukee Avenue is a defiantly silent contradiction hidden within a city that never stands still.

On Milwaukee Avenue, a leafy canopy conceals 46 small homes. Their gingerbread eaves and painted faces engage nature in a colorful competition.

"They kind of look like little cottages right in the middle of the woods," one visitor remarked.

It's difficult to believe this place sits so quietly amid the cadence of South Minneapolis, just off the bustle of Franklin Avenue.

"People either know exactly where this is and know everything about it, or they have no clue," said Chuck Levin.

Levin has lived on Milwaukee Avenue for 22 years, thanks to a fateful assignment in architecture school.

"I happened to be in a small group that was sent to Milwaukee Avenue," Levin said.

Levin discovered a narrow, tree-lined street with rows of identical houses.

Milwaukee Avenue was originally an alley where homes were built in the late 1800s to house workers employed at the nearby Milwaukee Railroad yards. By the mid 19th century, the railroads had lost steam.

The railroad workers who lived on Milwaukee Avenue lost their jobs, and the area began to change. Things got so bad, the city considered bulldozing the entire neighborhood.

"(The houses) were in exquisite and picturesque disarray," Bob Roscoe recalled.

In the 1970s, Roscoe led a grassroots effort to transform the avenue's hollow shells into one of Minneapolis' best-kept secrets.

"I'm really proud of it," Roscoe said. "I just think it's one of the great streets in America."

The vacated street now provides one of the best walkways in town, as well as a glimpse of a front-porch lifestyle that fled the rest of the city long ago.

"There are so many fascinating little spaces and gardens and features to the houses that you don't have to walk very far at all to feel like you've seen a tremendous amount," Levin said.

Roscoe will lead a guided tour of Milwaukee Avenue this Saturday. For more information, visit the City of Minneapolis' historic walking tours (<http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/hpc/walking-tours.asp>) information page.

Nancy from Minneapolis suggested WCCO-TV feature Milwaukee Avenue in "Finding Minnesota." She wrote, "My favorite hidden gem is right here in Minneapolis. It's where I always take people to show what's great about living here. It's called Milwaukee Avenue, and it's such a peaceful place to visit."

WCCO-TV wants you to tell us what other hidden gems deserve to be showcased. E-mail your "Finding Minnesota" ideas to Ben Tracy ([mailto:btracy@wcco.com?Subject=Finding Minnesota Idea](mailto:btracy@wcco.com?Subject=Finding%20Minnesota%20Idea)), and maybe WCCO-TV will send him there next.

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