For many of us outside the upper Midwest of the US, the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, conjure up the world of *A Prairie Home Companion* on National Public Radio. However, *Annals* readers might not be surprised to learn that Minneapolis was rated the Top Tech City in the US in 2005 by *Popular Science*! Minneapolis, St. Paul, and many surrounding suburbs are home to numerous high-tech start-ups doing groundbreaking work in hardware, software, and information technology services. St. Paul is the international headquarters of 3M, one of the world’s leading materials science corporations that also impacts the computer industry, from producing magnetic media to having invented Post-It notes—without which no software development team could carry out its work.

Careful readers will further remember that this high-tech presence has a deep history in the region. The Twin Cities’ role as the major industrial center in its region, as well as the site of the state university, caused it to be a mecca for inventors and entrepreneurs. (A non-high-tech example is Walter Deubner, inventor of the shopping bag, 1912.) A stroll just within the core University, Central, and Phillips neighborhoods of Minneapolis itself can point up some of the highlights, and suggest that for a concentration of computer history, Minneapolis can rival central New Jersey, the Silicon Valley, Route 128, or anywhere else in the world.

**Charles Babbage Institute**

Any computer history tour of Minneapolis should begin at the Charles Babbage Institute at the University of Minnesota, one of the world’s premier computer history archives. The Babbage is a research center of the university’s Institute of Technology that partners with the University Libraries. The institute is located in the Andersen Library at 222 21st Avenue South, on the university’s West Bank area, just southwest of the Mississippi River, and east of 35W, the main highway running north–south. Its collections include, among many other things, important corporate records, manuscript materials, and personal papers—several from Minneapolis itself. Before you leave the University campus, the Babbage staff can point you to the Shepherd Laboratories building across the river at 100 Union Street SE. It was there in 1991 that a team led by Mark McCahill (having already developed the pioneering POPmail program), wrote the Gopher Internet protocol.

**Control Data Corporation**

If you leave the campus and cross 35W, you arrive at the former site of probably the largest computer company in Minneapolis history—Control Data Corporation. CDC underwent a number of transformations and realignments over the years and subsequently moved to the suburb of Bloomington, but its original 1957 headquarters was right at 501 South Park Avenue. Formed by defectors from the ERA-Remington-Rand-Univac complex across the river in St. Paul (worth its own Local Area Networking column some day), it soon became a leader in the nascent computer industry. Perhaps most importantly, CDC produced the 6600—considered by many to be the first commercial supercomputer—under the leadership of University of Minnesota and ERA alumnus Seymour Cray (1925–1996).

The 6600 was designed around the corner at the Strutwear Building (a former knitting factory) at 1015 South 4th Street. Both these sites are now under parking lots of the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome, so the computer history tourist should take in a Twins or Viking game while there.

**Cray Research**

From here, you can head south toward the airport. In 1972, Cray left CDC to form Cray Research, which quickly became the industry leader in supercomputing. Although he moved the research lab to his hometown of Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, he kept his business office in Minneapolis, at an office complex just south of
the airport—first at 2950 Metro Drive and later at 7850 Metro Parkway. The Cray-1 computer, a technical and commercial success, is truly one of the milestones of computer history. Although there is not much to see there, it would not hurt to drive past if you were on the way to the nearby Mall of America, one of the great local tourist attractions.

**Honeywell**

On the way to the airport, you might also think about one last key player in early modern computing with Minneapolis roots—Honeywell. Although no longer in the business, it was an extremely important company, especially through Datamatic Corporation, its joint venture with Raytheon of Massachusetts. Among Datamatic's many accomplishments, the installation of its first mainframe, the D-1000, at Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Michigan marked a milestone in medical informatics. Honeywell can trace its Minneapolis roots to a thermo-electric regulator patented in 1885, and underwent many changes over the years. After a final set of corporate mergers and realignments in the 1970s and 1980s, it left Minneapolis in 1998 (it merged with Allied Signal and moved to New Jersey—see the previous LAN column in vol. 28, no. 1, pp. 104-105; http://doi.ieeecomputersociety.org/10.1109/MAHC.2006.1), and its campus was bought out by Wells Fargo. You can spot the campus just east of 35W where it crosses East 28th Street, although the original buildings are either not extant or renovated beyond recognition.

**The Bakken**

Finally, as you continue south, no high-tech history tour of Minneapolis is complete without a visit to The Bakken. Founded by Earl Bakken, developer of the transistorized pacemaker and founder of Medtronic, it is a library and museum dedicated to the history of electricity in the life sciences. Medtronic continues to be a major high-tech player in Minneapolis, and many of its contemporary bioengineering products do indeed contain microprocessors and other computer-related components. A detour west of 35W brings you to The Bakken. Although The Bakken focuses on earlier, pre-microprocessor developments, there is no harm in its wonderful history of the battery exhibit reminding us that without electrical engineering, there would be no computing and information technology!

Readers may contact Michael N. Geselowitz at m.geselowitz@ieee.org.