

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

Crex Carpet
Company Revisited

Page 18

Summer 2006

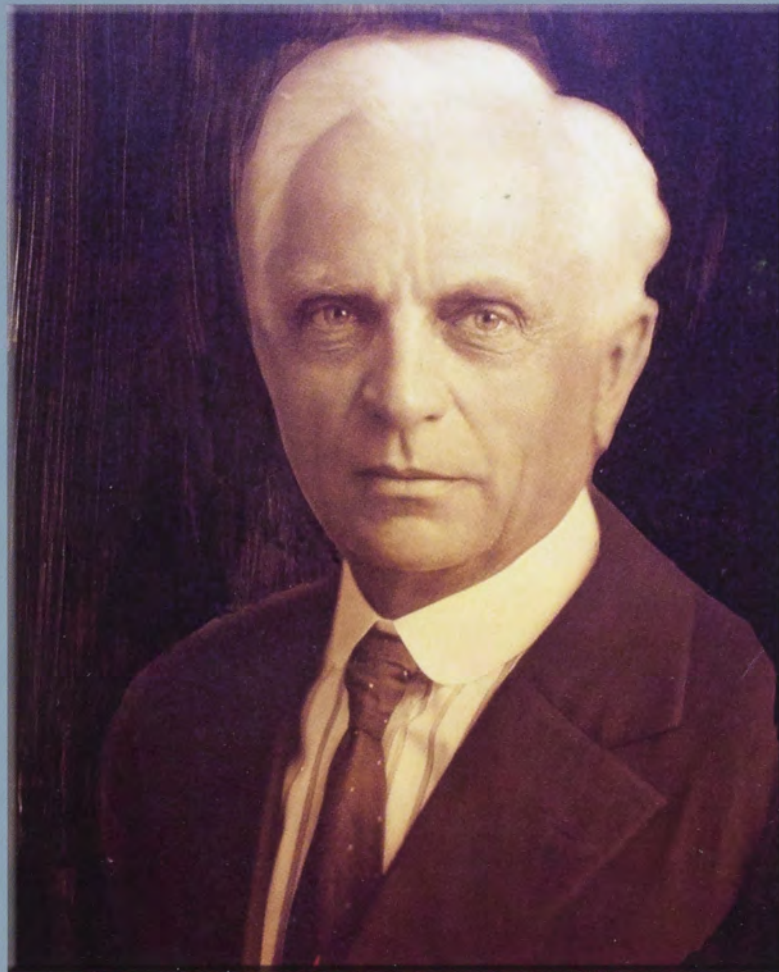
Volume 41, Number 2

“He Was Mechanic Arts”

Mechanic Arts High School

The Dietrich Lange Years, 1916-1939

—Page 4



A hand-tinted portrait of Dietrich Lange, who served as principal of Mechanic Arts High School between 1916 and 1939. Photo courtesy of John W. Mittelstadt. Photography by Maureen McGinn.

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RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 41, Number 2

Summer 2006

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The Ramsey County Historical Society shall discover, collect,
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recreate the historical context in which we live and work, and make
available the historical resources of the county. The Society's major
responsibility is its stewardship over this history.

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and by a contribution from the late Reuel D. Harmon

A Message from the Editorial Board

Good historical research and writing ultimately reveals the stories of people
from a new perspective. In his history of diverse Mechanics Arts High School,
John W. Larson shares his insights on the influence of a committed principal and En-
glish teachers on the later careers of graduates, including Roy Wilkins and Harry Black-
mun. Paul D. Nelson shows how his earlier article on the Crex Carpet Company led to
a new discovery: memoirs of the company's first president, Michael J. O'Shaughnessy.
And Paul Picard outlines the story of Billy Miske, a St. Paul boxer who took on Jack
Dempsey in 1920 despite an illness that would soon take his life. We are proud to help
preserve accounts like these, which otherwise would go unrecognized, and showcase
them for our wider member audience. As you hold this magazine, you are in a unique
position to read these stories: share the wealth and recruit a new member today!

Anne Cowie,
Chair, Editorial Board

“He Was Mechanic Arts”

Mechanic Arts High School: The Dietrich Lange Years, 1916–1939

John W. Larson

The building is long gone. Its name has been stricken from the St. Paul school district's records. Central Park where the kids hung out during lunch break is now a parking ramp. Even the name “Central Avenue” has been changed, at least twice. Nevertheless Mechanic Arts High School (MAHS) refuses to fade away. Its letter club continues to hold annual banquets and my own class of 1941 will have its sixty-fifth reunion this year. Why? What's so special about Mechanic Arts?

While still sitting on the United States Supreme Court in February 1992, Harry Blackmun wrote to me about Mechanic Arts saying, in part, “It was my school, too, for I graduated there in 1925. Its diversity and the excellence of its faculty were matters of great strength.” Perhaps these qualities explain why the school survives in our memories. That's how Civil Rights leader Roy Wilkins who graduated from Mechanics Arts in 1919 remembered the school. Excellent teachers and diversity were highlights of his high school years as he described them in *Standing Fast*, his autobiography.

Roy Wilkins was the same age as my father. Both were born in 1901. Roy was raised by his aunt and uncle, Elizabeth and Sam Williams, in a Rice Street neighborhood very much like the one in which my father and I grew up. It consisted mostly of hardworking Swedes, Norwegians, Poles, Germans, and Irish, all first- or second-generation immigrants, and four black families. Except for the Irish, the heads of most white families were still struggling to learn English.

A Swedish family, the Hendricksons, lived next door to the Williams. When Mrs. Hendrickson had an English letter to read or write she came for help to Roy's Aunt Elizabeth. Later Roy wrote, “Mrs. Hendrickson treated me as one of her own sons. There were times when she smiled

and hugged me, but whenever I got out of line, she aimed a torrent of Swedish at my ears and a hard swat at my backside.”

Roy graduated from the eighth grade at Whittier Grammar School in June of 1915. That fall he went on to Mechanic Arts High School. Fourteen years old, he signed up for the most difficult course available, pre-engineering. Later he was no longer sure why. He was indebted to an English teacher, Miss Mary E. Copley, for starting him out on a path better suited to his special gifts.

Mary Copley was born in St. Paul in 1884. She grew up at a time when teaching was one of the few professions open to young women. During her long career as an English teacher, she was exemplary of a cadre of well-educated daughters of better-off families who provided stability and quality to the Mechanic Arts teaching staff during a half century of change in secondary education.

Mary grew up in the home of her maternal grandfather Robert Armstrong Smith at 312 Summit Avenue, still the oldest house on the hill. Smith, a law graduate from the University of Indiana, arrived in Minnesota Territory in 1853. He filled a number of territorial and county offices before serving as St. Paul's mayor for several terms between 1888 and 1908. As the granddaughter of the popular mayor, Mary shared her childhood with the chil-



Roy Wilkins, a graduating senior, as he appeared in the June 1919 issue of the Mechanic Arts publication the M.

dren of St. Paul's prominent families. After graduating from St. Paul's old Central High School at Minnesota and Tenth in 1902, she attended the University of Minnesota and was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1906. Her adult years were spent helping to prepare less advantaged children, often children of recent immigrants so they might take full advantage of life's opportunities.

When Roy Wilkins first encountered Miss Copley in 1915 she was his freshman English teacher, in her early thirties, and had been teaching at MAHS since 1910. He remembered her as “a tall, plump woman who wore long dresses that nearly touched the floor.” After Roy turned in his first composition, Miss



The hand-tinted portrait of Lange on the cover is the same picture that appears here. The tinted version came from John Mittelstadt, Lange's grandson. This black and white photograph came from the Minnesota Historical Society. Lee Studios is said to have been the original photographer. Perhaps so, but the estimated date of the photograph as provided there, i.e. ca. 1935, should certainly be somewhat earlier. The same portrait appears in the May 1933 issue of the M that celebrated Lange's 70th birthday. All photos are courtesy of John W. Mittelstadt unless otherwise indicated.

