

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

*St. Paul's Biggest Party:
The Grand Army of the Republic's
1896 National Encampment*

Moira F. Harris and Leo J. Harris

—Page 13

Fall 2009

Volume 44, Number 3

The 1924 Junior World Series

The St. Paul Saints' Magnificent Comeback

Roger A. Godin

—Page 4



Saint Paul Saints first baseman Johnny Neun, right, dives toward a Baltimore Orioles runner in an attempt to tag him during one of the 1924 Junior World Series games played at Lexington Park. St. Paul Daily News photo, courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society. St. Paul Saints insignia reproduced by permission of the St. Paul Saints Baseball Club.

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RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 44, Number 3

Fall 2009

THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON DECEMBER 20, 2007:

The Ramsey County Historical Society inspires current and future generations to learn from and value their history by engaging in a diverse program of presenting, publishing and preserving.

CONTENTS

- 3 Letters
- 4 *The 1924 Junior World Series*
The Saint Paul Saints' Magnificent Comeback
Roger A. Godin
- 13 *St. Paul's Biggest Party*
The Grand Army of the Republic's
1896 National Encampment
Moira F. Harris and Leo J. Harris
- 21 *Growing Up in St. Paul*
The Mispacha on Texas Street
Nathalie Chase Bernstein
- 25 Book Reviews

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A Message from the Editorial Board

Last summer, St. Paul and Ramsey County hosted the Republican National Convention, which attracted national attention. Impressive as that event was, we may have forgotten other locally held, but nationally important gatherings held here. Our authors explore two of them in this issue. In 1924, the St. Paul Saints defeated a minor league rival, the Baltimore Orioles, to win the Junior World Series at Lexington Park at Lexington and University Avenues. Roger Godin guides us through the story of the series and the excitement it created. In 1896, St. Paul welcomed about 150,000 Civil War veterans and other visitors for the National Encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic, an enormously popular group with considerable political influence. Moira and Leo Harris recount the festivities, which included the display of an enormous "living flag" outside the then under-construction Landmark Center. On a smaller scale, we share Nathalie Chase Bernstein's warm story of growing up in the 1930s Jewish community of St. Paul's West Side. P.S. Don't forget, a membership to RCHS (including, of course, this nationally award-winning magazine) is a great holiday gift idea!

Anne Cowie, Chair, Editorial Board

Book Reviews

Three Bold Ventures: The History of North Oaks, Minnesota

Joan C. Brainard
and Richard E. Leonard
North Oaks, Minn.: Hill Farm Historical
Society and Beaver's Pond Press,
2007

229 pages; \$39.95

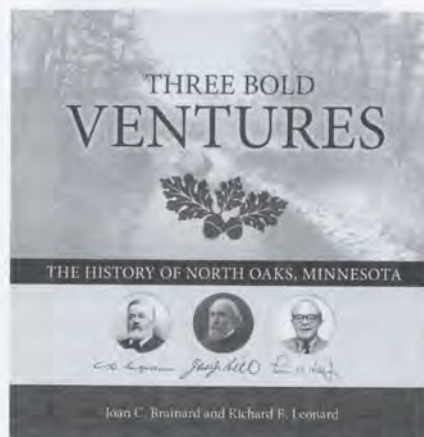
Reviewed by Anne Cowie

A pioneer's efforts to ensure a city's water supply; an industrialist's creation of a massive hobby farm; and an early planned suburban development: authors Joan C. Brainard and Richard E. Leonard document the history of the present-day community of North Oaks and show how it reflects all three of these "three bold ventures."

The first, short chapter in the book deals with Charles Gilfillan's purchase of 3,000 acres surrounding four lakes north of St. Paul in 1876, with the intent of giving the water rights to the city of St. Paul. Gilfillan recognized the acute need of a clean supply of water for the young city, which was growing rapidly. Phelan Creek, the original water supply, was inadequate; efforts to tap White Bear Lake became politically problematic. When Gilfillan bought the new acreage, a system of canals and conduits was built, allowing clean water to flow to the thirsty city. With a hookup to the Mississippi River, the system begun by Gilfillan still supplies water to St. Paul.

