

RAMSEY COUNTY
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**The 'Fighting Saint' —
The *U.S.S. St. Paul* and Its Minnesota Connection** *Page 4*



Women from the Yokosuka, Japan, Folk Dance Association perform Japanese folk dances for U. S. S. St. Paul crewmembers as the heavy cruiser prepares to leave Yokosuka for the United States on July 6, 1962. See article beginning on page 4.

D-Day Remembered By Seven Who Were There

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RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

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A Message from the Editorial Board

The Ramsey County Historical Society recently lost a loyal and long-time supporter when Lester B. LeVesconte, a grandson of Heman and Jane Gibbs, died in Illinois. In 1849 the Gibbs family established the pioneer farmstead that today we know as the Gibbs Farm Museum. Lester LeVesconte, whose mother was the Gibbs's daughter, Lillie, was instrumental in working out in 1949 the arrangements by which the Gibbs farm became a museum under the auspices of the Ramsey County Historical Society.

The Society's debt to Lester LeVesconte extends beyond the Gibbs Farm Museum because over many years Mr. LeVesconte actively promoted the publication of historical material about the Gibbs family and Ramsey County. Thus he helped support financially the Society's publication of his mother's book, *Little Bird That Was Caught*, about Jane Gibbs's experiences as a young pioneer in the wilderness that became Minnesota. His advocacy of the publication of Ram-



Lester LeVesconte

sey County history extended to the Society's broader plans, which included this quarterly magazine, *Ramsey County History*.

We honor Lester LeVesconte's memory and his many contributions to the Ramsey County Historical Society. We are inspired by his example and his vision for history.

—John M. Lindley, chairman,
Editorial Board

Books, Etc.

Where the Doors Never Close The Story of St. Paul's Union Gospel Mission

Virginia Brainard Kunz
St. Paul: The Union Gospel
Mission, 1993

Reviewed by Thomas H. Boyd

Everyone has a story to tell, and most of us need help to tell it. During three decades, through her long tenure as executive director of the Ramsey County Historical Society, her continued service as editor of *Ramsey County History*, twelve books and innumerable articles, Virginia Kunz has helped the residents of Ramsey County tell our story.

In her most recent work, *Where the Doors Never Close—The Story of Saint Paul's Union Gospel Mission*, Kunz has once again revealed an important part of Ramsey County's rich and wonderful history. In this instance, she writes about the Union Gospel Mission that has been serving Ramsey County's diverse communities for nearly a century. This is a wonderful story about a wonderful organization that has had a profound impact on St. Paul.

During the middle to latter part of the nineteenth century, St. Paul, like many cities that literally exploded in population, struggled to deal with poverty, disease, crime and other social ills that ran rampant in major urban areas throughout the country. In St. Paul, as throughout America, liquor and alcoholism were linked as the cause of these social problems. Correspondingly, in St. Paul, again as throughout America, temperance and "old time religion" were viewed as the cure.

When it was founded in 1902, the Union Gospel Mission's constituency



A young Peter MacFarlane with "Mother" Morrison. Union Gospel Mission photo from the book.

was the poor and the transient. The Mission opened its doors to the poor in the Lowertown neighborhood, as well as to the laborers who arrived at the railroad station after traveling "side door Pullman." Almost immediately, the Mission was overwhelmed by desperate, tired and hungry men. The Mission gave the men food, facilities to bathe themselves and fumigate their clothes and a dry, warm place to sleep. The only thing asked of these men in return was to attend religious services.

The Mission was supported by the leaders of the community, and others, who felt that helping others was their personal responsibility. Some dedicated their money, while others dedicated their lives. One of the best examples of this dedication was a woman known as "Mother Morrison," a former nurse who devoted fifty years to mission work.

When she retired in early 1910, she was given "... a note of thanks and appreciation. . . for her work and a check for \$15. . . to defray her car fare and other travel expenses."

"Soup, soap and salvation" was the battle cry of Peter MacFarlane, superintendent of the Union Gospel Mission for more than forty years. His energy, vision and faith transformed the Mission into one of Ramsey County's most important providers of social services during the Great Depression of the 1930s, and on into the difficult 1940s and 1950s.

