

3.0 PROPERTY HISTORY

3.1 Shoreview Development

The first permanent white settlers in the Shoreview area, Socrates Thompson and Samuel Eaton, arrived around 1850 and claimed land on Turtle Lake.¹ Early settlers included immigrants from Scandinavian countries as well as Ireland and Germany.² The soils in the area were sandy and marshy and were better suited for livestock rather than grain.³

Minnesota achieved statehood in 1858 and the Mounds View Township was incorporated the same year with 99 residents.⁴ Mounds View was bound by Anoka County at the north, the town of White Bear (organized 1858) at the east, the town of Rose (organized 1858, later Roseville) at the south and Hennepin and Anoka Counties at the west.⁵ There were more than twenty lakes in the township and Turtle Lake and Snail Lake were the largest.⁶ In the 1880s, the Soo Line Railroad extended a rail line to the area, which was increasingly known for its many lakes and recreational opportunities.⁷ The township was fully platted by the end of the 19th-century and remained largely in farming use with cabins around the lakes.

In the 1940s and 1950s, Mounds View Township was broken into smaller townships. The town of Shoreview was incorporated in 1957 with 5,231 residents within 12.75 square miles.⁸ The farms were replaced with single-family residential neighborhoods and year-round lake homes replaced the seasonal cabins around the lakes.⁹ In 1974, Shoreview became a city and had a population of 14,000.¹⁰

3.2 Site Ownership

The development site includes Lots 1 through 4 of J. F. Eisenmenger's Lake Villas addition which was platted in 1886. Johann Freidrich "John Fred" Eisenmenger (1845-1920) emigrated from Germany and was a St. Paul real estate agent.¹¹ The plat on Snail Lake was one of many real estate ventures in the St. Paul region developed by Eisenmenger. Lots 1 through 4 in the Lake Villa addition were sold separately. By 1930, the Union Gospel Mission Association of St. Paul had purchased lots 1 through 4 of J. F. Eisenmenger's Lake Villas. The Union Gospel Mission Association of St. Paul was one of many benevolent organizations in St. Paul serving the community.

¹ George Warner and Charles M. Foote, eds. *History of Ramsey County and the City of St. Paul* (Minneapolis: North Star Publishing Company, 1881), 274-275.

² City of Shoreview, "Comprehensive Plan: Destination Shoreview 2040 Plan" (Adopted in 2018), 166.

³ Warner and Foote, 273.

⁴ Ibid, 277.

⁵ Ibid, 273.

⁶ Ibid.

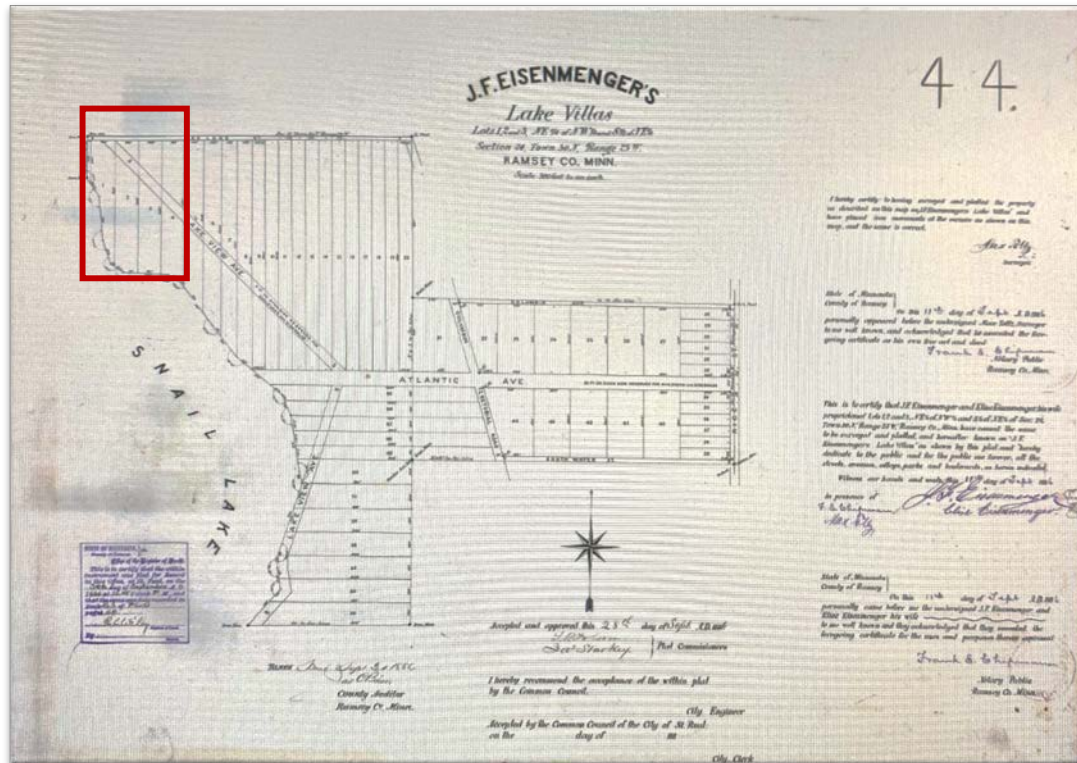
⁷ City of Shoreview, 167.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ U.S. Federal Census 1920, SD 159, ED 18, Sheet 14B.