The second "bold venture" began when James J. Hill, the railroad indus-

trialist, bought the land from Gilfillan in 1883 and added additional acreage. Hill built over thirty buildings on the land and started a venture to interbreed cattle imported from England and Scotland, with the goal of producing cattle



that would provide both milk and beef. Hill, ever the innovator, sought to distribute these cattle to immigrant farmers who settled along his Great Northern Railroad. Although Hill's farming venture was not a commercial success, North Oaks Farm proved to be a happy retreat for Hill and his family. Hill's second son, Louis W. Hill Sr., though less interested in scientific farming than his father had been, continued the tradition of the "gentleman farmer" at North Oaks and built a striking Swiss chalet on the eastern shore of Pleasant Lake.

In 1950, Louis W. Hill Jr., James J. Hill's grandson, who was interested in conservation, announced the beginning of the third "bold venture": a

planned suburban development that would provide a scenic living environment within commuting distance of the Twin Cities. By this time, the automobile had become a middle-class necessity, and better roads made it possible for more people with city jobs to live further out and secure the benefits of rural life. The North Oaks Company sold lots to homeowners, who were able to enjoy the countryside's woods and lakes, as well as a golf course, tennis courts, and even a ski hill.

It is here that the history of North Oaks, while less romantically compelling, becomes even more valuable for urban historians and those wishing to study the growth of local suburbs. The authors note the incorporation of the city of North Oaks, the advent of police and fire protection, and the unique governing relationship between city government, the North Oaks Homeowners Association, and the North Oaks Company. As in all communities, the political history played out against a cultural backdrop of schools, recreation, and civic organizations such as the League of Women Voters.

This history provides a thorough, accurate model for other communities to explore and document their origins and development. While North Oaks has unique and colorful roots, every local community has a history to tell, and more histories like this would be welcome additions to Ramsey County bookshelves.

Anne Cowie is a member of the RCHS Board of Directors and chairs the Society's Editorial Board.

*"My heart it is delicious":
Setting the Course for Cross-
Cultural Health Care:
The Story of the Center for
International Health*

Biloine W. Young
Afton, Minn.: Afton Historical Society
Press, 2008
193 pages, \$35.00
Reviewed by Tim Rumsey

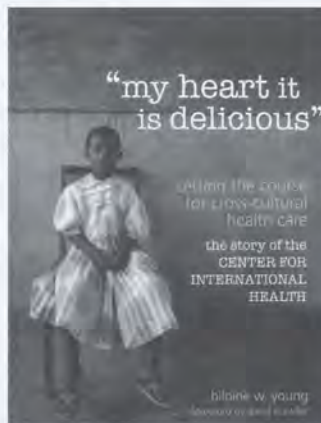
My heart it is delicious is a book you actually can judge by its cover. Beautiful and powerful. *My heart* is another winner from RCHS-member and author Biloine (Billie) Young and the Afton Historical Society Press. The book's twelve chapters alternate between recounting the nearly thirty-year evolution of Saint Paul's International Clinic to the Center for International Health (CIH) with telling the inspiring stories of hardship and loss of the Center's patients-refugees and immigrants from Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Russia, and Somalia.

By 1980, 100,000 Hmong refugees had relocated to Minnesota, most of them in the Twin Cities. The newly formed International Clinic at Saint Paul Ramsey Hospital was swamped. Its director, Dr. Neal Holtan, a medical veteran of Thai-Cambodian refugee camps in the late 1970s, attributes the success that the medical staff has had in dealing with the onslaught of refugees to the ability of the clinic's native-born interpreters. Not just for translation, but for brokering cultural compromise and understanding. The clinic's Western physicians and nurses in those days were often operating far outside their comfort zones with these new-American patients who, one clinic MD said, "came straight out of the seventeenth century." As author Young writes, "cultural humility was an early lesson for Holtan and his staff in the evolving discipline of cross-cultural medicine."