His son, John, said of MacFarlane that he was "the most thoroughly converted man I have ever known," that love of his fellow man was inspired by his love of God. As Peter MacFarlane's life and service shine out through these pages, the words of Kipling truly seem to have applied to him: he could "walk with kings—nor lose the common touch." His enthusiasm and optimism continued even through his final days when on his hospital bed he pointed upward and admonished his doctor to "keep looking up."

In time, the Mission's work expanded beyond poor men to serve women and children as well. Boys' and Girls' Clubs were organized. The Mission acquired Ma Barker's infamous dance hall and roadhouse, "Paradise Park," to create the Snail Lake Camp that provided children and young people alike with a break from the negative influences of urban poverty.

MacFarlane's passing in 1958 truly represented the end of an era, but the Mission continued under the leaderships of Harold Mordh, who succeeded MacFarlane, and George Verley, the present superintendent. They faced and solved problems unknown in MacFarlane's time: the encroachment of the newly-

constructed Interstate I-94 that took most of the land surrounding the Mission's Ober Boys' Club; the renewal programs that changed the physical and demographic character of downtown and the West Side and destroyed the neighborhoods whose people the Mission traditionally served; the Mission's forced move out of Lowertown and its agonizing search for a new site before finally coming to rest in Lafayette Park; and the need for expanded facilities as problems of chemical dependency, violence and homelessness exploded during the 1970s and 1980s.

The author describes how the Union Gospel Mission confronted these issues and still continued its work as a vital agency meeting the needs of a changing community. She writes of the Mission's creative approach to change in the purchase a year ago of the former Capp Towers, an eight-story hotel in downtown St. Paul. Renamed the Naomi Family Center, the hotel has been transformed into a shelter for homeless and low-income women and their children.

Inevitably, challenges will continue to face the Union Gospel Mission as it moves into its second century. Its history suggests, however, that devotion to the needy and help for the poor will remain an integral part of the Mission's primary purpose as it continues to serve as a spiritual healer of "lost" souls.

Thomas H. Boyd is a St. Paul attorney and a frequent contributor to Ramsey County History.

The Spirit of St. Louis

Charles A. Lindbergh
With a new introduction
by Reeve Lindbergh
St. Paul: Minnesota Historical
Society, 1993

Reviewed by John M. Lindley

Originally published in 1953 by Charles Scribner's Sons, Charles A. Lindbergh's *The Spirit of St. Louis* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1954. I first read the book nearly twenty years ago in tandem with *We*, Lindbergh's other book

about his historic New York-to-Paris flight.

Unlike *We*, which Lindbergh states was hastily written, *The Spirit of St. Louis* reflects not only Lindbergh's patient and detailed research into the facts of his May 20-21, 1927, flight to Le Bourget airfield, but also his mature thinking on aviation and his own life, developed over the fourteen years he spent writing this book. Now the Minnesota Historical Society has brought out a new Borealis edition of *The Spirit of St. Louis* with a disappointingly brief (only four pages) introduction by Reeve Lindbergh, the daughter of Charles and Anne Morrow Lindbergh. Reeve Lindbergh points out accurately that *The Spirit of St. Louis* "was a celebration of the beginnings of aviation as a profession, for my father and for others, and an acknowledgment of its coming of age."

Aviation did, indeed, come of age in 1927 with Lindbergh's trans-Atlantic flight, but *The Spirit of St. Louis* also celebrates Lindbergh's own spiritual coming of age in the autobiographical flashbacks and the philosophical discussions that are scattered throughout its length. The book also can be read simply as an expanded and more detailed account of Lindbergh's planning of his flight, the trials of the flight itself and his heroic triumph over these obstacles upon his arrival in Europe.

To grasp the enormity of what Charles Lindbergh accomplished, the reader must have some familiarity with Lindbergh's youth and early flying experiences. Lindbergh also summarizes the intense efforts of other fliers who preceded him as pioneers in the field and sought to be the first across the Atlantic. Because men like Nungesser and Coli had died only a short time before Lindbergh's historic flight in a failed attempt to cross the Atlantic, Lindbergh's achievement stands out in even greater profile.

The Spirit of St. Louis also celebrates the spirit of those who backed Lindbergh financially and technically in the construction of his single-engine Ryan monoplane and morally in their endorsement and support for him as a person who

would attempt such a remarkable feat. Reading this autobiography in the 1990s with the aid of hindsight resulting from NASA's Apollo moon landings of the 1960s and 1970s, the routine availability today of supersonic passenger flights across the Atlantic and the sophisticated navigational and electronic gear that pilots currently depend upon for everyday flights, Lindbergh's single-handed calculation of how to make his flight is extraordinary.