Copley asked him to stop at her desk when class was over, a request that normally meant bad news. When he stopped, she looked up, studied him briefly and said, "You have ability, Roy. You must develop your writing skills." It was the beginning, Roy later recalled, of the end of his engineering plans and the birth of a new thirst for books and writing. In the decades to come, the prominent civil rights leader never stopped in St. Paul without a visit with Miss Copley.

Dietrich Lange Becomes Principal

Roy Wilkins was still a freshman in the early spring of 1916 when Mechanic Arts said a sorrowful goodbye to its founder, George Weitbrecht. Dietrich Lange, who succeeded Weitbrecht as school principal in September 1916, was born of Johan Peter Dietrich Lange and Marie Dorothea Katharina (Ahrens) on June 2, 1863, in what was then the German Kingdom of

Hanover. The baby was baptized "Johan Dietrich" but growing up, he preferred to be called Dietrich. Eventually he abandoned Johan along with a great deal more of his old world patrimony.

Dietrich's father, an archconservative Lutheran clergyman, was trained in a seminary at Hermansburg near Hanover, for missionary work abroad. He enrolled his son in the seminary's school for boys. Its classical curriculum emphasized history, Latin, Greek, and modern languages. But already as a boy, Dietrich, not unlike the American naturalist Henry David Thoreau, preferred observing nature.

The school at Hermansburg was on the edge of a vast uncultivated area of sandy soil, the Lueneburger Heide. The Heide was a dreary place for some, but not for young Dietrich. During vacations he tended cattle that grazed on the coarse moor grass. He learned to identify heath birds, the grouse and the thrush, and others, and to recognize the berry bearing shrubs on which the birds fed. He also learned the names and seasons of the flowers, in particular the small purple flower of the heather, which when blooming, laid a carpet of purple that stretched over the level landscape to the far off horizon. And as a boy, Dietrich already knew that the nectar of the heather provided nutrients from which honeybees produced the much loved heather honey. The Heide was the beginning of Dietrich's life-long fascination with the natural world.

Hermansburg Seminary authorities expected their graduates to become foreign missionaries. Dietrich's father was obliged to go abroad when his studies were over. Accordingly, in 1881, he could choose a post in Africa, India, or North America. Johan Peter chose to emigrate to Minnesota, then considered a foreign mission field. Eighteen years old in 1881, with no clear vision for his future, Dietrich emigrated with his parents to Nicollet County in southern Minnesota, an area settled by many German immigrants.

When Reverend Lange accepted a call to become pastor of a church west of Nicollet, at Springfield in Brown County and not far from New Ulm, young Dietrich stayed behind. He was employed as a teacher of German in a log cabin schoolhouse belonging to Nicollet's German

Lutheran church. Decades later, Dietrich wrote that he had never been close to his father. They had always seen life differently. The difference was never more apparent than when, on a hot summer day in 1883, Dietrich walked the twenty miles from Nicollet to Mankato and enrolled there in Mankato Normal School. Dietrich later considered this event the beginning of his life in the "New World," more so than his arrival two years earlier at Nicollet. Mankato Normal was new country for Dietrich in yet another sense. For him it was a hitherto unexplored world of open discussion, scientific inquiry and the liberal arts.

Lange's years at Mankato Normal (today's University of Minnesota-Mankato), 1883-1886, prepared him for his life-long career in education and fueled his unquenchable curiosity concerning the natural world. In 1887 he moved to St. Paul and established himself as a grade-school teacher. He remained within St. Paul's public school system for the remainder of his long life. In September 1888, he married a former student from the Nicollet parochial school, Hulda Freitag. Then, a year later, in September 1889, he joined the teaching staff at St. Paul's Central High School.



Lange was forty years old, was teaching German at St. Paul's old Central High School, and was Supervisor of Nature Study for St. Paul Schools, when this photo was taken in 1903.



The Silver Island of the Chippewa, published in 1913, was the second of a series of Lange's fifteen popular books of adventure stories for boys, all cast in historic settings, and involving pioneer life, Indians, and the natural world about them.

During his years at Central (1889–1906), Lange established himself as a nationally known author and lecturer on nature studies. In 1898, Macmillan published his *Handbook of Nature Study: for Teachers and Pupils in Elementary Schools*. It was only the first of his many books. Alongside his lifelong career in St. Paul's public school system, Lange continued to hold nature seminars, to take groups of young people on nature walks, and to produce a steady flow of articles and books. All were efforts that, in one way or another, expressed his persistent desire to inform others concerning the details of our natural environment.

From 1906 to 1914, Lange was principal of St. Paul's Humboldt High School. While there, he introduced field geology and Audubon classes involving long hikes for groups of boys or girls. He also conducted classes in camp cooking and woodcraft. In 1908 he completed requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts at the University of Minnesota. Then, in 1912, he published *On the Trail of the Sioux*, the first of his series of fifteen

full-length books of adventure stories for boys. New volumes of Lange's adventure series appeared regularly every one or two years until 1930. Along with adventure, they were packed with information about the natural environment and advice on how to survive in the wilderness. Two additional volumes, *The Silver Island of the Chippewa*, (1913) and *Lost in the Fur Country* (1914), appeared while Lange was still at Humboldt High.

In 1914 Lange was named superintendent of St. Paul Public Schools. As superintendent he thought back to German secondary schools of his youth. They were attended by children of the upper and professional classes. There was a wide gulf between education of these classes and the bulk of the population. The German system, Lange concluded, was out of place in America. Regardless of ancestry, race, or economic status, every young American could rightly claim equality of opportunity with every other young American. American secondary education, its public high schools, had to be fashioned with this democratic ideal in mind. So Lange believed, and under his guidance as principal, not only Roy Wilkins, but thousands of students from a great variety of backgrounds were helped toward realizing their maximum potential.

In St. Paul, largely a city of European immigrants and their descendants, among them a good many Germans, there were aggressive efforts during World War I to seek out citizens whose sympathies were suspected of being with the enemy. "German" became an ugly word and the language unpopular. There is no evidence that Dietrich Lange, so obviously of German origin, had difficulty. By then his democratic views were well known. Still, one Mechanic Arts' graduate who afterwards became a faculty member, J.W. Schmitt, prudently changed his name to J.W. Smith in 1918. It was this same J.W. Smith who became Mechanic Arts' principal when Dietrich Lange left in 1939.

Even so, there was no lack of patriotism at Mechanic Arts during the war. Teachers, graduates, and even older students, went off to fight in 1917. Sixteen

years old, Roy Wilkins blended Mechanic Arts school spirit with wartime patriotism in a long poem, "Our Boys." It began:

The boys of old Mechanic's true,
Have heard their country's call.
In army khaki, navy blue,
They heed the bugle call.

