No other feature has had more impact on the founding of Minnesota. The waterfall not only built the city of Minneapolis but served as the nexus between nearly every part of the state.

The waterfall provided power. Throughout the years, mill owners took advantage of this power by installing water wheels. These water wheels helped turn the saws in sawmills which cut logs from the north and turned the millstones in flour mills which ground grain from the wheat fields of west. As a result, Minneapolis became the flour milling capital of the nation for fifty years.

This self-guided tour, the most comprehensive on this site, identifies forty historic sites around the area. Some of these sites are now mill ruins; others have become apartments and restaurants. Speaking to the size of the packet, this tour is about three miles long, so prepare appropriately (i.e. dress warm in winter or have plenty of water bottles in summer). The tour will not give you an overview of the history of the falls, which you can learn from both signs you will pass on the trail and this website. However, it will identify and give a little history about the many historical sites around the falls, along with some background on the geology of the falls itself.

The tour begins and ends at Father Hennepin Park, located near the intersection of Main Street South East and Sixth Avenue South East. Main Street has metered parking, and the tour will take about two hours to complete. However, you can find free parking in the Marcy Holmes residential neighborhood a few blocks to the west.

Enjoy the tour!
The Geology of the Falls
Two rock layers are at the falls. One layer is the Platteville Formation, which consists of a hard, yellowish rock called limestone that formed from mud at the bottom of an ocean which covered the area over four hundred and fifty million years ago. Beneath it is the St. Peter’s Sandstone, a rock made up of beach sand from the ocean. Together, these two rocks allowed for the formation of the falls and the creation of the waterfall. The Platteville also provided a good building material, and many of the mills and bridges around the falls were built from it. On the tour, take a close look at the buildings you will see. Those made of Platteville will have burrows from the animals that once slithered through the mud, evidence of Minnesota’s marine past. Without the Platteville Formation, the falls, the mills, and maybe even Minneapolis would never have existed.
1. From the intersection of Main Street South East and Sixth Avenue South East, walk west toward the Stone Arch Bridge. Before you reach the bridge, on your left, will be a small garden with a stone marker.

**Father Hennepin Bluffs Monument**

On this spot in 1680, a band of Dakota led Antonine Augalle and his travelling companion, Father Hennepin, by the falls, making them the first Europeans to see the falls. Hennepin received most of the fame for what he called his “discovery,” when he published an exaggerated account of his travels.

2. Begin your walk across the Stone Arch Bridge.

**The Stone Arch Bridge**

Railroad tycoon and mill owner James J. Hill built the Stone Arch Bridge in 1883. Dubbed “Hill’s Folly” because of its cost, the Stone Arch Bridge connected the west and east banks of the river, linking Minneapolis’ milling operations with the agricultural fields of the Dakotas and the barge and rail traffic of St. Paul. The bridge stands eighty two feet in height and has 23 arches with spans ranging from 40 to 100 feet. Built to last, the Stone Arch Bridge is composed of the same rock that forms the waterfalls’ edge and contains sediment layers, fossils, and fossil burrows, tell-tale reminders of the ancient tropical sea in which the rock formed. The last passenger train passed over it in 1978 and it opened to pedestrians in 1994.

3. As you start your walk on the bridge, look to your left, where you will see the Southeast Steam Plant (now known as the Southeast Heating Plant)

This steam plant, built in 1903, helped power the electric trolley cars that dominated Minneapolis streets for over forty years. The University of Minnesota purchased the plant in 1974 and set about renovating it while retaining its historic character. It now supplies steam heating to the university.
4. Continue walking west on the Stone Arch Bridge. On your left will be

**Lower Bridge/Tenth Avenue Bridge Remains**
A single pillar in the Mississippi is the sole remnant of an iron truss bridge that used to cross the river. The Tenth Avenue Bridge was originally built of wood in 1872. Soon an iron-truss bridge replaced it. However, the city intended the bridge for wagon use and thus did not make it strong enough to support cars or electric streetcars. Consequently, the city closed the bridge in 1934 and tore it down nine years later to provide scrap metal for use in World War II.

