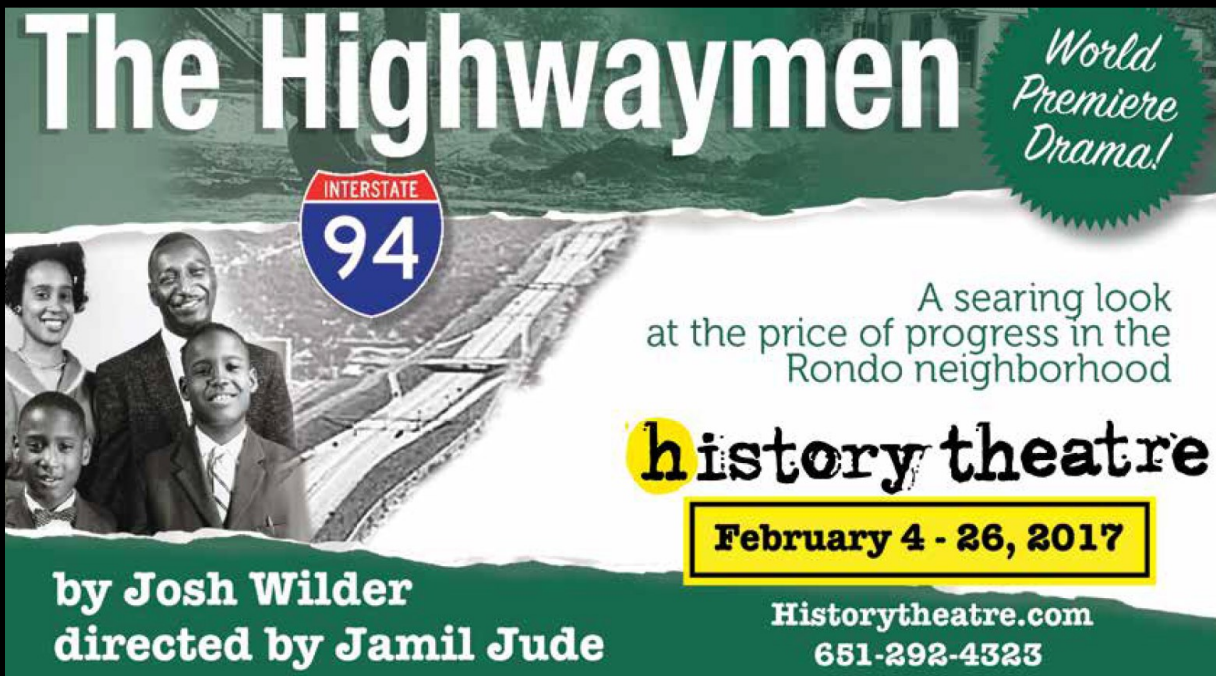


# history theatre



**The Highwaymen** *World Premiere Drama!*

A searing look at the price of progress in the Rondo neighborhood

history theatre

**February 4 - 26, 2017**

by Josh Wilder  
directed by Jamil Jude

Historytheatre.com  
651-292-4323

## Play Guide

**Play written by Josh Wilder**



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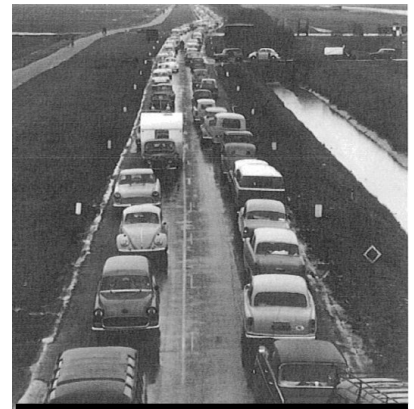
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Play Guide published by History Theatre c2016

## Building of the Interstate Highway in the Twin Cities

Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, roads in the United States were built and maintained primarily by state and local governments. By the time Henry Ford honed his system of mass -production, ushering in the age of the automobile, roads were beginning to be viewed as a public good that should be provided by the federal government. With 56% of American families owning cars by the end of the 1920's, the pressure for more and faster roads increased rapidly.

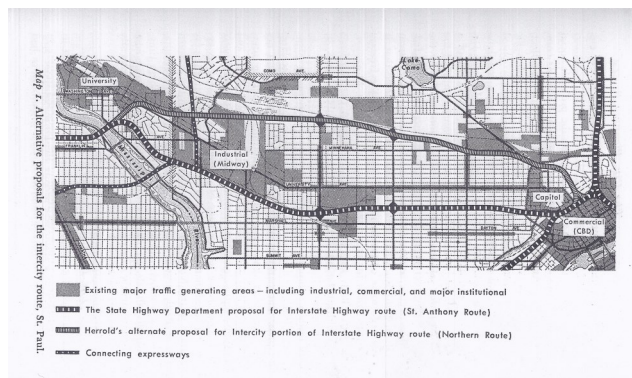
In 1938, the Bureau of Public Roads published the first national study to consider the feasibility of building a national system of super highways. The report expressed concern about urban congestion, recommending that the highways pass through cities in addition to providing bypass and connecting major urban areas. Although the report noted the reluctance of city administrators to undertake the type of project envisioned due to the expense and the reluctance to acquire private property, it also stressed the urgency of addressing growing traffic problems.