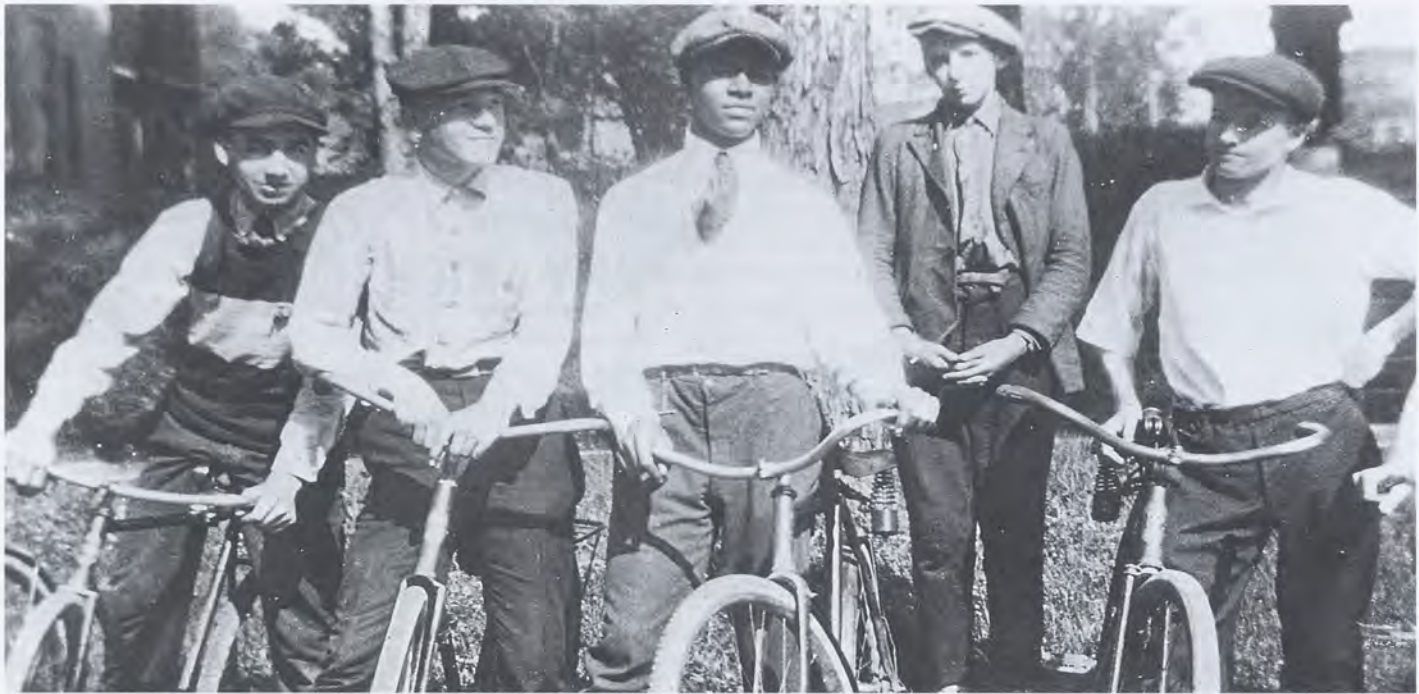
And ended:

You've solved your share of problems hard
On blackboard and on "bench"—
Don't let your record now be marred.
Just solve that German Trench.

History teacher, Miss Mabel Colter tracked down and wrote to some sixty Mechanic Arts people serving in the military during the war. Among them were a number of teachers. They included Edwin McKee, "a Canny Scot," who taught physics, was a popular coach in the late 1920s, and became assistant principal at Mechanics in 1939. Yet another veteran of World War I who would stay on at Mechanic Arts was school nurse Calla Clemens. After graduating from Mechanics in 1906, Calla Clemens studied nursing. When World War I broke out in Europe she volunteered her services as a Red Cross nurse. She spent the war years helping out in France but also, toward the end of hostilities, in Germany.

When Miss Clemens returned to Mechanic Arts in the spring of 1919 to tell her war stories, she received a warm welcome from Mr. Lange and a rousing one from the assembled students. Emmett Raymond, a young and energetic graduate of the University of Minnesota who had come to Mechanic Arts in 1917 to establish courses in music, welcomed Miss Clemens with a potpourri of those war songs that she said the soldier boys liked best. Decades later, Calla Clemens and Emmett Raymond were married. Long before then, each made valuable, even unique, contributions to Mechanic Arts tradition.

Prior to World War II, all St. Paul high school buildings were built with several stories, but only Mechanic Arts was built with an elevator. Mechanics was the only high school in the city that could accommodate physically handicapped students who were unable to use the normally overcrowded stairways. Handicapped



Roy Wilkins, center, with four other students from Mechanic Arts. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.

students came to Mechanic Arts from everywhere in the city in taxis provided at public expense. Nurse Clemens, with her staff of student assistants, looked after them while they were at school.

Roy Wilkins was a senior when he returned from his summer vacation to Mechanic Arts in the fall of 1918 and was chosen president of the school's Literary Society and Editor-in-Chief of the *M*, the school periodical. The choice of Roy, rather than one of the two white candidates, was made by a consortium of three English teachers and was based on compositions the three students had submitted during their first three years of high school English classes.

To Roy's surprise, W.E.B. Du Bois, who founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909, wrote of the event in the NAACP's monthly magazine *Crisis*. Roy discovered the one-paragraph news item tucked away on a back page of his uncle's copy of the magazine. "After that paragraph," Roy later wrote, "it no longer occurred to me to be an engineer."

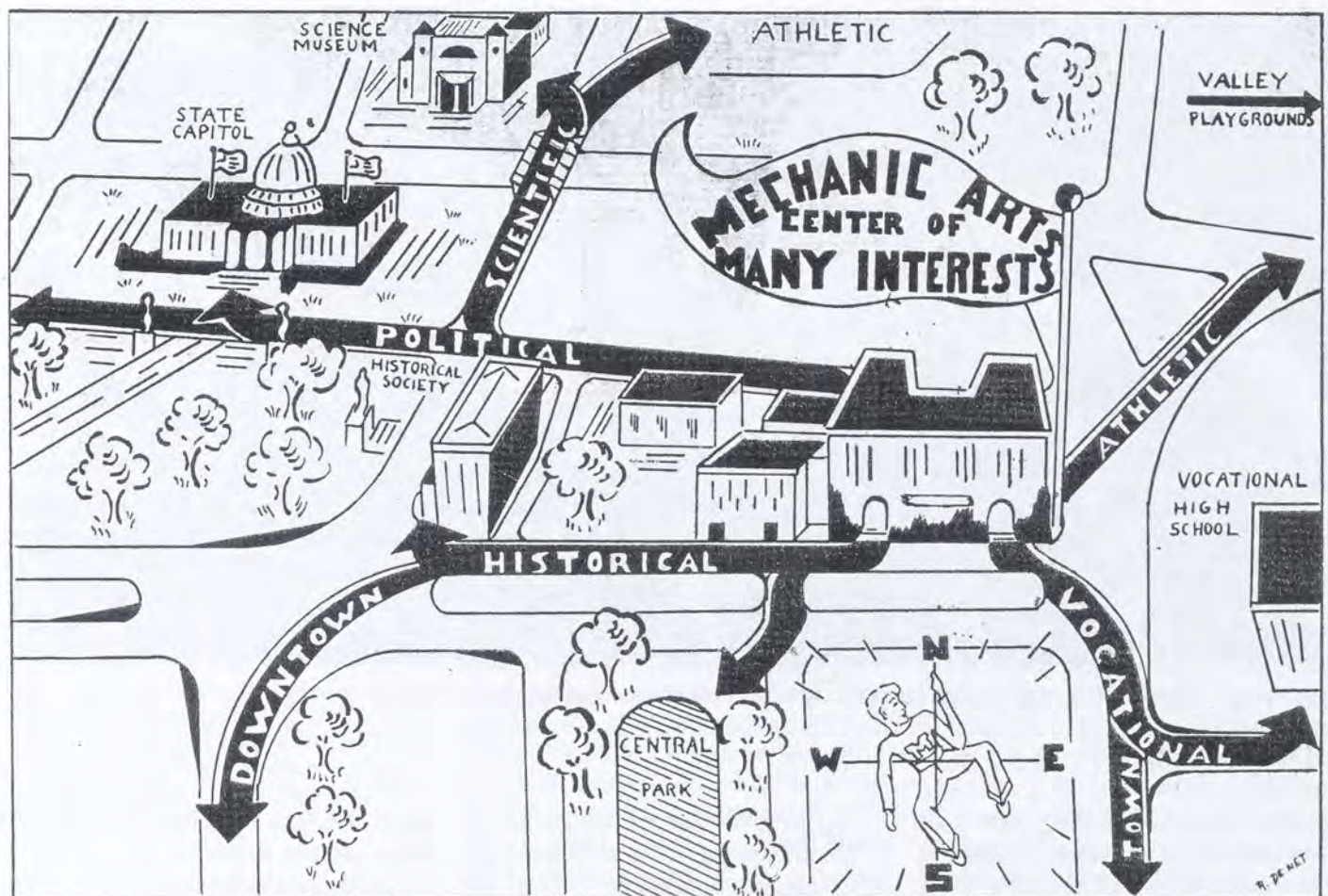
Roy Wilkins delivered the address of welcome on behalf of his class at its June 1919 graduation ceremony. Then life began in earnest, with a series of summer jobs to help pay for his university studies. These jobs, caddy at the Town and Country Golf Club, redcap at the Union Depot in downtown St. Paul, clean-up man at a slaughterhouse and finally as a waiter in a dining car of the Northern Pacific Railroad's North Coast Limited, gradually put an end, he later wrote, "to the innocence that had blessed most of my childhood." He began "to look beyond the comfort and safety of St. Paul to the larger, harder world beyond."

