

Waterways

A publication of the Upper Mississippi Waterway Association

PO Box 7006, St. Paul, MN, 55107

e-mail: umwa@qwestoffice.net

<http://www.umwa.us>

February 2011

Still important to St. Paul...

Landing has UMWA connection

(Editor's note) Long before roads or railroads reached the area, St. Paul's Lower Landing was one of the most hectic and hardworking steamboat landings in the country and was the main communication and commerce connection to the outside world. Today there's a plaque along the river in the Lowertown area designating the spot as Lambert's Landing and it continues to serve towboats which bring vital commodities up-river and carry agricultural and other bulk commodities to U.S. and world markets.

Many UMWA members know it as "Lambert Landing" and know that it's named for one of the founders of the organization, but may be a bit vague on details. With that in mind, Waterways asked Dick Lambert, director of ports and waterways for the Minnesota Department of Transportation, to tell us more about his ancestor and his history. Based on research at the Minnesota History Center and Lambert family records, here's Dick's report.

George C. Lambert was born in 1867 in Menin, Belgium and immigrated to the U.S. and settled in Minnesota with his parents in 1883. He studied law and became an attorney in St. Paul. He and his partner opened the law office of Willrich and Lambert in 1893.

George Lambert enlisted in the Cavalry in 1890 achieving the rank of Captain in 1898, and participated in quelling the Leech Lake Indian uprising in Northern Minnesota that same year. In 1899 Governor John Lind appointed him Adjutant General for the State of Minnesota with the rank of Brigadier General.



(Above) Lambert's Landing frequently provides services to line boats waiting for their down-bound tows.

George later returned to the 1st Field Artillery and achieved the rank of Colonel in 1913. The 1st Field Artillery, originally a Minnesota National Guard unit, later became the 151st Field Artillery of the Regular Army. Since then he affectionately retained the title of "Colonel George," by all that knew him.

In 1925 the Upper Mississippi Barge Line Co. was organized in the Twin Cities to build towboats (steamboats) and barges to be used and leased to the Inland Waterways Corp. to be operated on the River.

Landing to 3

From the Executive Director...

Minneapolis Deserves More.

Entitled “4 designs on river’s future”, competing firms laid out visions for enhancing nearly six miles of shoreline on each side of the Mississippi River in Minneapolis. As stated in the *Star Tribune*’s article of Jan. 30, those visions depict “state-of-the-art illustrations, maps and computer animations showing what the river corridor could become with new boardwalks, public beaches, pedestrian bridges, greenhouses and urban farms.”

The article goes on to state that the study area includes acreage on each side of the river that flows past some of the city’s oldest neighborhoods and industries; containing about 22 acres of parkland; with areas nearest the river being owned and used by [river-dependent] companies.

Asked to present at least one project that could be developed within the next three to five years, presentations zeroed in on popular themes including reclaiming the river as public space, ecological renewal, hike/bike trails and ultimately, carbon-neutral neighborhoods.

Winner to be named

And, according to the *Tribune*, a 13-member jury of design professional and elected officials will study proposals and announce a winner. The panel will also select one of the winner’s projects to be built in the next few years – the amount and sources of funding have yet to be determined.

Here are a few of the conceptual plans from which the jury will be making a selection. Each plan is 26 – 28 pages of maps and concepts, only two of which are discussed in this column.

TLS/KVA – Berkeley and Boston.

While recognizing that the Mississippi River is still a working place for industry and the city needs to work in order to prosper, this plan suggest that the current distance between the river and the city is not a component of that prosperity. ‘Distance’, we suspect, is used here in the metaphorical sense.

River to be ‘a catalyst’

Basically, their RIVERFIRST concept proposes to use the river and public space as a catalyst to

accelerate the transformation of the area from a smokestack industry to a 21st century green economy.

While their plan allows for a future “Green Energy Port” to drive the city’s global and regional green economy, there is also reference to Riverbank North which would use dredged sediments to construct RIVERFIRST Park and public riverfront trails. The first step in this project is to provide public access to the river which can coexist with existing industries. According to this plan, river sediment would be molded into berms enabling a continuous pedestrian and bike trail to rise and bridge over existing barge terminals and operations. This according to TLS, would create an undulating and safe public trail along the Riverbank North which can be built today with minimal impacts on industrial property, equipment and operations. At least, so says the proposal.

Connect park and river

Another TLS vision would reconnect the city’s historic high point, Farview Park, with the proposed Riverfront trail system, by bridging the I-94 Interstate system with a ‘great plain of green’ thereby providing a direct land access to the river for people, animals and storm water, without demolishing any existing homes.

Underscoring the importance of ‘place’, the TLS proposal states they are fully committed to work with policy makers to ensure that jobs created in the Green Port and River City Innovations districts are linked back to local residents who can bike, walk or take a shuttle bus to work.

Ken Smith Landscape Architect – New York City.

This submission outlines a projected \$1.3 billion post-mortem of industries in the Upper Harbor. While not mentioning names, it describes how the three industries on the west bank of the river will be transformed and, in turn, will transform the city.

“With the continued decline of the old industrial waterfront uses, the question now becomes: How should the river’s performance benefit the city’s future?” Answer: by helping to attract new high-tech and service industries and their creative workforce by providing an urban address and improving the environment and quality of life.

Executive Dir. to 3

Executive Dir. from 2

The proposal carves the west bank into three parcels.

‘The Gantries’

The south-most parcel is called the Gantries. In the words of the project, “The centerpieces of this new park are the gantry industrial relics and concrete silo. These structures will be re-purposed for new recreational uses and serve as a powerful reminder of the site’s industrial history.” From what we can deduce from plan graphics, a ‘barge drop’ will be located south of a gantry that has been transformed into a fifty-foot-high year-round water fall.