In 1988, Dr. Patricia Walker, a Thai-refugee camp graduate with Holtan and also the author's physician, became director of the International Clinic. Walker has led the clinic since and brought it

to the nationally recognized Center for International Health, now part of Health Partners Midway Clinic.

The most compelling stories in *My heart* come from CIH patients—those courageous immigrants and refugees whom, as Garrison Keillor is quoted as saying, "if we knew their stories, we could not keep back the tears." For example: two fatherless Cambodian children surviving months in the jungle and years in refugee camps be-



fore coming to the U.S.; a ten-year-old Vietnamese girl whose entire family was killed in their home while she hid in the next room; and scores of other refugees who "managed to stay alive throughout nearly a decade of starvation, slaughter, landmines, and civil war." Stories, as one Center patient said, "of much sadness."

Billie Young's own life experiences—seven years in Central America, trustee of Regions Hospital, and well-versed author, make her more than qualified for *My heart it is delicious*. The wonderful title comes from a grateful Russian cardiac patient who made that proclamation to Dr. Pat Walker. Over 100 photographs populate *My heart*. Many very moving; others simple year-book-style headshots that at least give due credit to the physicians, support staff, and patients integral to CIH's success. The book itself is another quality Afton Press work, which is to say it reads well, looks good, and even smells good. It also has the interesting distinction of including a foreword, preface,

introduction, and prologue.

My heart is a stunning book. And delicious as well.

Tim Rumsey is a RCHS member and has been a family physician on St. Paul's W. 7th Street for 32 years.

The St. Paul Conspiracy

Roger Stelljes
St. Cloud, Minn.: North Star Press of
St. Cloud
320 pages, \$24.95
Reviewed by Robert F. Garland

The St. Paul Conspiracy by local author Roger Stelljes, a practicing lawyer, gets a thoroughly deserved "Well Done" from this reviewer. The book has all the right ingredients, with interesting and believable characters, a clever and intricate plot, and a real feeling of the parts of the city of St. Paul in which it is set.

Lead protagonist Detective Michael "Mac" McRyan and his varied St. Paul Police colleagues show the reader the hard side of police work, reminding us that much of it is done by imperfect but diligent officers who are often dead tired and don't yet fully understand what is going on. Stelljes also shows us that crime detection involves a great deal of boredom and careful watching and waiting before any action occurs. The assorted other main characters working with and against the police are equally intriguing, and when appropriate the author fills his scenes with lesser characters in a very realistic manner.

The reviewer of a mystery-detective story must not say too much about the plot, but this one ingeniously combines several strands of events and takes the reader in more than one unexpected direction. What at first may seem to be discrete and unconnected circumstances appear to come together as the result of thorough police work, but there is plenty of room for the reader to form his or her own suspicions as to what is actually happening.

Readers of *Ramsey County History* will enjoy the action that swirls through Downtown, Crocus Hill, and University

Avenue, with appropriate side trips to Highland Park, Stillwater, Minnetonka, and Hudson, Wisconsin. Stelljes does an especially good job evoking the dark streets, narrow alleys, and old buildings of the eastern Summit Avenue/Grand Avenue area, and the gritty reality of nights on University Avenue. He strikes the right balance between fact and imag-



ination, and his description of two or three bars in which important things take place is also most convincing. When setting their stories in real locations, all authors face the question of place names. I thought Stelljes made good choices here, keeping some and changing a few others, giving the reader a chuckle or two in the process. Recent city planners of downtown St. Paul have not been easy on authors with the myriad of one-way streets, dead ends, and other changes, but Stelljes handles these well as the violent action roars through downtown St. Paul in the exciting climax.

This is not a “cozy book,” but the degree of raw language, violence, and intimate scenes seems about right and adds realism. His characters say and do things that fit the story.