5. Continue walking west on the Stone Arch Bridge. On your right will be

**St. Anthony Falls Laboratory**
Located on Hennepin Island, the University of Minnesota’s Saint Anthony Falls Laboratory uses water from the Mississippi, which flows underneath the building, to conduct experiments. Construction started in 1936 and ended in 1939 with the help of the Works Progress Administration, Northern States Electric, and the city of Minneapolis. The building uses the foundation of the paper mill built on Hennepin Island in 1857.

6. Continue walking west on the Stone Arch Bridge. On your left will be

**The Lower St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam**
Visible from the Stone Arch Bridge, the lower St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam still produces power. Built in 1895 to 1897 by Washburn-Crosby, it earned the nickname “La Barre’s Folly” after its incredibly high cost (nearly a million dollars) and after the engineer who thought of it, William de La Barre. The dam helped power electric street cars for fifty years.
7. Continue walking west on the Stone Arch Bridge. On your right will be
St. Anthony Falls
The face of waterfall has changed over the centuries. Originally a natural waterfall dependent on the Platteville limestone, St. Anthony was in danger of collapse throughout the early years of milling. Logs would fall over it and shatter the Platteville. Also complicating manners was a dam upriver that prevented water from flowing over the falls’ lip. This caused the limestone to freeze during winter and crack. As early as 1866, mill owners were trying to build a large wood covering, called an apron, to cover the falls and protect it. However, floods destroyed it. Later, another miller decided to build a tunnel underneath the waterfall to increase waterpower. The plan backfired and nearly destroyed the falls. The Army Corps of Engineers stepped in and by 1880 had built a massive wall beneath the falls to prevent further erosion and a concrete apron, a forerunner to the current apron over the falls.

8. Continue walking west on the Stone Arch Bridge. On your left you will see a long man-made pier stretching downstream. At the end of that pier, stood
Spirit Island
Now gone, Spirit Island was a small tree-covered rocky island that once stood downstream of the falls. Although the island held special significance for the Dakota, later Minneapolis residents quarried the island away to use its rock as building stone. The Army Corps of Engineers removed the last remnants of Spirit Island when they installed the lock next to the falls.

9. Continue walking west on the Stone Arch Bridge. In front of you, you will see the
Washburn-Crosby A Mill and Complex
The Washburn A Mill stood seven and a half stories high, making it the largest mill at the falls when it was built in 1874. However, four years later, the mill exploded and killed eighteen men. The explosion, resulting from flammable dust created by the milling process, shot the roof of the building hundreds of feet into the air and leveled a third of the falls’ industry. A month later, the remains of the Washburn A Mill still smoldered. However, by the next year, Washburn-Crosby rebuilt the Washburn A mill and the other millers rebuilt their mills. The mill produced flour until 1965. Its owners abandoned it, and a fire destroyed most of the mill in 1992. In 2003, the ruins became part of the Mill City Museum.

10. Continue walking west on the Stone Arch Bridge. On your right will be
The Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock
Between 1950 and 1963, the Army Corps of Engineers constructed a lock on the west side of the falls, vastly improving upriver navigation. The lock has a drop of 49.2 feet, the largest of any lock on the Mississippi River.
11. Follow the Stone Arch Bridge to the end. There, you will find a trail, immediately on your left, leading you to Mill Ruins Park. Don’t take it. Walk to West River Park Road, which is the road in front of you, and follow an old wall to the corner of Portland Ave. and West River Parkway. There you will see the ruins of the


Four mills once stood in this jumble of ruins. The Cataract Mill opened in 1859 and was the first flour mill built on the west side of the river after the construction of the canal. The Artic, Union, and Holly mills became its first neighbors. Each mill was made from Platteville limestone, a rock layer found at the falls, and stood four stories tall. Their owners abandoned them by 1930. Today, the Cataract’s foundation walls are visible at the corner of Portland Avenue and West River Parkway and one of its millstones rests on a wall.