**Fig. 9. Plat of J. F. Eisenmenger's Lake Villas, 1886
with Lots 1-4 highlighted. (Hennepin County Recorder)**

In 1925, Lots 1 and 2 were owned by sisters Willanna Harvey Werner and Frances LaRue Harvey with Harvey's husband, William Frank Harvey.¹² They operated a dance hall (razed) on the property, but a construction lien on the property led to the sheriff's sale of the lots in 1926.¹³ Walter MaGee purchased the lots for \$1,272 and transferred ownership to John Hammerbacher in 1928.¹⁴ In 1930, Hammerbacher sold Lots 1 and 2 to the Union Gospel Mission Association of St. Paul.¹⁵

Eisenmenger sold Lot 3 to Charles Michaud and Achille Michaud in 1891 for \$750.¹⁶ In 1930, the Michaud heirs sold Lot 3 the Union Gospel Mission Association of St. Paul.¹⁷

Eisenmenger sold Lot 4 to Sinai Michaud and Louis Michaud in 1895.¹⁸ The lot transferred in 1898, 1909 and 1928.¹⁹ In 1930, W. S. Marshall and his wife, Hulda Marshall, sold Lot 4 to the Union Gospel Mission Association of St. Paul.²⁰

¹² Ramsey County Document #706680, August 27, 1925.

¹³ District Court Decree, Document #714728, Book 812, page 271.

¹⁴ Ramsey County Document #714729, July 26, 1926, Deed Book 812, Page 286; Document #760643, June 12, 1928, Deed Book 845, page 296.

¹⁵ Ramsey County Document #798553, May 2, 1930.

¹⁶ Ramsey County Document #190365, October 10, 1891.

¹⁷ Ramsey County Document #799450, Book 877, page 533, May 14, 1930.

¹⁸ Ramsey County Document #230603, November 1, 1895.

¹⁹ Ramsey County Document #230664, July 8, 1898; Document #371712, March 12, 1909; Document #773158, Book 856, Page 310, June 20, 1928.

²⁰ Ramsey County Document #800185, Book 878, page 225, June 20, 1930.

3.3 Mission Movement

Missions are part of a centuries-old tradition of providing physical and spiritual relief for the poor, and were often situated in rural areas and operated by monasteries. In 1826, David Nasmyth, an urban evangelist in Glasgow, Scotland, founded one of the first urban missions in response to deplorable living conditions in industrialized cities.²¹ Nasmyth's mission in Glasgow was followed by another in Dublin, Ireland.²² In 1835, the London City Mission, was founded to aid dock workers.²³ Urban missions in American cities responded to living conditions surrounding factories and were often established by an outspoken evangelist preaching the "social gospel."²⁴ In 1872, Evangelist Jerry McAuley founded New York City's Water Street Mission.²⁵ Mission work, also called urban evangelism, not only preached to the poor, but also provided food, clothing, housing and an education.