This book in that sense witnesses to his spirit, his courage and his uncompromising willingness to sacrifice anything (his own money, possible safety gear, food, comfort and the like) that might in the smallest way impede his chance of completing the flight. Lindbergh's concentration on the planning for the Atlantic crossing and his willingness to forego any tangential material goods to maximize the possibility of success has a spiritual quality not often associated with heroes of the present day.

Charles Lindbergh was born in Detroit, but as the son of a Minnesota congressman, he grew up in Little Falls and Washington, D. C. He spent two years as a student of mechanical engineering at the University of Wisconsin, but dropped out in 1922 to learn to fly. Once he'd soloed, Lindbergh did what a lot of other pilots of that era did. He bought a surplus World War I plane and supported himself with barnstorming flights all over the Midwest and South.

In 1924 he entered the United States Army flight school in Texas and a year later, after a rigorous course of training, graduated at the top of his class with a commission as a second lieutenant in the Air Service Reserve. When barnstorming took him to St. Louis in 1926, he became an airmail pilot on the St. Louis-Chicago route. During this time, Lindbergh conceived his plan for the New York-to-Paris flight and found financial backers in St. Louis who helped him buy the plane he called "The Spirit of St. Louis."

Lindbergh's autobiographical focus in this book ends with his spectacular landing in Paris. There is no mention of his subsequent marriage to Anne Spencer

Morrow, daughter of Dwight Morrow, the American ambassador to Mexico, or the famous kidnapping of their two-year-old son in 1932, or Lindbergh's isolationist views of the late 1930s. None of this is part of *The Spirit of St. Louis*; yet few readers today can totally disassociate the twenty-five-year-old Army captain of 1927 from the celebrity he became after his trans-Atlantic crossing.

Lindbergh was no Horatio Alger whose hard work in combination with the good chance of being in the right place at the right time inevitably won him success, wealth and fame. In this sense, Charles Lindbergh was a true descendant of those Midwestern pioneers who carved out their futures in a new land by dint of their inner drive and self-confidence in their ability to endure hardship while gaining success in the world.

John M. Lindley is chairman of the Editorial Board for Ramsey County History and has written and published in the field of aviation. He is manager of the College and General Publications Department at West Publishing Company, St. Paul.

Harlem Renaissance from page 13

"it was an age of miracles, it was an age of art, it was an age of excess, and it was an age of satire" that, in the wake of the failed politics that had produced World War I, echoed in the youthful spirit of the Big Party, the Carnival and the Orgy.

Looking to New York as eagerly as fellow Midwesterner Langston Hughes, a cadre of young black Minnesotans found themselves caught up at various levels in the social and creative whirl of the time. Anna Arnold Hedgeman, reared in Anoka but ultimately Harlem-bound herself, had graduated from high school in 1918 and become Hamline University's first African American student when she heard W. E. B. DuBois, on an NAACP speaking tour, lecture at a St. Paul church. She was enthralled with his account of international black leaders at the first Pan-African Congress he had helped orchestrate recently in Paris.

Homer Smith, a journalism graduate of the University of Minnesota, would find himself drawn East and then abroad with Langston Hughes, Dorothy West, Henry

D-Day Remembered By Seven Who Were There

D-Day from page 12

some of the split pea soup being served from a big round black iron pot located in the center of the very little open space on the deck. I'm not sure I should blame the cooks, but not many of us were willing to try the open-pot menu after the first hour of pitching around on the choppy Channel.

We had started out in good faith, planning to land in Normandy on June 5, after joining other landing craft, when suddenly new instructions came that the landings had been postponed and our boat would be held in the pattern for an extra day. Ours not to question why. Ours to follow orders. There were planes overhead, but so high that we could only tell that they were, not

Moon, Taylor Gordon and other young renaissance exponents on a 1932 film-making venture to Soviet Russia. Smith would subsequently live an expatriate life there for fourteen years.