12. Follow Portland Ave. east, towards the Stone Arch Bridge. It should slope downward and underneath the bridge. However, before you reach the bridge, to your left will be two

**Minneapolis Eastern Railroad Trestles**

These two stone columns once held the trestle that supported the rails of the Minneapolis Eastern Railroad and gave it access to the flour mills. The huge iron structures over the tailraces also helped support trains.
13. Follow Portland Ave. underneath the bridge and take a right along the pedestrian trail. You will soon be in Mill Ruins Park.

Ruins (Note: you must read from right to left to correctly identify the ruins)

Minneapolis Cotton Mill/ Excelsior Mill/ Minneapolis Flour Mfr. Co. G Mill
Originally a linseed-oil mill, these ruins became a cotton mill in 1870. A few years later, it became the Excelsior flour mill. The mill ground flour until the 1930s. Northern States Power Company used its tailraces to produce electricity until 1960 when the mill was torn down.

Minneapolis Paper Mill/ Pillsbury C Warehouse 1867-1931
The two-story Minneapolis Paper Mill operated until the early 1890s when the Pillsbury Company bought the building. They tore it down and replaced it with a five-story warehouse. While the warehouse came down in 1931, Northern States Power Company had moved into its basement, and the old turbines of the mill produced electricity until 1960.

Alaska/Pillsbury B Mill 1866-1931
The five-story limestone Alaska Mill was built in 1866. It became the first mill owned by the future Pillsbury Flour Mill Company in 1870. After burning in 1881, the Pillsbury Company replaced it with the six-story Pillsbury B Mill. The building had pairs of beautiful arched windows overlooking the falls. It was torn down in 1931.

Clapp Woolen Mill/Empire Mill/Pillsbury B Elevator/King Midas Elevator 1865-1881; 1888-1969
Originally a woolen mill, this site became a flour mill in 1878, which burned down three years later. The site remained vacant until 1888 when the Pillsbury Company built a grain elevator for its Pillsbury B Mill. The grain elevator remained in business until 1962 and burned down seven years later.

What is a tailrace?
Unfortunately, the sole reminder of many of these mills is their tailrace. Tailraces are tunnels from which water exited the mill after turning the water wheel. In 1857, the Minneapolis Milling Company, which leased water to the mills, built a large underground tunnel to serve the mills. The canal, as it was called, focused water and increased its speed and water potential. From this underground tunnel came a whole network of tunnels which water flowed through turning waterwheels. The water left the tunnel through the tailrace.

Palisade Mill
Leonard Day Company built the Palisade Mill in 1872. They named it after the steep ravine it bordered, which still exists today. Washburn-Crosby bought the mill a decade later and doubled its size. The mill operated until 1932, when its owners removed its machinery. A fire destroyed the rest of the mill in 1940.

The Buried Ruins
Each of these flour mills was made of limestone. The actual mills were destroyed in 1931, but their tailraces and wheel pits became part of the Consolidated Hydro Plant, producing electricity long after flour production ceased. Following their demolition, the ruins were filled with gravel and sand and await future excavation.
14. Follow the path along the Mill Ruins. You will soon be walking up an incline next to a steep ravine. At the end of this incline will be Gold Medal Park. Take a right and follow the pedestrian path running alongside West River Parkway. You should pass the Guthrie Theatre and then the Pillsbury A Mill. By then, you will be walking on a wooden boardwalk.

First Avenue Canal Boardwalk
Beneath the boardwalk lies a large canal the Minneapolis Company excavated in 1857. The canal started above the falls and ran for more than two hundred feet, helping to focus water flow to increase water power potential. To build the canal, workers removed the St. Peter’s Sandstone and had water running beneath the Platteville formation. The canal greatly increased production of lumber and later flour on the west side of the falls.