As an adult, Roy Wilkins worked to bring the races closer together. As head of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People from 1955 to 1977 he was a key figure in passage of the Civil Rights Acts of 1957, 1960, 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. For his achievements in the field of civil rights he received honorary degrees from a host of U.S. colleges and universities, and numerous awards, including, in 1969, the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Through it all, Roy Wilkins remem-

bered the days he spent "in a school-boy's cap and knickers chasing around the quiet tree-shaded lanes," of his Rice Street neighborhood. He never forgot his neighbor Mrs. Hendrickson, or his boyhood friend, the shy, blond boy Herman Anderson, nor Miss Mary Copley, the English teacher in long dresses who discovered his talent for writing.

In 1919 the Civil Rights struggles of the 1950s and '60s lay in the distant future, but Mechanic Arts already emphasized equality of opportunity for each student regardless of ancestry, race, gender, or economic status. A classmate of Roy Wilkins, Thomas Minehan, pulled it all together in a lengthy essay that appeared in the February 1919 issue of the *M*. Minehan wrote, "In the pupils of Mechanic Arts you find democracy exemplified. Here is a working model of the melting pot. Rich and poor, Jew and gentile, bourgeoisie, proletarian and aristocrat, are on one plane of equality." Any student could aspire, Minehan explained, to leadership in the class organizations, or in one of the school's clubs.



The world as seen by a student cartoonist at Mechanic Arts late in the Lange years. The MAHS building (right center) opened in 1911 at Central (now Constitution) Avenue and Robert Street. The two buildings to the immediate left of MAHS housed the gym (shown with two black doors) and the drama club and German classes (rear). The lone building further to the left, behind the former Minnesota Historical Society building, was the MAHS "music shack."

Mechanic Arts had so few students when it moved into its new building at Central Avenue and Robert Street in 1911 that Principal George Weitbrecht wondered how they would ever fill all the available space. In 1916 the school still had no more than 900 pupils. But then, American high schools across the country began educating a broader spectrum of the nation's young people. In the early years of the twentieth century approximately half of the boys and girls aged fifteen were not attending school. When Lange left Mechanic Arts in 1939, eighty-five percent of the nation's fifteen year olds were in school. The increase has been attributed to child labor laws of the early 1920s, but the growth in the number of students

at Mechanic Arts was also due to demographic changes.

Around 1900, better-off families living in neighborhoods close to Mechanic Arts began moving further from the Loop to quieter areas up on the hill or to new developments near the edges of the city. They were replaced by families from a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds, some of them newly arrived immigrants, with modest incomes and many children. This was especially true of Lowertown, an area of some forty city blocks on the east side of Jackson Street, from Fifth Street on the south, northward to Fifteenth Street, now University Avenue, and beyond to Valley Playgrounds. Affectionately known as "The Badlands," Lowertown had single-family homes, apartments, churches, synagogues, small

businesses, ethnic grocery stores, and a large open-air market.

The Badlands were home to Irish, Jewish, Mexican, Italian, and Black Americans, among others, and they lived in relative harmony with one another. When their kids were old enough, they sent them to St. Mary's or to Franklin elementary schools. Afterward, most of them went to Mechanic Arts where, had they not already practiced tolerance for one another, acquiring an education would have been difficult indeed. Apart from a different ethnic mix, much the same was true of kids who came to Mechanics from the area known as Frogtown.

Frogtown, north of University Avenue and west of Rice Street, was home to Minnesota-born offspring of immigrants as well as more recent immigrants from

Austria, Germany, Poland, and Sweden, among others. It was also a blue-collar community where breadwinners worked for the railroad, were sheet metal workers, shoemakers, blacksmiths, or janitors. Many owned their own small homes and sent their kids to St. Agnes or Jackson elementary schools and, for high school, to Mechanic Arts.

An area between University and Marshall Avenues and westward from Rice Street toward Lexington Parkway, with Rondo Street running through its heart, was St. Paul's African-American community. Although African Americans in St. Paul during the 1920s and '30s were still working their way toward all the freedoms their birthright should have guaranteed them, those who came to Mechanic Arts participated fully in all that the school had to offer. They were an important part of the rich diversity of which MAHS was so proud.

MAHS in the 1920s and '30s

By 1921 Mechanic Arts had fifteen hundred students with a wide variety of backgrounds. Teachers began to complain of overcrowding. Building alterations were made in 1924, including the creation of rooms at the ends of the school's wide corridors. Aimed at expanding the school's maximum capacity to 1,450, these alterations were clearly inadequate, especially since, as the decade progressed, attendance regularly approached two thousand.

Adequate indoor space for athletics had been a problem from the beginning. Mechanic Arts had no indoor gymnasium until it moved into its new building in 1911. Even so, before then, from 1895 through 1898, Mechanics won three consecutive years of citywide interscholastic track meets. In 1898, in what may have been the first athletic contest between two St. Paul high schools, Central High School's football team defeated Mechanic Arts 25-0. After all, Mechanic Arts had no football coach until 1910, but then, for the first time, the Mechanic Arts team triumphed over Central's. In 1912, with a gymnasium in the lowest level of the new school, Mechanic's won first place in citywide high school basketball competition.

Despite expansion of both boys' and

girls' athletic programs during the 1920s, the basement gymnasium had to do until September 1931 when students arrived after summer vacation to find a well-equipped and spacious gymnasium had been added at the west end of the 1911 building. What is more, space occupied by the original gym in the school basement was remodeled to serve as a lunchroom, one large enough, in Lange's words, "to hold us all in two shifts." The old lunchroom on the floor above was done over to house the school library, which until then had been crowded beneath the auditorium balcony.

In the 1920s Mechanic Arts became a large, urban high school offering a comprehensive program aimed at serving all the needs of high-school-age youngsters in its district. Courses for college-bound students, such as science, history, Latin, and modern languages, were retained as new courses were added to meet the needs of students who planned to enter the workplace immediately after graduation. Now students could choose commercial classes such as salesmanship, shorthand, typewriting, or commercial law. Of course, the school continued to offer classes in art and shop, courses important at Mechanic Arts since the days of its founder, George Weitbrecht.

While new courses were added to the curriculum, the number and variety of extracurricular activities also multiplied. By the end of the 1930s Mechanics Arts had some thirty-five clubs ranging from aviation, actually model building, to stamp collecting. The freshman student, in many instances the first in his or her family to attend high school, was faced with a bewildering multitude of choices.

In his 1959 study, *The American High School Today: A First report to Interested Citizens* (New York, McGraw-Hill), James B. Conant maintained that critics of the American system of secondary education, especially Europeans, were apt to say, "It's not a system at all, it's chaos." Looking back from the year 2000, Diane Ravitch in her book, *Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms* (New York: Simon & Schuster), cites an American critic who agreed to the chaos, but he



Graduating seniors dedicated their 1932 yearbook to Miss Copley to convey admiration "... for her lovely and gracious womanhood and her sunlit understanding".

blamed the confusion on the waves of fads and reforms that now and then swept through the system and left "teacher and pupil to work out each his own salvation in a chaos of confusion and disorder."

Neither fads and reforms, nor chaos and confusion were characteristic of Mechanic Arts during the Lange years. Lange believed in balancing idealism with utilitarianism, rejected fads, and when superintendent of education in 1914, remarked that there were more educated female teachers in St. Paul than educated male teachers. Later, as principal of Mechanic Arts, Lange appears to have allowed his educated teachers, women and men, to withdraw to their classrooms, close their doors, and teach those subjects they had been taught to teach. It was not Mechanic Arts teachers who had to find their salvation, but the students. The teachers were there to help them.