The end of the 19th-century was marked by two severe economic depressions in 1873 and 1893. Immigrants and unemployed workers moved to the cities for work. St. Paul's population grew from 20,033 in 1870 to 133,156 in 1880.²⁶ The plight of immigrants and factory workers entering Minneapolis and St. Paul was met by numerous religious and charitable organizations. Churches, clubs and associations ministered to the poor, as did local branches of the Salvation Army, Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). Minneapolis' early missions dedicated to the gospel welfare movement included the City Mission (razed) on Washington Avenue South, founded by Rev. Edward S. Williams of the Park Avenue Congregational Church in 1883, and the Union City Mission (razed) at Washington Avenue South, founded in 1885.²⁷ In 1868, St. Paul employed the Rev. E. S. Chase as the "city missionary."²⁸ By 1877, St. Paul's YMCA maintained four mission stations.²⁹ The Western Seamen's Friend Society and the St. Paul Bethel Association merged in 1891 and operated a mission houseboat for working class men on the St. Paul riverfront; it was managed by the Reverends Robert Smith and David Morgan.³⁰ The cities' early missions were commonly connected to a church congregation and often operated out of the church. Preaching and Bible teaching, choirs and music, entertainment, social services such as food pantries and children's camps were typical components of the mission program.³¹

²¹ Virginia Brainerd Kunz, *Where the Doors Never Close: The Story of St. Paul's Union Gospel Mission* (St. Paul: Union Gospel Mission, 1993), 3.

²² Kunz, 3.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Norris Magnuson, *Salvation in the Slums: Evangelical Social Work 1865-1920* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1977), 1.

²⁵ Kunz, 3-4.

²⁶ Kunz, 15.

²⁷ Marion D. Shutter, ed., *History of Minneapolis: Gateway to the Northwest* (Chicago: S.J. Clark Publishing Co., 1923), 205; "Services Conducted in 40 Years in Mission," *Minneapolis Journal*, September 27, 1939; Rev. H.K. Painter, "Minneapolis: A Brief Historical Survey of Religious Development and Conditions," *The American Missionary*, Vol. 64, 1910. The Gospel Mission was located at 29 Washington Avenue in 1887 and remained into the 1940s.

²⁸ Kunz, 11.

²⁹ Kunz, 12

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Norris, 1.

By 1930, there were dozens of missions and tabernacles in Minneapolis and St. Paul.³² They were located in churches and reconstituted storefronts and in converted single-family homes throughout the city. Some Gospel missions like Gateway Gospel Mission (razed) at 117 Nicollet Avenue and Gospel Mission (razed) at 35 Washington Avenue South in Minneapolis and Union Gospel Mission (razed) at 235 East Seventh Street in St. Paul were dedicated to providing social services. Other missions, like the Full Gospel Tabernacle at 3015 13th Avenue South (extant) and River Lake Gospel Tabernacle (razed) at 4610 East Lake Street in Minneapolis, focused on preaching and dynamic leaders. The People's Christian Mission (razed) at 1204 Washington Avenue South in Minneapolis and the Crispus Attucks Home (razed) at 1537 Randolph Avenue in St. Paul ministered to African Americans. The Children's Gospel Mission in Minneapolis incorporated in 1911 and organized children's camps on Lake Nokomis; in 1916 the mission purchased land on Lake Minnetonka for camping and summer outings.³³

3.4 Union Gospel Mission of St. Paul

The Union Gospel Mission of St. Paul was organized on December 1, 1902 as "an agency of the evangelical churches" with a primary mission of "saving souls."³⁴ An upstairs hall at 414 Jackson Street in St. Paul was rented and Reverend Everson R. MacKinney, a Baptist missionary, was hired as the superintendent.³⁵ The founders stipulated that the headquarters should be in the heart of the city and near railroads and "taverns and bottle houses."³⁶ The Mission was housed at a rented facility at 443 Jackson Street (razed) before purchasing the building at 235 East Seventh Street (razed) in 1910.³⁷ In 1912, historian Henry Castle described the organization's main mission as trying to rehabilitate down-and-out men with temporary shelter and food.³⁸ In 1927, the Union Gospel Mission built an addition to their downtown building. Funded by the St. Paul Bethel Association and the St. Paul Community Chest, the addition called "Bethel Hotel" included dormitories for 240 men and a basement restaurant; there was a separate entrance for the "Boys Club."