15. Continue walking on the path. On your left, you should see
North Star Woolen Mill
A number of entrepreneurs started failed business ventures with cloth at the falls. The only one with any success was the North Star Woolen Mill, which began operations in 1864 and produced scarves, flannels, blankets, and yarns until the 1940s.

16. Continue walking on the path. At the intersection of Portland Ave. and West River Parkway, you will see a set of ruins on your right.

Clapp Woolen Mill/Empire Mill/Pillsbury B Elevator/King Midas Elevator 1865-1881; 1888-1969
Ruins
These are part of the foundation of the Pillsbury B Elevator. Originally a woolen mill, this site became a flour mill in 1878, burning down three years later. The site remained vacant until 1888 when the Pillsbury Company built a grain elevator for its Pillsbury B Mill. The grain elevator remained in business until 1962 and burned down seven years later.

17. Walk north on Portland Ave. You will see a staircase, and at the top of that staircase will be the
Fuji-Ya
To see the ruins of the Fuji-Ya, walk around to the east side of the building, the side that faces the river and falls.
Before moving to its Lake Street and Lyndale location, this Japanese restaurant was the first of many revitalization efforts at the falls. Built by Reiko Weston in 1968, its parking lot incorporated many parts of the Columbia flour mill, while the restaurant’s foundation incorporates parts of the Basset Sawmill which burned down in 1890.
18. After taking a look around the Fuji-Ya, return to the staircase. At the top of the staircase you will be at the intersection of First Street and Fifth Avenue. At the corner of Fifth and First, you will see the **Crown Roller Mill and Boiler House**

The Crown Roller Mill was the second largest flour mill on the west side. It operated from 1880 until the early 1950s. A fire ripped through it in 1983, destroying the interior. Rather than destroying the rest of the mill, the city of Minneapolis helped rebuild it. It currently leases office buildings. The southern part of the building, with the smoke stack, was a boiler room, which helped power the mill.

19. **Walk west on Fifth Avenue, away from the river. Behind the Crown Roller Mill is the Standard Mill**

Dorilus Morrison, the first mayor of Minneapolis, built this mill in 1879. In the 1940s, flour milling ceased and the building was converted into a warehouse. In 1987, the mill became a luxury hotel. It now leases condominiums.

20. **Walk west on Fifth Avenue. At the intersection of Fifth Avenue and South 2\textsuperscript{nd} Street, you will see the Ceresota Elevator**

Built in 1908, the Northwestern Consolidated Milling Company’s Elevator “A”, also known as the Ceresota Elevator, had a capacity of one million bushels, the largest of any elevator in the milling district. It remained a grain elevator until 1987, when it was converted into office space.

21. **Continue on Fifth Ave Southeast. Take a right onto Washington Ave. and continue north until you meet the intersection of Washington and 3\textsuperscript{rd} Ave. at the corner of Washington and 3\textsuperscript{rd} will be The Milwaukee Road Railroad Depot**

Built in 1899, this depot served the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad. During its peak years, twenty nine trains a day left the station. The last train left the station in 1971 and the building soon became office space. It now features two hotels, an indoor water park, an interpretive museum, a restaurant, a bar, and an underground parking garage.

22. **At the intersection of Washington and 3\textsuperscript{rd} Ave. South East, take a right and walk for a block until the intersection of 3\textsuperscript{rd} Ave. SE and 2\textsuperscript{nd} Street S. On your right will be The Milwaukee Road Freight Depot**

Built in 1875, this building connected to a railroad depot that predated the one that still stands today. It stored freight and served as a package drop-off point until it became vacant in the early 1970s. In 1998, it became a Dunn Bros. Coffee House.
23. Continue on 3rd Ave. Southeast and cross South 2nd St. At the corner of 3rd Ave. and 2nd St. you should be able to see Mill Place (Hall and Dann Barrel Factory, 1880)

In 1877, Albert R. Hall and Marcus C. Dann formed a partnership to make barrels to ship flour. They moved to this location in 1880 and were reputed to be one of the largest cooperages in the world. By 1890, they had stopped producing barrels and produced cloth bags instead. Like many other mill buildings, it now houses offices.