The north-most parcel is named Domes and Silos. These are old salt domes, concrete silos and miscellaneous structures that will be re-purposed to provide a major nodule at the north area of the proposed river park. Silos will be redeveloped as an ‘extreme sports’ center with rock climbing and skateboarding, and landscape around the relic structures will be restored to native oak savanna, providing a “vivid contrast between pre-industrial landscape, the industrial relics, and their post-industrial new uses.”

‘The Fields’

Between the Domes and the Gantries is The Fields. This area emphasizes contemporary open space related to active lifestyles and health; agriculture and production will be a major element in this area. Eco-Barge(s) will be fitted with an underwater viewing room to build interest in land stewardship and community spirit. “Near Lowry Avenue, a park lodge with a large fire hearth will be available for group events and reunions.”

Interesting and relevant

Another view. Surprisingly, we found many issues covered in the four proposals interesting and relevant, considering the assignment covered a period of upwards to 50 years. An element common to them all seems to be the notion that by ‘taking back the river’ and ‘putting the river first’, the area will be able to attract new high-paying light industries and necessary highly-skilled employees. Regrettably, this ‘Disney Land North’ concept seems to overlook the here-and-now issue of how to move fundamentals such

Executive Dir. to 4

Landing from 1

George Lambert joined and was appointed to the Board of Directors of the UMBL Co. in 1927.

C.C. Webber of Minneapolis was President of the Board of Directors. Mr. Webber sent a letter of support to improve navigation for Upper Mississippi to Walter H. Newton (House of Representatives). In 1928 President Coolidge supported the project. Later, in 1929, the President Hoover also supported navigation on the Upper Mississippi.

The Upper Mississippi Barge Line Directors asked Lachlan Macleay, Secretary of the Mississippi Valley Association in St. Louis to come to Minneapolis to discuss support for navigation for the Upper Mississippi.

George Lambert met with Colonel C.L. Hall of the Rock Island Corps of Engineers to discuss the nine foot channel project in November 0f 1928. Hall’s decision was that deepening navigation to 9 feet would not be cost effective.

George Lambert and B.F. Beck were asked by the Upper Mississippi Barge Line Board President C.C. Webber to prepare a case for the nine foot channel on the Upper Mississippi that could be presented to the Board of Engineers of the U.S. Corps of Engineers.

In 1929 the Board of Engineers overruled Col Hall and recommended a survey to determine the cost. This was completed and the estimated cost was \$98 million to convert the Upper Mississippi from a 6 foot to a 9 foot deep navigation system with locks from St Louis to St Paul. These results were then presented in time for consideration by the U.S. Congress in December of 1929.

In 1930 the Rivers and Harbors Act authorized and funded the 9 foot deep navigation system for the Upper Mississippi.

Also, about this time with the enactment of the Minnesota and St.Croix Commission, George Lambert was appointed its Chairman by Governor Christianson. This was another organization that supported navigation.

In 1932 the City Council appointed Col. George Lambert as St Paul’s Port Authority in preparation for more barge traffic to the Twin Cities.

The same year, the Upper Mississippi Waterway Association was formed to further support

Landing to 4



Above: St. Paul's Lower Landing in its heyday. Note the river obstacles visible in mid-channel. Pilots on these early boats would have greatly appreciated today's safer, 9-foot channel.

Executive Dir. from 3

as aggregates, steel and agricultural inputs and products to and from the area if shippers lose their water-side locations.

Issue won't 'go away'

The TLS proposal postulated that “if smokestack industries go away or are relocated somewhere else, it only shifts the site of the problem since aquifers, groundwater, storm water and rivers are inevitably linked.” We agree! Turning that statement around will show the seriousness of an issue that cannot be made to ‘go away’ simply by making shipping companies relocate; when shipments of essentials handled through the Upper Harbor cannot move by barge, they will be forced onto trucks which have a larger carbon footprint.

If the 21st century Minneapolis Harbor is to be all its supporters envision, a way must be found to accommodate waterfront enhancements while maintaining sites for still-essential river-dependent industries. And to do this without degrading environmental standards and the very quality-of-life issues these plans aim to eliminate.

City residents deserve at least that much consideration.

Plans are available online at www.minneapolisriverfrontdesigncompetition.com

Landing from 3

the construction and promote business for the 9 foot navigation system.

Early in 1934, Col George C. Lambert passed away at the age of 66, before he could see the completion and results of the 9 foot channel project. Several years later in recognition of his work for the river, the City of St Paul named their Lower River Landing in his honor, “Lambert Landing.”

2010 river numbers available

As he does each year, Dick Lambert has compiled tonnage figures for Minnesota's river ports and says that 2010 was “almost a carbon copy” of last year. He says diversion of corn into ethanol production continues to impact commodity movements downriver. He also says river freight rates along with high ocean freight rates from the Gulf have also diverted some river grain to the West Coast for export.

However, specific figures show total river tons just slightly ahead of 2009 at 10,893,368. More detailed numbers are available online at <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/ofrw/waterways.html>.

The Corps of Engineers locked the last down-bound towboat of the 2010 season on Nov. 25. Given the severity of the winter, there's little or no speculation on when the first tow might challenge Lake Pepin.

Ice thickness measurements in Lake Pepin are typically scheduled to begin in mid-February and are conducted on a weekly basis. Measurements are reported from each mile on the Upper Mississippi River between mile 765 and 786. These measurements are taken at various points and the Corps emphasizes that the ice thickness given is valid for that location only. When they're posted, you can find this year's measurements online at www.mvp.usace.army.mil/navigation.