Traffic outside Saint Paul, 1953

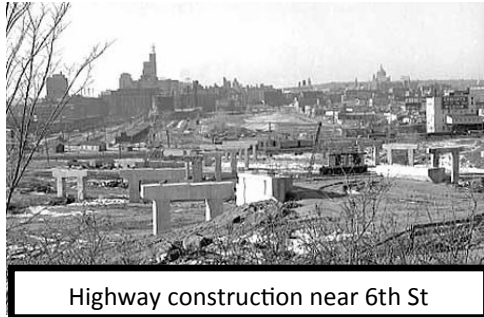
Congress in 1941 passed legislation to fund a 78,780-mile network of highways, but it was vetoed by President Roosevelt because of his expectation that the United States soon would be involved in World War II. Demonstrating his commitment to the project, however, the President appointed the National Interregional Highway Committee. The Commission was tasked with adding 34,000 miles of rural and urban highways throughout the United States to links cities with populations greater than 300 thousand. The roads would alleviate concerns about finding work for soon to be returning soldiers, would give the military a way to easily move men and equipment if needed, and would be beneficial to a rapidly increasing group of automobile drivers.

The idea to connect the Twin Cities was first approached by city officials in the 1920s, but took hold in 1944. It was believed that the new highway should be accessible to the University of Minnesota as well as designed to offer Minneapolis residents the ability to reach the State Capitol with ease. St. Anthony Avenue, the only viable existing street option that was platted through to Minneapolis, ran parallel to these two streets stretching from downtown Saint Paul to the western city line and was considered the best option almost immediately. As it approached downtown Saint Paul, St. Anthony Ave. ran through the Rondo neighborhood, where most of the African Americans in Saint Paul lived.



In 1945, George Herrold, Saint Paul's founder of city planning, began voicing what he considered to be significant concerns about the use of St Anthony Ave. He believed that the social impact of what they were doing should take precedent over everything else.

The predominantly African-American communities affected would have a hard time finding new homes in other city communities, and putting the highway through their neighborhood would cause significant crowding issues. He felt the city had an opportunity to create entirely new desire lines with his plan without having to displace entire neighborhoods. He proposed a second alternative, which would run adjacent to railroad tracks north of St. Anthony. This would come to be known as the Northern Route.



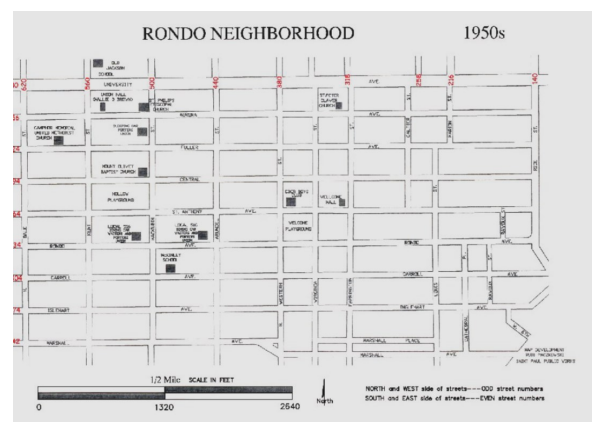
Highway construction near 6th St

Following Eisenhower's election in 1952, the country entered the era of "Peace, Prosperity, and Progress." Americans had jobs and money, and were on the move. No matter where and when Americans moved, they went by car. The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 made the new highway an absolute reality. Through the increased taxes on fuel, vehicles and related purchases, the federal government would pay 90 percent of the costs associated with highway construction, leaving states required to deal with only the additional 10 percent.

States had only one year to get cost estimates to the Bureau of Public Roads, which left little time for arguing with the local officials. Those affected had precious little time to make their case for any changes.

Leaders of the African American community became aware of the approval of the St. Anthony route in 1953, six years after it occurred. Reverend Floyd Massey, a community leader, learned that the Saint Paul Planning Board, of which he was a member, would be asked to approve the intercity freeway proposal. The Rondo-St. Anthony Improvement Association, the first of many organizations to be formed in response to the freeway construction was started. Many neighborhood residents had already been displaced by the 1952 Western Redevelopment project that took 608 families homes, 35% which were African American, with no plan of relocating them. In place of these homes that were destroyed, the city built a school, a park and designated 24 acres for commercial development. The previous experience made the choice of the Rondo Route for the interstate less a shock, but no less devastating.