24. Walk east on 3rd Ave., past Mill Place, and cross First St. Take a left on First St. and continue until you meet Hennepin Ave. Take a right on Hennepin Ave. and walk towards the extension bridge. On the extension bridge, take the staircase on your left to First Bridge Park, beneath the suspension bridge.

Remains of the Second Hennepin Ave. Suspension Bridge

In 1857, the cities of Minneapolis and St. Anthony (which joined Minneapolis in 1872) built a wooden suspension bridge connecting their cities. It became the first bridge spanning the Mississippi. Over the years, the city has replaced the bridge three times. Beneath the current suspension bridge are the remains of the second bridge; its foundation of limestone blocks, two anchors, and supporting cables. The supporting cables held up the bridge while the anchors kept the cables attached to the ground.
25. Take the staircase back up to the Hennepin Ave. Bridge and continue east on Hennepin Ave. Across the bridge you should see the **Grain Belt Beer Neon Billboard**

Grain Belt Beer was a product of the Minneapolis Brewing Company, an enterprise formed by the merger of four local breweries in 1890. The company built the sign in 1940 as part of a gambit to increase sales during the Great Depression and the years following prohibition. The Grain Belt Brewery, upstream of Nicollet Island, closed in the 1970s. The city now owns the sign.

26. Continue across the bridge and take the first left you find. It will take you to Hennepin Island. Follow the street and take a left onto Merriam Street. In front of you, you will see **Bell of Two Friends**

Ibarki, Japan, Minneapolis’s sister city, presented this twelve foot sculpture based on the design and shape of a 2,000 year old bell found in Ibarki in 2001 to honor their twenty year friendship.

27. Turn around and walk east on Merriam St. On your left you should see **Nicollet Island Stock Pavilion**

This pavilion dates to 1892 and housed the William Bros Boiler Works. A fire destroyed it a year later, but it was rebuilt and added onto to form the Durkee-Atwood Complex. In 1983, the Parks Board purchased the complex and demolished most the buildings except for the pavilion. Director Brian Levant filmed part of *Jingle All the Way*, starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, here.

28. Continue to walk east on Merriam St. On your right, before you cross the Merriam St. Bridge, you will see **Nicollet Island Inn**

Built in 1893, this building was a sash, door, and blind manufacturing factory. In 1913, the Salvation Army bought the building and ran a men’s shelter in it for sixty years. They finally sold it to the Minneapolis Parks Board. The building fell into disrepair until developers bought it, fixed it up, and reopened it as a restaurant and inn.
29. **Cross the Merriam Street Bridge**
This Bridge was originally one of four trusses of a railroad bridge that crossed the Mississippi a mile upriver from Nicollet. In 1986, the bridge was demolished and this truss was floated downriver to its current location where it became a pedestrian bridge.

30. **Immediately in front of you, at 25 Main Street SE will be Brown-Ryan Livery Stable**
Built in 1880, this stable was originally located at Second St. NE. However, the building was in the way of a high-rise project and the city moved it to this location in 1981. The entrance of the originally building does not face the street but faces the plaza shared by the entrance to Riverside Apartments.

31. **Take a left onto Main Street SE. In the plaza to the immediate right of the Brown-Ryan Livery Stable, you will see Our Lady of Lourdes**
First Universalist Society finished construction on this church, built from the Platteville limestone of the falls, in 1857. Twenty years later, the Catholic French Canadian community purchased the building. The church is the longest operating church in the Minneapolis area.

32. **Walk south on Main Street. Stop at 29 Main St. Kronick Warehouse**
After a fire destroyed the previous factory at this location, the Levin Brothers built a five story factory and warehouse in 1917. By the 1940s, the building was only a warehouse. However, by the 1960s, it had become home to a number of artists until the city bought and sold it to the Riverplace apartment complex, which added the glass and metal arched front.