In 1930, the Union Gospel Mission purchased the land on Snail Lake in Shoreview for children's summer camps. The land was purchased for \$10,000 and had 2,000 feet of shore line, a farm house, pavilion, five cottages, 22 boats and a two-car garage.³⁹ The Mission purchased discounted bricks from Twin City Bricks and the Gyro Club of St. Paul, a men's fraternal club, donated \$1,000 for the construction of a two-story building named Gyro Lodge.⁴⁰ It appears the unheated building was built for Union Gospel Mission summer children's camps as well as church revivals.

The Great Depression forced the Mission to change their plans for the camp. In 1934, the men's dormitory in downtown St. Paul was at capacity, Peter McFarlane, superintendent of the Mission, requested approval from the Ramsey County Board of Welfare to house 140 men at the Snail Lake camp.⁴¹ The Mission was already housing men at the camp before the request because newspapers

³² The Minneapolis Directory of 1929 lists 9 settlement houses, 12 nondenominational missions and dozens of missions related to specific church congregations. The *Minneapolis Tribune* of April 15, 1933 listed 26 "Gospel Missions" in Minneapolis. The St. Paul Directory of 1922 lists fourteen missions.

³³ Articles of Incorporation of The Children's Gospel Mission, 1911. On file at the Minneapolis Collection of the Hennepin County Library.

³⁴ Kunz, 26.

³⁵ Kunz, 25-26.

³⁶ Kunz, 27.

³⁷ Kunz, 26, 39.

³⁸ Kunz, 28.

³⁹ Union Gospel Mission Archives, Minnesota Historical Society.

⁴⁰ Kunz, 57. The Gyro Club of St. Paul organized in 1914 and stopped taking minutes in 1952; the club merged with the Oryg Club in 2005. Building permits and records for the Gyro Lodge have not been uncovered.

⁴¹ Kunz, 60.

reported that two Gospel Mission men drowned in Snail Lake in 1932.⁴² The camp received more negative press when two men died after drinking illegal alcohol processed at the camp.⁴³ In 1934, the Mission transferred 95 residents to St. Paul to illegally vote in an election, which instigated an election recount.⁴⁴ With the advent of WWII in 1940, the housing pressures on the Mission were alleviated and the camp discontinued housing men in Gyro Lodge.



Fig. 10. Gyro Lodge at Snail Lake in 1933. (MNHS)



Fig. 11. Gyro Lodge at Snail Lake in 1933. (MNHS)

By the 1940s, the Mission was operating a diverse program beyond “serving transients and derelicts” and served boys, girls, women and families at multiple locations.⁴⁵ The Bethel Hotel and restaurant on East Seventh Street continued to house and feed men, but the building also housed the Boys’ Club and Girls’ Club. The Ober Club building and the Welcome Hall Christian Center in the Rondo neighborhood served children and families. The West Side branch of the Mission at 133 East Fairfield Street held gospel services and women’s meetings. The Concord Street Chapel at 223 Concord Street housed a boys’ club. The Mission started to promote summer camps at Snail Lake, which was originally called “Camp MacFarlane.”⁴⁶

⁴² *Minneapolis Journal*, July 5, 1932.

⁴³ “Poison Sought in Deaths of Pair,” *Minneapolis Star*, April 15, 1935.

⁴⁴ “St. Paul to Recount Questioned Ballots,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, March 14, 1934.

⁴⁵ Kunz, 68.

⁴⁶ MNHS, Union Gospel Mission archives.

In the 1960s, Union Gospel Mission operated two children's camps. The camp on Snail Lake was called "Gospel Hill" and two, 24-bed, brick cabins (razed) were built ca. 1962 (Fig. 13).⁴⁷ The Gyro Lodge housed 100 campers in the second-floor dormitory hall and had a kitchen and dining hall on the first floor.⁴⁸ The one-story boiler addition at the south side of the Gyro Lodge may have been built in the 1960s. The St. Paul Kiwanis Club leased the Kiwanis camp on the St. Croix River to the Union Gospel Mission throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The 40-acre camp had eight cabins and the Mission raised funds for many improvements including a swimming pool.⁴⁹ The Kiwanis Camp was more successful and after 25 years of operation, the Kiwanis Club voted to discontinue the Mission's lease and independently operate the camp.⁵⁰