How then did the young freshman scholar find his or her way about in the confusing



Cartoons from the June 1919 M show returning World War I servicemen, girls about to "bob" their hair, and the Jazz Age at Mechanic Arts.

multitudes of courses, clubs, and athletics available at Mechanic during the 1920s and '30s? Most parents were of little help. Few had gone to high school them-

selves and there was no parent-teachers association. Guidance programs and aptitude tests were not seriously considered at Mechanic Arts until late in the 1930s.

There were no "track systems" involving the grouping of students perceived to be of similar ability and setting them aside for special treatment. IQ tests were not widely administered until 1938, and then only to the freshmen, sophomore, and senior classes.

It helped, of course, if the young person had a brother or sister who had already been through it all. Usually the beginning student had no more help than a homeroom advisor could provide. But, if he or she were lucky, along the way, a teacher would discover and encourage that young person's special talents as Miss Mary Copley had done for Roy Wilkins back in 1915.

Doubtless, hundreds, if not thousands, of MAHS students found their way in life with the help of one teacher or another. One sometimes learned of the importance of a teacher's influence long after school years. In 1955 Mabel Hodnefield Seeley (1903-1991), one of the popular mystery writers of her day, credited, yes, Mary E. Copley of Mechanic Arts with first encouraging her to write.

Mabel was seventeen years old in 1920, when she moved with her family to St. Paul from Herman, Minnesota, because her father, Jacob Hodnefield, was offered a position as newspaper curator at the Minnesota Historical Society. Mabel completed her last two years of high school at Mechanic. Encouraged by Miss Copley, she wrote creepy stories for the school's literary magazine, the *M*. Years later, between 1938 and 1954, she published seven well-received volumes of mysteries with Minnesota settings. She and Miss Copley remained lifelong friends.

The Importance of Creative Writing

Creative writing was important at MAHS from the beginning. When the *M* first appeared in January 1913, it was not the yearbook it eventually became. It was a periodical with student's stories and poetry and was published until 1920 by the MAHS Literary Society. By 1920 the Literary Society was no longer active and in December Mary Copley and a second English teacher, Eleanora Deem, were made jointly responsible for overseeing publication of the *M*.



This photo of Harry Blackmun appeared in the *Mechanic Arts* yearbook when he graduated in 1925.

Eleanora Deem was eighteen years older than Mary Copley, who always referred to her as "Miss Deem." She had been born in 1866 in Union City, Ohio, and she, like Mary Copley, grew up in the home of a maternal grandfather, David Ferguson, the town physician. Eleanora attended Oxford Female College in Oxford, Ohio, a village some forty miles northwest of Cincinnati. Bright and dedicated, she went on to graduate work at the University of Chicago and afterward completed her academic education at Barnard College for Women in New York City. Founded in 1889, Barnard was affiliated with, and located adjacent to, Columbia College, which eventually became Columbia University.

Before coming to St. Paul to teach at Mechanic Arts, Miss Deem was principal from 1896 to 1900 of Union City's West Side High School. Perhaps she was attracted to St. Paul and Mechanic Arts because of the innovative ideas of the school's founder George Weitbrecht. In any event, Eleanora Deem was well established at Mechanics before she was joined there by Mary Copley in 1910. Together, they moved to the school's new building in 1911.

In the early 1920s co-advisors Copley and Deem began to have second thoughts about the future of the *M*, at least as a lit-

erary magazine, and some students were agitating for a school newspaper. Neither Eleanora Deem nor Mary Copley knew anything about publishing a newspaper. Nevertheless, the first edition of the *Cogwheel* went to press in February 1924. Miss Copley, known for her oft-repeated admonishment, "Strive to improve yourself. Always try to make things as nearly perfect as possible," practiced what she preached. She enrolled in journalism courses at the University of Minnesota.

When she was well versed in the subject, Miss Copley started a course in Journalism at Mechanics. Miss Deem, left the technicalities of newspaper production to her younger colleague. Instead, she continued to emphasize her courses in Creative Writing. Nevertheless, when it came to the *M* and the *Cogwheel*, Miss Deem and Miss Copley functioned as a team. In the background as advisors, they were always ready to give full credit for a job well done to their student editors.

* * *

Harry Blackmun came down from Dayton's Bluff to enroll at Mechanic Arts in the fall of 1921, some weeks before his thirteenth birthday. Young as he was, he was no dummy when it came to writing essays. Assigned the theme "My Ideal as a High School Boy," he wrote in part, "Theodore Roosevelt is my hero." In an essay dated March 21, 1923, when Harry was fourteen years old and vice-president of his Sophomore class, he was himself the hero.

In "My Illness—Appendicitis," Harry described how, two weeks earlier, on March 8 he was rushed to St. John's hospital in the middle of the night, placed on an operating table, administered ether, and had his side cut open leaving a six-inch scar. Harry's fascination, indeed preoccupation, with all the details of his appendectomy suggest he might have become a doctor, and not necessarily a Supreme Court justice.

As a high school student, Harry Blackmun was not always sure of himself. It helped that his occasional essays attracted the favorable attention of his English teachers and that in the spring of 1924 he won a Junior-Senior story-writing contest. Then, when school re-

opened after summer vacation in the fall of 1924, he was elected president of the senior class. This may have given another boost to his self-confidence. In any event, he began to dream of going east to an Ivy League college after high school.

Further along in his senior year, his English teacher urged him to participate in a citywide debating contest about the U. S. Constitution. The contest was sponsored by the *St. Paul Pioneer Press and Dispatch*. When Harry won, all of St. Paul read about it in their daily newspapers. The notoriety may have given him greater courage to pursue an ambitious plan for college. In any event, now he began to think of going to Harvard.

There was no academic reason why Harry should not hope to go to Harvard. He had been enrolled in the college preparatory program all along and he graduated fourth in his class of 450. But it looked very much like he would end up with the rest of his college-bound classmates at the University of Minnesota. He couldn't afford to go to Harvard, and his father couldn't help.

New York Times journalist Linda Greenhouse, in her excellent 2005 biography, *Becoming Justice Blackmun*, tells how "two English teachers" at Mechanic Arts thought so highly of Harry Blackmun that they recommended him to a Minnesota group of Harvard graduates for a scholarship. She doesn't say which English teachers. A letter from the present writer to the Library of Congress, now custodian of Blackmun's papers, and the help there of a Research Specialist, Mr. Ernst J. Emrich, produced a copy of one page of Harry Blackmun's journal for May 1925. On 15 May he wrote, "Today Miss Deem told me that she had made an appointment for me with Mr. Young, an attorney, who has charge of this Harvard Scholarship business. I shall go down to his office at four tomorrow. Here's hoping that I have luck."

The Strong Music Program at MAHS

Early in the 1920s, Emmett Raymond's popular music classes were moved out of the school, either because they were noisy or because the overcrowded school building could not comfortably hold them,

into a large one-story temporary structure out back. Students knew it as "Shack C" or simply the "music shack." By 1932, the music shack was home to some 300 students who were enrolled in one or another of the various classes of the music department. From these students Doc Raymond put together the Mechanic Arts band, a school orchestra, a boy's glee club, a girl's glee club, a mixed chorus, a boy's quartet, a girl's trio, a clarinet quartet, and a string quartet, all of which he entered in the 1932 annual Minnesota High School Music Contest.

Emmett Raymond's classes in music and music appreciation, and in particular the many musical events he directed, not just at school but elsewhere about the city, contributed greatly to the schools reputation for excellence. This was particularly true of the school's hundred-voice choir. In its royal blue robes and white stoles, the choir not only sang at school assemblies on special occasions, but also at two dozen or more churches, colleges, or conventions, in the course of a typical school year.



Lange at the Spring Lake cabin north of Hastings where he did much of his writing in the autumn months of the 1920s and early 1930s.