33. **Continue south on Main Street. Stop at 117 Main Street Pracna**
Frank Pracna built this three-story building in 1890. He and his family lived in the upper floors of the building. Downstairs he ran a popular saloon for workmen at the falls until the onset of prohibition. In the following years, the building served as a warehouse and a machine shop until architect Peter Hall bought it and opened it as a restaurant in 1969.
34. Walk South on Main Street. Stop at 127 Main Street  
**Morrison/Martin Blocks**  
In 1858, Captain John Martin built a beautiful limestone building with four windows going across. Francis Morrison, who owned the property to the left of it, decided to build a store imitating its design, but only had the space for three windows. The upper floors served as offices for doctors, lawyers, and dentists. The buildings were also home to two newspapers until the Union Iron Works, which occupied the space next door, purchased it and converted it to factory use. In 1985, St. Anthony Main renovated the building and included it in its complex.

35. Continue south. Stop at 129 Main St.  
**Upton Block/Union Iron Works**  
This building is made of Minneapolis brick and first served as a hardware store for the Upton Brothers before they moved their store across the river. It housed various retail stores and a newspaper until the Union Iron Works bought it in 1879. The Iron Works produced machinery for the mills and remained in the Upton Block until 1930. The building became a warehouse until St. Anthony Main renovated it in 1985.

36. Take a right into Xcel Energy Waterpower Park. On your left will be  
**Main Street Station**  
The Minnesota General Electric Company built this power station in 1894. Water produced a little less than half the electricity from the station. The building burned down in 1911 and was rebuilt. The plant stopped producing power in 1963.

37. Walk east and follow the pedestrian trail in the power park. When you have passed Main Street Station, turn around and look at the east bank of the river. In front of the Morrison, Martin, and Upton Blocks you will see the  
**Pillsbury A Headrace**  
To power the Pillsbury A Mill, its owners built a tunnel underneath the building and underneath part of Main Street. Water rushing through this tunnel, called a canal, would turn water wheels, providing power to the mill. The canal focused water, increasing its speed and thus increasing the amount of power it generated. Water would enter through the headrace.
38. Continue to follow the pedestrian path to the overlook above the falls. As you look, notice the huge v-shaped upriver of the falls. It goes underneath the Third Avenue Bridge

Upper St. Anthony Falls Dam
In 1856, the west and east side milling interests consolidated their waterpower, forming two companies, the Minneapolis Milling Company and the St. Anthony Waterpower Company. These companies controlled the waterpower and land along the falls and leased the water to mills. However, before they could start leasing, the companies had to evenly divide the water of the falls between themselves. To achieve this, they constructed a v-shaped dam above the falls. By diverting the water into two different millponds, the dam allowed the two power companies of the falls to develop independently. The basic shape of the dam still exists today.

39. After you are finished with looking at the falls, exit the park and take a right onto Main Street Southeast. Walk south and stop at 201 Main Street. On your left will be the
Salisbury & Satterlee Company Complex
Salisbury and Satterlee built the five story red brick building (at 221 Main Street) in 1892 as part of their box spring and mattresses manufacturing business. They added onto it with a small two story addition in 1909 (201-205 Main Street). The Jefferson Company, which owns St. Anthony Main, bought the buildings in 1977 and renovated them.

40. Continue south on Main Street. At the intersection of 3rd Avenue and Main Street, on the left, you will see the
Pillsbury A Mill
The Pillsbury A Mill was the largest flour milling operation at the falls and for a short time, the largest flour mill in the world. Built in 1881, the mill stood seven stories tall, cost half a million dollars, and produced four thousand barrels (one barrel = 60 pounds of flour) of flour a day. The last mill operating at the falls, it closed in 2003.

If you continue south on Main Street, you will come to Father Hennepin Park, where you started the tour.