

CITY OF DULUTH  
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
LANDMARK DESIGNATION

**I. Name of Property**

A. Historic: Lake Shore Park  
B. Common: Leif Erikson Park stage

**II. Location**

A. Address: N/A  
B. Legal Description: N/A

**III. Classification**

A. Type of Property: Park Structure  
B. Current Use: Occupied  
C. Current Zoning: MU-N

**IV. Owner**

A. Current Owner: State of Minnesota  
B. Address: 10 London Road, Duluth, Minnesota 55805

**V. Property Status**

A. Occupied/Vacant: Vacant  
B. Assessed Value: Land: \$2,828,800  
Building:  
Total: \$2,828,800  
C. Condition: Fair

**VI. Historical Background**

A. Year Built: 1928  
B. Architect/Builders: Sullivan and Holstead  
C. Original Site: Yes  
D. Altered/Unaltered: Alterations include filling the doors and windows with concrete blocks, and the addition of flag poles at the back of the stage  
E. Architectural Style: Gothic Renaissance

**VII. Description of Property:**

The Leif Erikson Park amphitheater is a stone structure situated in a basin on the edge of the park adjacent to Lake Superior. The semicircular flat stage is made of flagstone and is flanked by a pair of one-story stone towers with conical roofs. Between the towers is a low stone wall that forms the back of the stage. The back side of the stone wall facing Lake Superior has a series of segmentally arched window and door openings, all of which are covered with plywood. The doors provided access under the stage to

dressing rooms, store rooms, and toilets. A circular stone staircase and solid stone railing leads from one of the towers down to the bottom of the wall.

**VIII. Present Condition:**

Fair

**IX. Statement of Significance:**

Constructed at a cost of nearly \$22,000 by City of Duluth park department employees according to the design of architects Abraham Holstead and William Sullivan, the amphitheater at Leif Erikson Park is historically significant at the local level as the site of various recreational and social events. The amphitheater was completed in 1928 and became a popular location for community gatherings, band concerts, pageants, and from 1948 to the mid-2000s, the site of the Duluth International Folk Festival.

**X: Findings on Designation Criteria:**

The following criteria are established by ordinance as the basis for designation of a site/district, with the requirement that the property proposed for designation meet at least one of the criteria.

A. "It has character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City of Duluth, State of Minnesota, or United States."

Finding: Leif Erikson Park was the site of the Duluth International Folk Festival from 1948 to the mid-2000s, and the stage a place for various demonstrations and performances from cultures around the world. The festival started after WWII as Duluth experienced an influx of immigrants. The event was hailed as an "outstanding demonstration of patriotism and brotherhood" by Hubert Humphrey and John Blatnik. The stage itself has been a place for outdoor concerts, church sermons, and more recently, outdoor movie nights. It serves as a landmark and destination for both tourists and residents.

B. "Its location was the site of a significant historical event."

Finding: The International Folk Festival was an event that brought diversity and inclusion into the Twin Ports from 1948 until the mid-2000s.

C. "It is identified with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the cultural development of the City of Duluth, State of Minnesota or United States."

Finding: Not Applicable to this property

D. "It embodies a distinguishing characteristic of an architectural type."

Finding: Not Applicable to this property

E. "It is identified as the work as an architect or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the City of Duluth or the State of Minnesota."

Finding: The architects Sullivan and Holstead were known well for their contributions to buildings in Duluth. Those buildings include the St. Louis County Jail, Denfeld High School, and the Duluth Steam Corporation Plant.

F. "It embodies elements of architectural design, details, materials, and craftsmanship which represent significant architectural innovation.

Finding: Not Applicable to this property

G. "Its unique location or singular physical characteristics represent an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the City as a whole."

Finding: The Leif Erikson Park stage is well-known to both tourists and Duluthians. The two castle-like towers that flank the stage are iconic and distinctive to the park and are closely associated with Duluth for many.

## **XI: Conclusions**

Points in Favor: The stage has been a signature destination within a key part of Duluth's parkway system. Its place in Duluth's recreational and cultural identity reflects a long history of events and festivals, such as the International Folk Festival, and of Duluth's park-visiting traditions.

Points in Opposition: None

## XII. Attachments

### A. Location Map



### B. Photos

Construction 1927



Construction 1927



1929



1937



1950s



International Folk Festival

Aerial 1973





PUBLIC LIBRARY  
DULUTH, MINN.  
1957

LIVING IN THE NORTHERN PLAINS . . . DULUTH, MINNESOTA

YOU WOULD LIKE IT IN **Duluth**

Scandinavian folk dances follow Hawaiian hulas . . . Swedish ceramics are displayed next to Swiss wood carvings . . . Japanese kimonos mingle with Scottish plaids. It is the International Folk Festival of Duluth—a day-long gala of parading, singing, dancing and fun. Custom and heritage link Duluth to all the world's traditions, just as the St. Lawrence Seaway links this port with all the world's trade.

Duluth, one of America's busiest ports, offers outstanding transportation facilities, plus productive labor, a thriving market, and abundant natural gas, piped in by Northern Natural Gas and distributed by the City of Duluth Gas Department. For more information about plant location opportunities in Duluth, write the Area Development Department of Northern Natural Gas Company, Omaha, Nebraska.

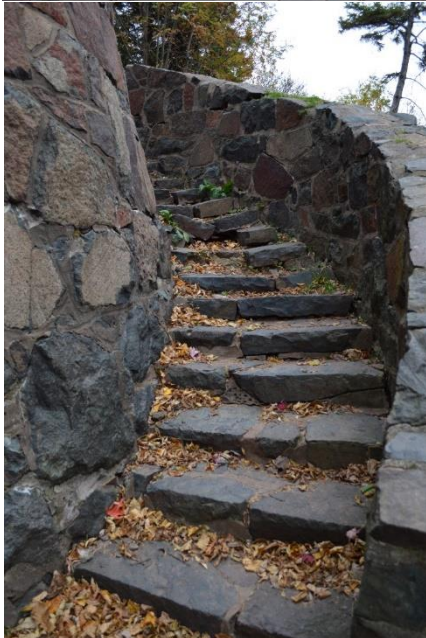
NORTHERN NATURAL GAS COMPANY • GENERAL OFFICES: OMAHA, NEBRASKA

This ad appears in the August 4 issue of TIME.

JUL 6 1961

Ad that appeared in an issue of TIME magazine in 1961

Present Day Stage



### C. Bibliography

Duluth Herald. (1958). [Article] Duluth Public Library, Duluth Celebrations, Folk Festival. Duluth, MN.

Duluth Department of Parks and Recreation records, 1896-1980 | Archives and Special Collections, Kathryn A. Martin Library, University of Minnesota Duluth

"Leif Erikson Park." *Zenith City Online*. N.p., n.d. Web. 24 October 2017.  
<<http://zenithcity.com/archive/parks-landmarks/leif-erikson-park/>>

Nelson, Nancy S., and Tony Dierckins. *Duluth's Historic Parks: Their First 160 Years*. Duluth, MN: Zenith City Press, 2017 . Print.

S2422 Hugh McKenzie photograph collection, Archives and Special Collections, Kathryn Martin Library, University of Minnesota Duluth

TIME magazine. (1961). [Ad] Duluth Public Library, Duluth Celebrations, Folk Festival. Duluth, MN.