Raymond Mohl, author of *Highways, Housing & Freeway Revolt* states that "it now seems apparent that public and policy makers used expressways to destroy low-income and especially immigrant neighborhoods in effort to reshape the physical and racial landscape of the postwar America". It was a wide held view by those living in the Rondo area directly prior to demolition that the Twin Cities highway planners were taking advantage of the poor economic position of the area and discriminating against the lack of social influence the community had during this time. One in seven African Americans in Saint Paul lost a home to I-94. A critic wrote that "very few blacks lived in Minnesota, but the road builders found them".



While city officials would later laud the generous prices the people of Rondo were paid for their homes, their rosy picture would only tell half of the story. The city depressed the highway through this area to alleviate noise, but cutting the community in half was a blow from which it would never completely recover. African Americans whose families had lived in Minnesota for decades and others who were just arriving from the South made up a vibrant, vital community that was in many ways independent of the white society around it. The construction of I-94 shattered this tight-knit community, displaced thousands of African Americans into a racially segregated city and a discriminatory housing market, and erased a now-legendary neighborhood. The limited access road split the community in two – cutting off connections not only to businesses, but also friends, relatives and churches. Of the 433 households eliminated, only 45% received any form of compensation or assistance, 4% of which were African American households. Not many options were available for those displaced. They were left with nowhere to go and were forced to rely on houses accommodating multiple families. This also resulted in increased racial segregation, since many Caucasian communities would not sell or rent to them.

After nearly a decade of construction and many more years of planning, on Monday Dec 9, 1968 at 2:15 in the afternoon the Twin Cities were finally linked with the dedication of the \$80 million stretch of Interstate 94. A coalition of leaders from Saint Paul drove east to meet a westward bound Minneapolis coalition in front of Highway 280. After a short ceremony representatives from each of the “twins” tied ribbons together to signify the linking of the two cities. By 4:00 pm that day the roads were “officially” open to the public.



On Dec. 9, 1968, a new 11-mile segment of Interstate 94, linking downtown Minneapolis with downtown St. Paul, opened for the first time.

# The Players



## **Frank Marzitelli—Commissioner of Public Works**

Frank D. Marzitelli was born on February 25th, 1914 in St. Paul, Minnesota. The son of Italian immigrants, Marzitelli grew up in St. Paul's predominantly immigrant Levee neighborhood, located on the river flats under the High Bridge that was later cleared of houses after floods in 1951 and 1952. He attended public schools, graduating in 1931 from Mechanic Arts High School. After finishing high school, Marzitelli first worked at Purity Baking Company, where he joined and became very active in the Bakers and Confectionery Workers Union Local #21. He served as a union official for fifteen years. In 1950, with the help of the unions, Marzitelli was elected to the St. Paul City Council where he served until 1957. Major accomplishments included the abolition of the Department of Education and creation of the Independent School Board, the expansion of the branch library system, and the founding of the Saint Paul Arts and Science Council. Marzitelli never earned a college degree, but took extension classes in business, economics, and government at the University of Minnesota over a period of fourteen years.

Although his six years on the city council were his only service in an elected office, Marzitelli continued to serve in state and municipal government in a diverse series of appointments including Deputy Commissioner of Highways (1957-1961) and Executive Vice President of the Port Authority of St. Paul (1961-1972). In 1972 Mayor Larry Cohen appointed Marzitelli as St. Paul's first city administrator. Governor Wendell Anderson appointed him Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Highways in 1975, and he went on to serve with another state agency from 1976 to 1978 as Deputy Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Public Welfare.

Marzitelli joined and held offices in a number of volunteer organizations. He served as president of Minnesota Good Roads, Inc., from 1967 to 1979. He was also active in numerous service and fraternal organizations, including the Elks, the Knights of Columbus, and the St. Paul chapter of UNICO, an Italian-American service organization, for which he served as president.

Marzitelli devoted much of his talent and energies to culture and the arts. He served as board member to Theatre Saint Paul, Chimera Theatre, Great American History Theatre, Minnesota Museum of American Art, United Arts, Minnesota Conservatory of the Performing Arts, and the Twin City Jazz Society. During his years in municipal government, he served on the board of Minnesota Landmarks and played a major role in accomplishing the restoration of the Old Federal Courts Building as a home for arts organizations, later renamed Landmark Center. In 1975 he was appointed to the Civic Center Theater Project by the mayor of St. Paul. In 1978 he became President of the St. Paul-Ramsey Arts and Science Council, and in 1980 assumed management responsibility for the location, design, construction, and funding for the new Ordway Music Theatre, later joining its Board of Directors as Secretary and Consultant.