Because he was Hamline University's bandleader as well as music director at Mechanic Arts, Raymond was able to recommend his best MAHS music students for Hamline scholarships. One of his music students, Russell Hammar, was not only president of his 1938 class at MAHS, he was lead singer and soloist in the school choir, sang in the mixed quartet, played in the band and the orchestra, and acted in the senior class play. Raymond helped Russell get into Hamline from where he graduated in 1942 and made music his lifetime career. In 1961 he became head of the music department at Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan, where, after he died in 1990, a memorial to his memory was erected on the college campus.

Dietrich Lange as Writer and Naturalist

In all those things that meant so much to him, his series of adventure books, his lectures and writings on nature, and his exploratory hikes into the wilderness, Dietrich Lange's sixtieth birthday in June 1923 marked the beginning of what was possibly his most productive decade. That he was able to accomplish so much was due in part to Homer E. Hillard. Hillard had been a chemistry teacher at Central High School until he became assistant principal at MAHS in the fall of 1922. Lange was still there for the big things, but Hillard, known for his cheery good humor, took care of the day-to-day routine and petty drama that was part of running a high school where there were no less than sixty teachers and nearly 2,000 students.

When not at school, Lange was frequently underway. He had his favorite spots, and he visited them often. They had to be accessible on foot or with public transportation because he did not own or drive an automobile. A favorite destination for hiking was the Minnesota River valley. He could easily descend to the valley from Fort Snelling, end-station of the "Maria-Fort Snelling" electric streetcar. Spring Lake, a large millpond created before the Civil War by a milldam, just north of Hastings, reminded Lange of Thoreau's Walden, and was another of his favorite destinations. In the autumn

months of the 1920s and early '30s, he often did his writing there at a borrowed summer cottage. Like Fort Snelling, it too could be easily reached with the inter-urban electric streetcars of the Twin City Rapid Transit lines, and for these Lange had a lifetime pass.

Each summer of the 1920s, Lange taught a six-week nature workshop at the Fairhope Summer School in Greenwich, Connecticut. He took his summer students on nature walks much as Thoreau had done decades earlier with children of Concord, Massachusetts. Far from interfering with his writing, Lange's ambulatory lifestyle provided the raw material that enlivened his many books and articles.

Lange not only completed his fifteen volume series of adventure stories by 1930, he also published dozens of articles in newspapers and periodicals. They included a weekly column in the children's magazine, *Our Young People*; "Stories from the Woodland Trail," a weekly column in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press and Dispatch*; as well as articles in *American Boy*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Boys Life*, *Chicago Tribune*, *The Farmer*, *Minneapolis Journal*, *Minneapolis Tribune*, *New York Herald*, *St. Paul Daily News*, and many others. As he approached his seventieth birthday, Dietrich Lange, was not only a household name in the Twin Cities, but



In 1942, when coach Buck Wood left Mechanic Arts to become a special agent with the FBI he was already an MAHS legend.

in much of Minnesota and in areas of the East as well.

In 1932, the nation was deep in the third year of the Great Depression. Harry Blackmun came home to St. Paul that summer, a graduate now of Harvard College and the Harvard School of Law. He moved in with his parents who still lived on Dayton's Bluff and were not at all well off. Finding a job was difficult, even for a Harvard graduate, but in August he was hired on as a law clerk by federal courts of appeals judge John B. Sanborn, the same judge who eight years earlier had awarded young Harry first prize for his high school oration on the Constitution. Blackmun's salary was to be \$2,200 a year.

In the 1930s, Dietrich Lange no longer traveled to Greenwich, Connecticut,

in the summer for nature seminars and had more time for hiking closer to home. In September 1932 he hiked to Spring Valley with Harry Blackman. More than half a century later, in 1986, Blackman remembered Lange as an old friend and a remarkable character whom he had only really learned to know in the summer of 1932, after he returned home from Harvard. As Blackmun remembered it, they spent weekends together tramping the Minnesota River Valley while Lange taught him to appreciate the beauties of nature.

MAHS Sportsmen

In 1933 young Oliver Pluff moved with his family from the economically depressed Iron Range town of Chisholm, Minnesota, to St. Paul. They settled in Frogtown and Oliver, known to everyone as "Ollie," attended Jackson Ele-

mentary School where he captained the school's first basketball team. In the spring of 1938, while a Mechanic Arts freshman, he played on the school's "B" basketball team. Thanks to Ollie's speed and skill, his team was the season's city champions.

When not playing basketball, Ollie played baseball. During his two years on the Mechanic Arts baseball team, he led St. Paul's high school conference with his batting average and in the spring of 1940, he was awarded all-city baseball honors. Nevertheless, though Ollie weighed only 140 pounds, he is best remembered for his outstanding performance at football, performance that he attributes to careful grooming by his coach, Delbert, better known as "Buck," Wood.

After graduating from Mankato High School in 1924, Buck Wood attended Macalester College where he was a star

Mr. Lange's Issue

Mechanic Arts Cogwheel

Medalist Rating C.S.P.A. 1933—Pacemaker Award N.S.P.A. 1933

MECHANIC ARTS HIGH SCHOOL, ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA, FRIDAY, MAY 26, 1933

And With This Issue
Our Work is Done.
Have a Good Vacation
And Auf Wiedersehen.

We'll Be Shaking Little
Brother's Bank, For The
Big Doings at the Col.
Tonight.

VOLUME 3

MECHANIC ARTS HIGH SCHOOL, ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA, FRIDAY, MAY 26, 1933

No. 34

Final Edition of Cogwheel Dedicated To Principal Lange

Surprise Number Issued To Congratulate School Head On 70th Birthday

Annual Spring Frolic Slated At Coliseum Tonight

Hilarious Time Promised As Alumni Association Complete Arrangements

Students Urged to Attend Affair; Admission Set At 25 Cents

Dr. Bence and Aids Complete Elaborate Guest List

Many prominent St. Paul persons, alumni of the school, will attend the annual Spring Frolic tonight at the Coliseum.

Some of the expected guests are: Mr. Charles Wehert, president of the class of 1913, and Mrs. Wehert; Dr. Carl Haedger, '11, former National Handball Champion, and Mrs. Haedger; Hon. Mr. Harry Dehn, '09, Assistant Attorney General of Minnesota, and Mrs. Dehn; Dr. Horace La Besoniere, '16, recent State Representative from the 12nd District, and Mrs. La Besoniere; Mr. Marshall Countryman, '12, General Counsel for the Great Northern Railroad, and Mrs. Countryman.

Large Guest List

Mr. George Sudheimer, former city councilman, and Mrs. Sudheimer; Dr. Roger Countryman, '15, member of the Miller Clinic and Hospital, and Mrs. Countryman; Mr. Leslie Gutterman, vice-president of the General Alumni Association, and Mrs. Gutterman; Mr. Larry Pirra, treasurer of the General Alumni Association, and Mrs. Pirra; Mr. and Mrs. Chester Tuohi, and Dr. and Mrs. Ralph Swain.

Mr. Lange Writes Farewell to Seniors

TO THE BOYS AND GIRLS OF MECHANIC ARTS:

Very soon we shall say farewell to each other and the school for another long vacation. It would be fine if we could all go into a big summer camp on Isle Royale, but we shall scatter all over the four points of the continent, and if you will, so shall I.

I hope you will be careful in avoiding the usual kind of vacation accidents, like auto, and when you are in swimming and boating.

Some of you have felt the pressure of the economic depression, but this depression is to be wane. This country is going to overcome its present difficulties, just as it has in the past and we shall all be the better for the lesson.

We have had another successful year of close cooperation between teachers and pupils. I am looking forward to another year even more successful. If the young people in America learn peace, good will, and cooperation in high school, they will help the world along towards the far more difficult path of national and international cooperation.

And now, boys and girls, I bid you farewell and hope that I may see you healthy and happy when school begins in the fall.

