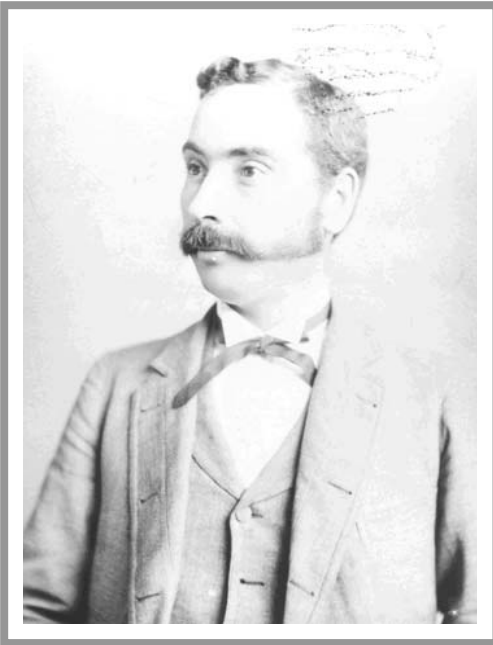


James T. Elwell – Como's founder



James Tallmadge Elwell (b. 1855) founded what we call the Como neighborhood in 1882, by purchasing a large tract of land on either side of the Como Road. He filed three residential plats with Minneapolis that year: Elwell's Addition (14th Ave to 18th Ave SE, from Como Ave. to Division Street, or East Hennepin Ave.); Elwell's Second Addition (from 10th to 14th Aves., from Como Ave. to Division Street and two blocks north of Division St.), and Elwell's Third Addition (south of Como Ave. to 8th St. SE, west of 14th Ave. SE). Elwell also bought land along each side of today's Stinson Boulevard, from East Hennepin Ave. to Broadway St., which was for many decades part of the Elwell Dairy Farm Inc., plus almost 53,000 acres of eastern Anoka County where he had two large stock farms.

James T. Elwell drained the marshland in his Additions to Minneapolis, laid out the streets and built 55 houses. Newly married in 1882, he built his own home at 903 SE 15th Ave. (now 1003 SE 15th Ave.) and led the establishment of the Como Avenue Congregational Church on 14th Ave. SE and Tuttle School (1883) at 14th and Talmadge Aves. SE. He failed to persuade the Minneapolis Park Board to buy land south of the church for the Second Ward Park, but he brought water, gas, telephone and horse-drawn streetcar lines to the new development.

Elwell was hard-hit by the financial Panic of 1893 and had to move his young family to the farms in Anoka County. He was elected to the state legislature from Anoka in 1899, and was able to return to Minneapolis in 1901, to a house at 945 SE 14th Ave. A Progressive-era Republican, Elwell was state senator from "the University District" from 1907 to 1915. Besides getting a large sum in 1909 for the University of Minnesota to expand beyond The Knoll area, as a Good Roads advocate, one of his lasting contributions was the 1911 passage of The Elwell Law, which set up the formula for funding street, road, and parkway construction and improvements and is still the basis for them today.



Upper photo of James T. Elwell from "Views Illustrating Farms and Lands Owned by James T. Elwell, Anoka County, Minnesota 1892": Minnesota Historical Society

Lower left photo of Como Congregational Church, also from James T. Elwell's album: Minnesota Historical Society (we believe this photo was printed in reverse)

Lower right photo of James & Lizzie Elwell's home at 945 SE 14th Ave. (was torn down or moved in 1969 to make room for an expansion of Van Cleve Park): 1914 or earlier, from Edwin S. Elwell Jr's collection