I am now looking forward to another book from Roger Stelljes and I think others who read *The St. Paul Conspiracy* would then do the same.

Robert F. Garland is a St. Paul resident who is himself an author of several mysteries, some of which are set in St. Paul. He is also a former member of the Society's board of directors.

*Crusaders for Justice:
A Chronicle of Protests by
Agitators, Advocates and
Activists in Their Struggle for
Civil and Human Rights in St.
Paul, Minnesota, 1802–1985*

Arthur C. McWatt

St. Paul: St. Paul Branch of the NAACP
with assistance from Papyrus Publish-
ing, 2009

236 pages, \$18.99

Reviewed by John M. Lindley

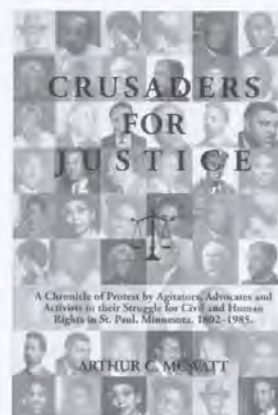
Arthur McWatt has written an important account of St. Paul in his book *Crusaders for Justice*. His focus is on the struggle for civil and human rights in St. Paul from 1802 to 1985. Some of the incidents that McWatt recounts, such as the struggles of African Americans George Bonda, James Thompson, and Robert T. Hickman in nineteenth-century St. Paul or the unselfish efforts of men such as Fredrick L. McGhee, William T. Francis, Roy Wilkins, and Whitney Young in the twentieth-century, have been told well by other writers and are generally acknowledged as central to our state's history of race relations. While all of these men are present in *Crusaders for Justice*, McWatt departs in a major way from this well-trodden path in his accounts of lesser-known leaders in the struggle for civil rights in Minnesota's capital city.

McWatt explains in his Introduction that the idea for writing his history came from the many hours he spent mining St. Paul's African-American weekly newspapers for their reports on instances of racism, discrimination, and other rights violations in the city. His goal was “to chronicle the struggles of these crusaders and champions from St. Paul in the hope that future generations might learn from what had transpired” (p. xi). In addition, McWatt believes that St. Paul over the years “has often been the training ground for civil rights leaders throughout the nation, many of whom learned their crafts here” (p. 219).

A graduate of the University of Minnesota, McWatt spent thirty-three years

teaching history in St. Paul's Marshall Junior High and Johnson Senior High schools. He was the fifth African-American teacher to be hired by the St. Paul school district. He and his wife, Katie, have been influential leaders in the fight for civil rights in St. Paul over many years. They both served the St. Paul community through participation on various interracial committees and commissions, the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and working for the St. Paul chapter of the Urban League.

Crusaders for Justice is more than a history that brings into sharp light the important contributions of people such as Fr. Stephen L. Theobald, Cecil Newman, Rev. Francis J. Gilligan, Rev. Denzil Carty, Estyr Peake, Josie Johnson, James S. Griffin, and the Rev. James Battle,



among many others. The book also has a short section called “Family Heritage Vignette” located between chapters in three places. These vignettes summarize the McWatt family history and strengthen our awareness of how intimately their family story is intertwined with the larger civil rights history. This book is a testament to the faith that Arthur and Katie McWatt have demonstrated over the years in the efficacy of public activism and protest on behalf of human and civil rights. Anyone who is interested in how St. Paul has changed for the better in its human relations will want to read this insightful history.

John M. Lindley is the editor of Ramsey County History.

R.C.H.S.

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The cover of the Official Program for the 30th National Encampment of the G.A.R. in St. Paul in 1896, left, and a Delegate Badge from that convention. The five-pointed star and the "Delegate" bar above the eagle were made of Minnesota copper. The program image is courtesy of the Ramsey County Historical Society. The badge is from the Albert Scheffer family archives, photo courtesy of Moira F. Harris and Leo J. Harris. For more on the G.A.R. encampment in St. Paul, see the article on page 13.