-D. LANGE

Mr. Lange at 70

Mr. Lange Termed Great Educator and Naturalist In Interviews of Teachers and Associates On His Entire Life's History

Upon the great occasion of the seventieth birthday of Mr. Dietrich Lange, principal of Mechanic Arts High School on June 2, the Cogwheel Staff has gathered a "birthday bouquet" of tributes from his many friends and associates, in celebration of this event. It has been kept a complete surprise from him until this morning. The first is from S. O. Hartwell, superintendent of schools. "Principal Dietrich Lange is to be congratulated not only on his seventieth anniversary, but on the mature wisdom and youthful spirit which have marked his fine work as teacher and principal. He has kept a lasting interest in other youths who have been in his charge. They all retain a grateful memory of his justice and kindness."

Mr. H. E. Hillard, Assistant Principal: "To me, the most outstanding characteristic of Mr. Lange is his unlimited patience with students who need help. I think that he shows more interest in the pupils of his school than any other principal whom I have worked under."

Clarence B. Kramer, former student: "Professor Dietrich Lange, a man of high ideals, has been my constant inspiration since high school days, to act manfully and strive to do the right at all times."

Loyalty His Greatest Virtue

Miss Ethel Graves, who taught under Mr. Lange at Humboldt: "If you ask me what I consider Mr. Lange's greatest virtue, I should say loyalty—and that faces kind of loyalty that recognizes the best in people. As one of his teachers, I always felt that I could safely pour into his ear any of my reactions. Not only did I get the sympathy I wanted, but my confidences were never repeated or belittled. In all the years we have been friends I have never known him to carry a grudge or betray a trust."

Judge Loevinger Picked As Senior Graduate Speaker

Ushers Chosen From Junior Boys; June 11 Last Date For Flowers

Judge Gustavus Loevinger will be the commencement speaker at the graduation exercises June 19, at 8 P. M. in the St. Paul Auditorium.

The ushers for the affair were chosen by Miss Frances Ek, senior class adviser, from the junior class. They are as follows: Ray Williams, Bernard Schleier, Joe McPherson, Irvy Hubbelke, James Murray, Clem Barnes, Don Pines, Gene Barnes, Sam Cooper, Ernest Anderson, Andrew Burnham, George Strane, Ed Linton, Joe Kraft, Budd Mack, Rolf Nohak, Bob Sherman, Kenneth Kehn, Bob Nelson, Steve Pittelkow, Charles Hedlund, Kenneth DeVina, Lowell Sullivan, Joe Brady, Herman Nelson, John Winkler, Jack Tallen, John Arth, Bob Kirk, Dale Regan, Kenneth Ehn, Bob Huson.

The ushers for the production, *Bowers* was awarded to Pamela (Cont. on page 3, col. 4.)

Paul Ristau Wins Honor Roll Award

Mary O'Donnell Takes Next Prize, With Helen Cherney, Third

Paul Ristau, valedictorian, who has led the Cogwheel honor roll twice, upon being at the end of the term when he led the entire school, will be awarded first prize in the Cogwheel honor roll contest.

Second prize will be given to Mary O'Donnell, senior, and third prize to Helen Cherney, junior. Both girls led

List Cantata And Concert For June 1

Proceeds To Buy Music And Instruments For Band

A cantata, "Hilwatha's Wedding Feast," by Coleridge-Taylor, and a concert by the band with numbers by the Boys' Glee Club will be presented by the music department under the direction of Mr. E. A. Raymond in the school auditorium on Thursday, June 1, at 8:00 P. M.

"Proceeds from the concert will be used to buy new instruments and music for the band. The band has played for all the school entertainments, and we think that it is not too much to expect the school to get behind this concert," says Mr. Raymond.

In Term Project

The cantata is the term project for the chorus classes, and the whole concert will be an hour and a half in duration. Tickets will be fifteen cents and a repetition of the performance on Friday night will depend on ticket sales for Thursday.

The first half of the program, consisting of the cantata, will be accompanied by the orchestra. A cast of 180 will sing the story of the marriage and the attending celebration.

To Play at Como

Appreciation of the band is shown by their invitation to play a series of concerts at Como Park beginning

Add New Group

T. O. S. S. S.

Summer Vacation Main Event on Final Calendar

May 26 "M" Alumni Homecoming, Coliseum, 7:30 o'clock.

May 29 Junior representative meeting, Room 408, 8:15.

May 30 Memorial Day, No school.

May 31 Archery Club, Room 4, 2:15.

June 1 "M" Annual Out.

June 2 Ma Alpha, during English 8 periods; G.P.'s Swimming Y. W. O. A.

June 3 Junior representative meeting.

June 4 Penny Coliseum; Sky

Mr. Lange at 70

Mr. D. Lange

Above is a picture of Mr. Dietrich Lange.

The Mechanic Arts Cogwheel of May 26, 1933 was dedicated to Mr. Lange on the occasion of his 70th birthday.

athlete in four varsity sports: football, basketball, track, and swimming. He accumulated nine letters and earned all state honors three years in a row. In the mid 1930s he began teaching and coaching at Mechanic Arts while studying evenings at the St. Paul College of Law (today's William Mitchell College of Law). In 1939, Wood put together a Mechanic Arts team that included a lightweight backfielder, Ollie Pluff.

On the evening of October 12, 1939, at the then newly built Central High School Stadium, later renamed for James Griffin, a light drizzle was falling on the 6,000 or more excited supporters of the contending teams, Mechanic Arts and Central High. Suddenly, just as the third quarter drew to a close, a pass from Mechanic's Ollie Pluff put the ball on Central's four-yard line. Three plays later and Pluff scampered over for a touchdown. The final score, 12-0, gave Mechanics its first victory over Central in fourteen years.

While still teaching and coaching at Mechanic Arts, in February 1940, Buck Wood graduated from the St. Paul College of Law. He was there when Ollie Pluff graduated in June 1941 and he was able to help Ollie get into a junior college at Worthington, Minnesota. World War II began that December and cut into Ollie's college career. He joined the Navy. Meanwhile, in August 1942, Buck Wood was admitted to the Minnesota Bar. He left Mechanic Arts and became a special agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

In 1982, Buck Wood's name was added to Macalester's athletic Hall of Fame. Ollie Pluff had to wait until 1998, but then the St. Paul City Conference added his name to its list of the city's best 100 all time male high school athletes. The City Conference compiled its list from teams dating back to that very first contest between the Mechanic Arts and Central football teams in 1898.

The Cogwheel, M, and Seedlings

No matter how busy with his writing and wilderness treks, Lange always managed a palpable presence at Mechanic Arts. There was no doubt but that he was in charge. His distinctive aura unified the



Seniors of 1938 vowed never to forget May Kellerhals and thanked her for helping to make their high school days a wonderful adventure.

school. In one sense, he was Mechanic Arts. In June of 1933 a special issue of the *Cogwheel* was dedicated to Lange on the occasion of his seventieth birthday. Since its first issue in 1924, the *Mechanic Arts Cogwheel* was well established and as much a part of the school as Lange himself.

Miss Deem and Miss Copley had been co-advisors for the *Cogwheel* and the *M* since the early 1920s, but by 1932 the *M* was no longer a magazine emphasizing creative writing but an annual, or yearbook, sometimes with a special theme but always dedicated to the graduating class. Miss Deem, now sixty-six years old, resigned from her duties toward the *M* and the *Cogwheel* so as to establish and have time for a new publication, *Seedlings*. *Seedlings* became what the *M* had been early on, a magazine where the school's best literary talents could be displayed. It flourished under Miss Deem's leadership, and in its third and fourth year was awarded "All American Honors." The final issue of *Seedlings* appeared in January 1938.

More than seventy years old in 1938, Miss Deem retired from teaching and returned to Union City, Indiana, to live with

a niece and her niece's family there. Pensions for retiring St. Paul teachers were pitifully small in the 1930s. The 1939 *M* honored her on behalf of alumni and students for the dignity, kindness, and integrity with which she had conducted her English classes over more than thirty years of teaching at Mechanic Arts. It was the least they could do.