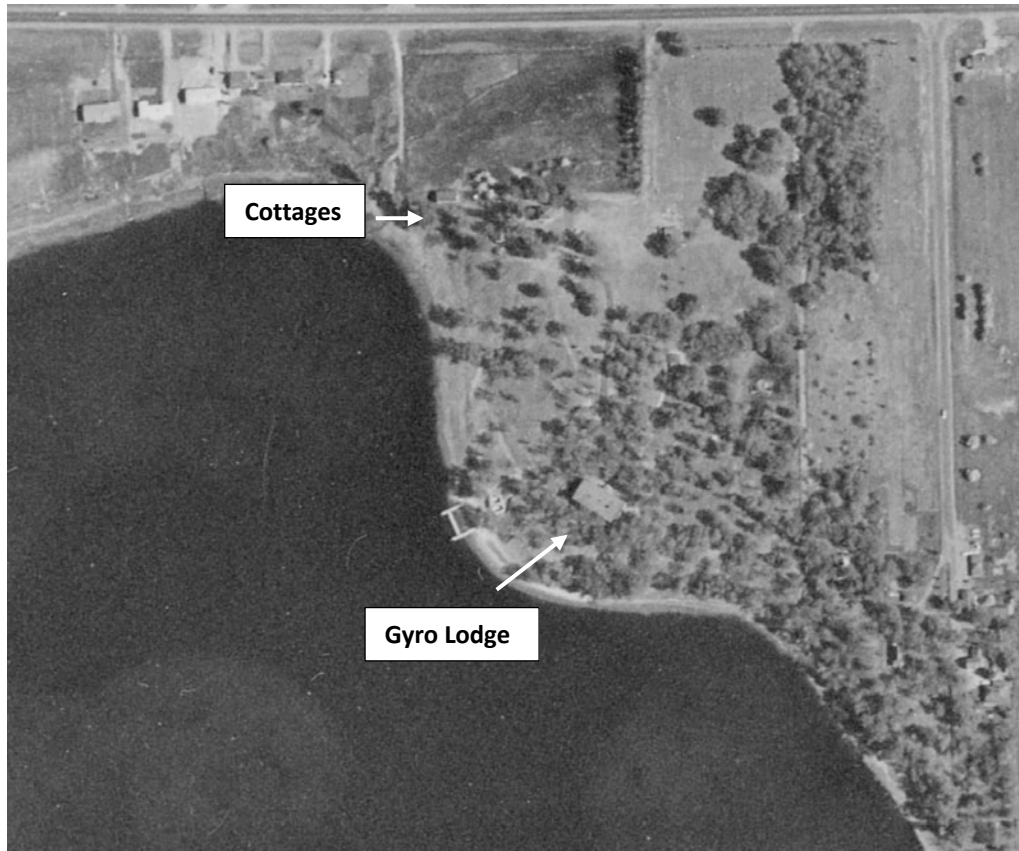


Fig. 12. Aerial view of Snail Lake property in 1957 with the Gyro Lodge and cottages (razed) before the two brick cabins were constructed. (Borchert Map Library)

⁴⁷ MNHS, Union Gospel Mission Archives.

⁴⁸ MNHS, Union Gospel Mission Archives.

⁴⁹ Kunz 69, 86.

⁵⁰ Kunz, 86.