He contributed twenty years to the board of St. Joseph's Hospital, five of them as its president, and also served on the board of Associated Capital Hospitals. Marzitelli married Helen Misch of Independence, Wisconsin in 1938. They became the parents of seven children. Frank Marzitelli died on August 15, 2000 at age 86 of congestive heart failure.



**George Shepard—Chief Engineer, Department of Public Works**

George M. Shepard, son of William Milson and Lucille Mehitable (Thrall) Shepard, was born in Ellington Township, Dodge County, Minnesota, on July 18, 1888. He graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1909 with a B.S. in Civil Engineering. While at the University, he was editor-in-chief of the "Minnesota Engineer," the forerunner of the present "Technology." He was a member of Sigma Xi, Tau Beta Pi, and Theta Tau.

Mr. Shepard became City Engineer of Jamestown, North Dakota in 1912. He spent the next several years in railroad, municipal, and federal engineering engagements, mainly in St. Paul. From 1917 to 1919, he served in the U.S. Army Engineers and retired as Lt. Col. When he returned to St. Paul in 1922, he entered private practice for a time before he was appointed Chief Engineer for the City of St. Paul in December 1922. He resigned from the City in 1927 and became Chief Engineer for the Northern Contracting Co. In 1932 he returned to St. Paul as Chief Engineer. In 1957 he was appointed Street and Highway Engineering Coordinator. His projects included the Twin Cities Lock and Dam, Kittson Sewer Tunnel, control works for the water supply of Boston, Mass., and various bridges. He retired from this post in 1965.

Mr. Shepard was a member and former Director of the American Public Works Association; a member and past president of NSPE, St. Paul Society of Engineers; past president of Minnesota Federation of Engineering Societies; and a past president of the National Council of State Boards of Engineering Examiners. In addition, he served on the State Board of Registration for Engineers, Architects and Land Surveyors (1938-53), and on the Minnesota Highway Study Commission (1953-55). He was also a member of the American Legion, St. Paul Athletic Club, Masonic Lodge and Shriners.

In 1950, Mr. Shepard received the University of Minnesota Outstanding Achievement Award for accomplishment in the Public Works Field. He was awarded in 1960 the Samuel A. Greeley Scroll, a national service award from the American Public Works Association. This award was made for his distinguished municipal service.

Mr. Shepard was elected an Associate Member of the Society in 1917, a Member in 1920, and a Fellow in 1959. He also served as Past President of the Minnesota section in 1943. He died in 1974.



**Floyd Massey, Jr—Minister, Pilgrim Baptist Church & Local Activist**

Born in Rock Hill, South Carolina, Floyd Massey Jr. grew up in Gastonia, North Carolina, and earned a bachelor's degree from Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, N.C., in 1936. Massey taught American history, sociology and economics at Booker T. Washington High School in Columbia, S.C., from 1936 to 1941, and then earned his master's degree and doctorate in divinity at Colgate Rochester Divinity School in Rochester, New York.

In 1944, Massey began his tenure as pastor of the Pilgrim Baptist Church, a position he would hold for 21 years. While there he increased membership from 125 to more than 1,000. He served on the board of the Council of Churches, the Foreign Missions Board of both the National and the American

board and was convenor of the Rondo-St. Anthony Highway Organization. Reflecting his continuous interest in the educational system, Dr. Massey and members of Pilgrim spearheaded the drive to build a new Maxfield Elementary School.

He was the pastor of Macedonia Baptist Church in Los Angeles from 1965 to 1987 and leader in both the black National Baptist Convention USA Inc. and the predominantly white American Baptist Churches USA. He was also active in the NAACP and with the Martin Luther King International Board of Preachers of Morehouse College.

He passed away on October 28, 2003 at the age of 88.



### **George Herrold—Director of City Planning**

George Herrold, was born on March 26, 1867 in Fulton Alabama. He went to college in Stanford and was appointed Assistant City Engineer in Saint Paul in 1912. He was Appointed City Planning Engineer and Director in 1920 and remained in that postion until 1952.

Saint Paul's "founder of city planning" was regarded in local political circles to be an "unbending idealist,". He had significant concerns about the proposed route of Interstate 94, believing it would decimate the long established Prospect Park and Rondo neighborhoods, essentially cutting the life out of them. He believed the proposed route, if built to the scale being considered by officials, would cut the life out of the long established Prospect Park and Rondo neighborhoods. Herrold felt that it was the city's civic duty to protect the interests of those citizens. While this was his most significant problem with the Highway Department's planned route, it wasn't the only one. He proposed a "Northern Route", a highway that would run a mile north of University Avenue adjacent to the existing railroad lines. Herrold's idea was rejected, and he resigned shortly after construction began. George passed away on July 19, 1964.



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**Fhwa.dot.gov** Highway history including a section of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956.