Ethel Ray Nance, born in Duluth and matured by jobs for the Minnesota State Relief Commission and the Minnesota House of Representatives, went to work for the National Urban League in the mid-1920s and became one of *Opportunity* magazine editor Charles S. Johnson's closest aides. She helped him develop the literary contests and social gatherings that provided the central facets of the Harlem Renaissance milieu.

And Taylor Gordon, a Montana-born concert singer and gadfly who had spent some of his early years as a St. Paul chauffeur and railroad car attendant, went on to tour internationally with J. Rosamund Johnson. Gordon published in 1929—before going on the Russian journey with Hughes and Company—one of the most colorful autobiographies of the renaissance era, *Born to Be*.

Dr. John S. Wright is a professor in the University of Minnesota's Department of Afro-American & African Studies and in the University's English Department.

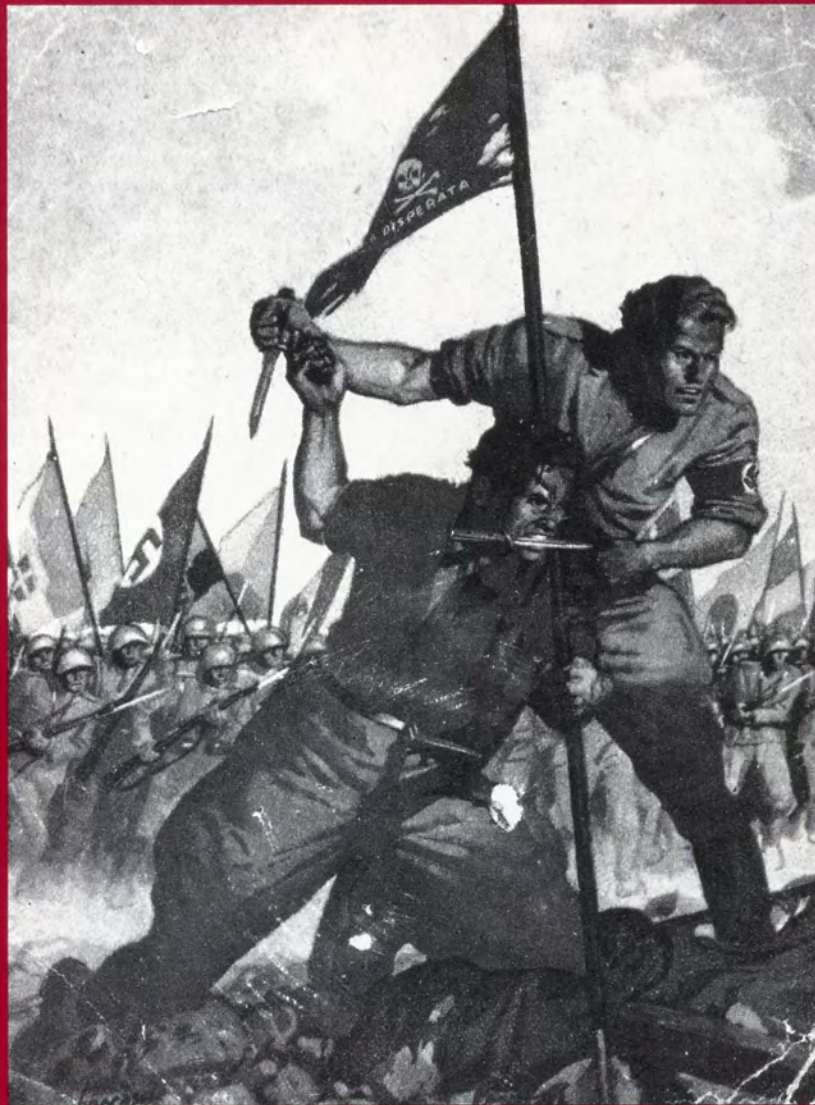
whose they were. We were surprised that no bombs were on the day's program.

About 6:30 p.m. we found out what the words "ready reserve" meant in Army jargon. These "ready reserves" (including us) were to be available to be thrown in at any point of the action where it was felt we could move things along faster. We were all to go ashore as quickly as possible and



Arlo H. Knowles in uniform and recently.





A German propaganda card given to Russell W. Anderson by a German soldier taken prisoner during the Normandy landings. "He was a nice guy," Anderson remembers. See the article beginning on Page 9: "D-Day Remembered by Seven Who Were There."

R.C.H.S.
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