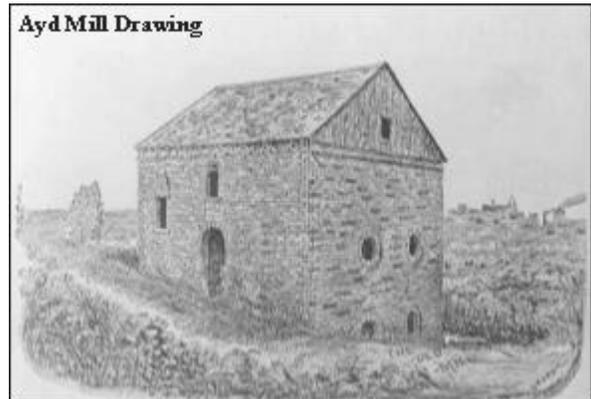


## “THE ROAD TO NOWHERE”: A CITY (STREET) IN SEARCH OF AN IDENTITY

This couldn't be real. It must have been an aspirational dream proffered for the future, right? He couldn't be serious. But there was St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter delivering his Budget plan for the City of Saint Paul. It included **five fewer police officers** and **two fewer lanes** of traffic—for cars, that is. In what surely is one the most fatuous plans ever, we citizens of Saint Paul were duly informed that the northbound lanes of **Ayd Mill Road (AMR)**, the well-traveled diagonal connector, is being turned into a “bike path and a pedestrian thoroughfare.” Wow— “pedestrian thoroughfare” sounds like a new attraction at the State Fair! Who's driving this idea? Saint Paul's Climate Action and Resilience Draft Plan (April 2019) aspires to **reduce driving** by 2.5% annually until 2050. **Bingo!** Look, I too support HOV lanes and sensible bike paths. But this?

Beginning at 35E just east of Lexington Ave. and continuing to Selby Ave. near Snelling Ave., the two-mile spur has had a colorful history. Originally called the Short Line Road, its name reflected its status as a railroad connector link from Saint Paul to Minneapolis. I recall when the name changed in the late 1980's in honor of **John Kaydon Ayd**, a German settler who operated a Mill in the mid to late 19th century. (inset) More than 950,000 German immigrants came to America in the 1850's. Admittedly, I knew nothing about him. My curiosity having been piqued, I did a little digging. If you are driving Northbound on 35E, when you pass over Jefferson Ave. just as the road veers eastward, you are right over Ayd's property and the old mill. The ravine that forms AMR today used to include a pond, and Ayd operated a gristmill there. A gristmill grinds cereal grain into flour; this one processed 22 sacks of corn per day.



John Ayd came to Saint Paul as a 52-year-old in 1851, the same year the **log chapel** of Saint Paul became a **Cathedral** upon the July arrival of **Bp. Joseph Cretin**. Let's be clear—Mr. Ayd **was a squatter**, settling on a “quarter section,” that term describing 160 acres. Then outside the city limits, the area was known as Reserve Township. The land was between Randolph and St. Clair (S to N) and Victoria and Lexington Parkway (E to W). Three years later, he purchased the land, along with land near Dayton, MN by the Crow River— this man was a mover and shaker. Cascade Creek ran through that ravine, providing a water source for his mill. But when the Chicago, Milwaukee, & St. Paul Railway (Short Line) came calling, soon their tracks were laid up the ravine. They cut off the water supply, draining the millpond.

The fall 1974 issue of Ramsey County History magazine has a great article by **Donald Empson** about the mill and the history of the area. ([Click here](#) online.) Ayd sold sixty acres of his land, divided the remaining parcels among his sons, then retired to St. Michael, MN, where he died in 1867. The millhouse was torn down in 1966, a victim of progress. Since the idea of a connector was good for the railroad, in the 1960's city planners envisioned it as a connector for the freeway. Fifty-five years later, we still have not finished the job. One cannot travel northbound on 35E and make a direct connection to I-94 West. You must exit and navigate a crowded Snelling Ave. and re-enter I-94. The Ayd Mill spur carries **24,000 vehicles per day**; yours truly is often among them. On Twin Cities Marathon weekends, it's the best way to skirt Summit Ave., passing underneath it, allowing cars to access Selby Ave. leading to the Cathedral for Mass. Yes, that's a hint!

Wrap your heads around this for a moment. What will happen to 24,000 vehicles when suddenly they are **limited to one lane** each way? For comparative purposes, our city sponsored bicycle study indicates that an average of 536 bicycles per day pedal on Summit Ave. (east of Fairview). It notes that 76% of that traffic is from May to October. Hmmn— 24,000 vehicles will now be limited to one lane each direction. Can you name a single lane street that has such a volume? Nor can I. For example, Randolph Ave carries 12,100 vehicles per day, but that is in both directions. That's right— imagine **doubling** the traffic. Have you braved Randolph Ave. at 3:00 p.m. when school gets out? Q: Where do our city leaders think that the Ayd Mill traffic will go? A:

Not.Their.Problem! It's Yours!

Earlier this year, the residents of my old neighborhood banded together, rejecting the city's plan to force sidewalks upon their residential boulevards. They **did not need them**; they like the streets just as they are. The city relented, but not without a curt letter explaining that their neighborhood will be moved to the bottom of the list for future repairs. Do you think the city banked the money (i.e. **your** money) earmarked for the ill-fated sidewalk project? Think again. The \$3.5 million the city is spending on AMR comes at least in part from that rejected project. On its website, the City of Saint Paul is subtitled, "The most livable city in America." For whom or for what? Certainly **not** for unenlightened dinosaurs like me who prefer tooling around in conveyances with gas-powered engines, four tires and a steering wheel. No, our leaders have other plans. Shh, don't tell anyone, but I think we are trying to become Minneapolis!

- I am delighted to announce that **Mr. Christopher Ganza** will serve as our new **Choir Director-Organist** beginning next month. He has been at Our Lady of Lourdes in Minneapolis since 2015, and also serves as Director of Choral Music at **Saint Agnes School**. Chris is finishing his doctorate at the University of Oklahoma and will assist the Cathedral Heritage Foundation in producing our music series/concerts here. Chris and his wife Molly reside in Saint Paul. Rehearsals begin **Wednesday evening September 11**– it would be a great time to **consider joining** the Choir!
- Our security needs are in the forefront of my thinking every single day. While a security firm provides a presence at all weekend Masses, the time is ripe to **install security cameras** throughout the main church and parking lot, as well as adding a smoke detection system in the Dome. I will share more about this after Labor Day, asking for your prayerful consideration in support of this initiative.
- The Cathedral was invited to host a **deployment ceremony** for the men and women of the Saint Paul National Guard on September 20, 2019. We are honored! More information will follow.
- I plan on visiting the **Minnesota State Fair** next week. The myriad fried food options are easy to resist, but the strawberry malts in the Dairy Building? Sorry, but they are a required purchase!

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel  
Rector

