

Northfield, Minnesota — Yesterday & Today

Sought out for the river that runs through it, Northfield was founded by John W. North in 1855 with the purpose of milling the Cannon River. Fields of rich, golden wheat and the river's natural power brought national acclaim to this small town for producing the finest of flour. Today Malt-O-Meal operates the mill, and the delicious, sweet aroma of hot cereal permeates the town's atmosphere.

In addition to industry and agriculture, Northfield's early settlers had high ideals in the areas of religion and education. Northfield is home to two nationally ranked colleges: St. Olaf and Carleton, both initiated by religious organizations. St. Olaf is recognized internationally for its music ensembles, and the St. Olaf Christmas Festival which broadcasts around the world is one of Northfield's most treasured events. Both colleges contribute to the culture and diversity of the town and are an integral part of the community.

But this charming, quaint river town was not without its troubles. In September of 1876, the James-Younger Gang sauntered into town stirring up some real commotion. What was supposed to be another textbook robbery was foiled by noble Northfield citizens who bravely stood their ground — marking an end to the Old West, as it was known. Today the Defeat of Jesse James Days is attended by approximately 150,000 people and is the largest all volunteer-run celebration in the state of Minnesota. Many books have been written on the subject and stories still echo down the Outlaw Trail.

With all of its high hopes and struggles, Northfield's past and current success is largely due to the character of its people and their deep sense of community. More important than the noted literary, political and industrial leaders that lived in Northfield is the town's commitment to itself. People give freely of their time and talents for the betterment of this community.

This attitude has set in motion the fine attractions, recreation, arts and culture and events, which still flourish today. Enjoy a wide array of dining and lodging possibilities. Come for an event — stay for the experience!