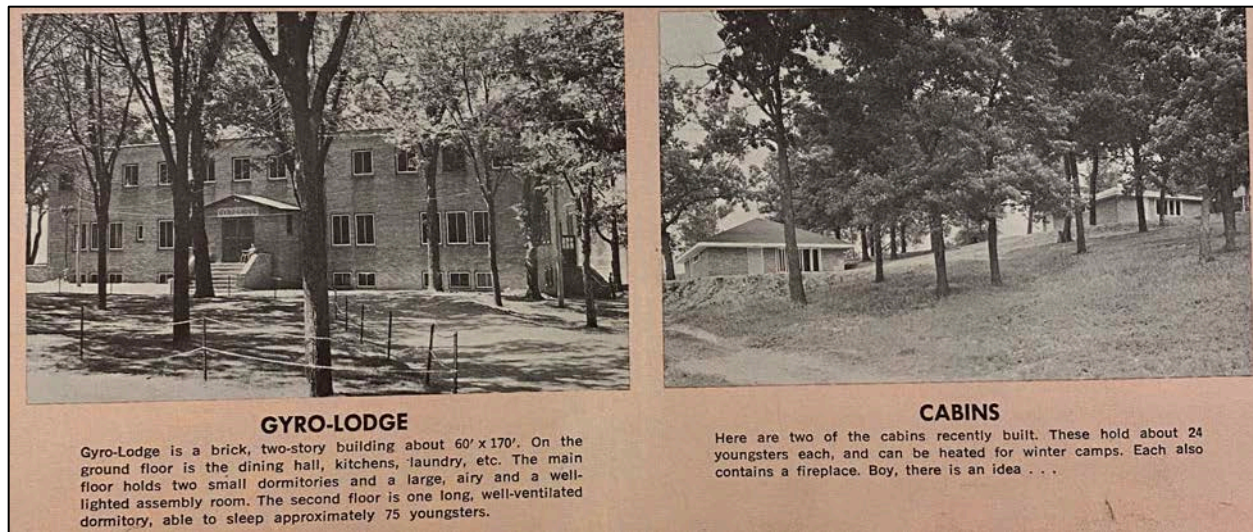


Fig. 13. "Gospel Hill" Camp in 1963 with Gyro Lodge at left and brick cabins at right. (MNHS)

In 1963, the Union Gospel Mission constructed an alcohol treatment building to the north of Gyro Lodge.⁵¹ The building housed the "Dry Dock" program for chronic male alcoholics and in 1972 the building housed residents of the Shoreview Treatment Center.⁵² The Mission claimed the male residents would assist with camp maintenance, but combining a children's camp with the male residential program created security risks at the site.⁵³ In 2000, the treatment center building was rebuilt as the Ona Orth Ministry Center and was named after the funder, Ona Orth (1915-2002). The new building had a chapel, gymnasium and commercial kitchen and accommodated 80 residents.⁵⁴ In 2001, the Mission phased the alcohol treatment clients out of the camp site and utilized the Ona Orth Ministry Center for camp activities. The aging Gyro Lodge building was vacated and eventually condemned. The camp continued as a day camp, but no longer offered overnight stays. The organization has not maintained records on numbers of children and residents served at the site.

A number of issues led to the decline of the Union Gospel Mission and its programs. In the 1970s, urban renewal development plans for St. Paul suggested moving the mission and its "derelicts" out of the inner city to deter the homeless population and surrounding security issues.⁵⁵ The Mission had mounting debts and deteriorating buildings and many of the supporting agencies that regularly assisted the Mission began to question the Mission's operations and financial records.⁵⁶ While the Mission maintained multiple programs for men, women and children, the primary purpose for supportive housing for chronic alcoholic men no longer garnered the public sympathy and funding groups.⁵⁷ By 1970, the Mission was operating eighteen foster homes, but the Juvenile Court Services of Ramsey County voted to discontinue funds due to the religious aspects of the operations.⁵⁸ The long-term Mission superintendent, Harold Mordh, was investigated for multiple infractions and resigned in 1974; he was eventually convicted on corruption charges.⁵⁹

⁵¹ MNHS, Union Gospel Mission Archives.

⁵² MNHS, Union Gospel Mission Archives; Kunz, 83.

⁵³ Kunz, 60, 83.

⁵⁴ "Ministry Center has rich history of helping youth," *Shoreview News*, May 26, 2009.

⁵⁵ Kunz, 94.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 93.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 87-88.

⁵⁹ "Former Foster Child Claims Sexual Abuse at Union Gospel Mission, *Pioneer Press*, April 12, 2017.

In 1980, the city housing authority offered \$600,000 for the Union Gospel Mission building on Seventh Street.⁶⁰ With the funds and additional fundraising, the Mission built a new men's shelter and addiction recovery program building at 435 East University Avenue. The Mission tightened the goals for supportive housing and substance abuse programs and focused funds on the men's treatment facility on University Avenue and the Naomi Family Residence at 109 Ninth Street East, a shelter for homeless women and children. In 2020, the Union Gospel Mission board sold the camp for "needy kids" because the "buildings fell outside of the organization's mission."⁶¹

⁶⁰ Kunz, 100.

⁶¹ "Union Gospel Mission is selling longtime Shoreview lakeshore campus," *Star Tribune*, August 18, 2020.