Lange and Isle Royale

Seventy-five years old in the spring of 1938, Dietrich Lange was not about to retire. He continued, typically, to organize wilderness outings. One teacher, May Kellerhals, a 1914 graduate from Mechanic Arts, was nearly as keen on nature walks as Lange. She taught biology, botany and zoology, collected plants, insects and other small creatures, and was known for her brisk and independent manner. She also drove an automobile.

In September 1938, Miss Kellerhals recruited Karl Grittner, one of her science students, to help gather specimens for her botany and biology classes. Karl had transferred to Mechanic Arts from Roosevelt Junior High School on St. Paul's West Side. West Side youngsters did not normally come to Mechanic Arts, but he had done so in order to study biology under Miss Kellerhals. As with many Mechanic Arts students of the Depression years, his parents were offspring of newcomers to America. His father was the child of German, his mother of Swedish, immigrants. Neither parent had attended high school and now, during the Great Depression, Karl's father, a millwright-carpenter, was unemployed. The family lived on welfare until he found work with the WPA.

Miss Kellerhals picked Karl up at school on a Saturday morning in October and drove to Spring Lake where they collected a variety of fern and other plant specimens. She explained that the plants would be dried and organized for reference in what she called a herbarium. She did not immediately explain why, but they also gathered a great many frogs. Karl had a lively interest in all these things, and made himself useful on the outing.

In the spring of 1939 Miss Kellerhals asked Karl if he would care to accompany Principal Lange and his teenage grandsons, John and Hugh, on a six-week



In this 1937 yearbook photo the present author, (13 years old, top row and second from the left), has freshman classmates from a great variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds.

camping trip to Isle Royale, a remote island archipelago in northwestern Lake Superior. If so, he would need \$50 for a train ticket from St. Paul to Duluth and return, the cost of travel by boat from Duluth to Isle Royale and back, and other incidentals.

Abandoning, for once, his scientific detachment, Lange maintained that Isle Royale was "... the most beautiful bit of earth the Lord had created." His involvement with the island archipelago went back to 1914 when he visited it in the company of his son Otto, who had just graduated from West Point. In 1914 Isle Royale was home to a few small settlements of commercial fishermen, all near the water's edge. Inland, the archipelago's main island, some forty-five miles long and nine miles wide, had high timbered ridges of spruce and fir, dark valleys, inland lakes and streams. It was an unspoiled wilderness teeming with abundant wildlife. Back home, Lange senior planned for a return to Isle Royale, stud-

ied its history, biology, and its terrain, but did not get back until the 1930s.

In March 1931 Congress authorized establishment of an Isle Royale National Park but withheld funds required to purchase and administer the property. An environmentalist before the term was popular, in 1923 Lange became the first president of the Minnesota Izaak Walton League. In 1931 he was made the League's permanent honorary president. He was also an active member of the Audubon Society, the Wilson Ornithological Society, and other conservation organizations. Then too, as an author and lecturer, he had far-reaching influence in conservation matters. When, in May 1935, he was recommended for appointment to the national board of directors of the Isle Royale National Park Association, he was already putting all his considerable influence behind the Isle Royale National Park project.

Lange's participation in environmental matters was always practical. Seventy years old, in June-July of 1933, he spent four weeks on Isle Royal, camping out, while showing two barely teenage

grandsons, Hugh and John, how to cook over an open fire, sleep on the ground, and generally how to survive in the wilderness. The three repeated the adventure, with variations, in 1934 and 1935. When they could, in 1934, they slept on the floor of an abandoned log cabin, formerly a fur trapper's dwelling. In the summer of 1938, this time accompanied by son Otto and grandson Hugh, Lange again returned to Isle Royale. At seventy-five, he speculated that this might be his final visit.

Lange's Last Years

There was no way that Karl Grittner could scrape together \$50 in 1939 in order to accompany Principal Lange for a summer on Isle Royale. He was in a similar plight when he graduated from Mechanic Arts in June 1940. He had no money for college. Miss Kellerhals found a job for Karl at Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company, where he worked until, in the fall of 1941, he had saved enough to enter Hamline University.

After graduating from Hamline in 1945, Karl spent a semester in Washing-



On nice days, as this 1937 yearbook photo shows, Central Park was lunch-break hangout for Mechanic Arts students.

ton, D.C. as an intern with the American Council on Education. In 1946 he returned to St. Paul's Roosevelt Junior High School as a substitute teacher. Eventually, he served in various capacities at a number of schools until, in 1969, he became principal of Johnson Senior High School on St. Paul's East Side where he remained until 1979. Meanwhile, Karl had a collateral career in state politics. For six years, beginning 1953, he was secretary of the Liberal caucus in the Minnesota House of Representatives. Then, for twelve years, from 1959 through 1971, he was in the State Senate where he served as minority leader from 1967 to 1971.

Principal Lange did not go to Isle Royale in 1939 after all. Following city-wide high school graduation ceremonies in June, St. Paul's Superintendent of Public Schools replaced Lange at Mechanic Arts with James W. Smith, the same Smith who before 1918 was J. W. Schmitt. Edwin McKee was promoted to be Smith's assistant, while Lange's assistant, Homer E. Hillard, was moved to Murray High School as principal. Lange became St. Paul's "Supervisor of Nature Study," essentially the same position he had held some forty years earlier while

concurrently teaching German at Central High. It was quite a shakeup.

Shakeup indeed; but not everything changed at Mechanic Arts. There was still Miss Mary Copley and the *Cogwheel*. Irving Kreidberg edited the *Cogwheel* in his senior year, from September 1938 until June 1939. He walked to school from his home at 486 Carroll Avenue near the McKinley Elementary School, at the edge of the Rondo district. His father, Eli Kreidberg, also walked to Sons of Jacob Congregation synagogue on College Avenue between Wabasha and St. Peter. Eli belonged to the Eastern European wave of Jewish immigrants. He had served in a Boston synagogue before coming to St. Paul. As cantor at the Sons of Jacob synagogue he was known for his splendid singing voice, for his rich cantorial repertoire, and for his skill in organizing boy's choirs.

As a sophomore at Mechanic Arts in 1937, Irving, or Irv as he was called by nearly everyone, enrolled in both Miss Copley's journalism class and Miss Deem's class in creative writing. In his junior year he was assistant editor on both

the school magazine and the school paper. For the final issue of *Seedlings*, which appeared in January 1938, Miss Deem was faculty advisor for literary matters; Miss Copley for type and make-up. Irv was make-up editor. At seventeen, under Miss Copley's tutorship, Irv was already developing skills that would serve him throughout his working life in publishing.

During his senior year at Mechanics, Irv edited the *Cogwheel* and every two weeks, as each new issue was laid out and ready for the printer, he brought the copy to the North Central Publishing Company on East Fifth Street in Lowertown. At North Central, printing and publishing became his passion. After graduating from Mechanics in 1939, he attended the University of Minnesota, majored in journalism and edited the University's newspaper, the *Minnesota Daily*. In 1943, after graduating from the university, he became an Intelligence Officer with the U.S. Marine Corps and saw service in theaters of war as far away as mainland China. The war over, in 1946, Irv returned, full circle, to St. Paul and the North Central Publishing Company where, in time, he became its president.

Meanwhile, Miss Copley continued to oversee student publication of the *Cogwheel* until June of 1951. In 1951 she had taught at Mechanic Arts for over forty years and had been *Cogwheel* faculty advisor for more than twenty-five. The final issue of the *Cogwheel* was a giant, twelve-page issue. On its back page two short paragraphs told of her leaving the school. She had been born in January 1884, was 67 years old, but she was not retiring. Irv Kreidberg took her on as a proofreader at North Central Publishing Company. She was 86 when she passed away in August 1970. As the Certificate of Death attests, she had never married, she had been a school teacher at Mechanic Arts High School. She was buried in the family plot in Oakland Cemetery that was purchased by her grandfather, Robert Armstrong Smith, in 1868.

At home at 2229 Como Avenue in St. Paul's St. Anthony area, where the family had lived since 1924, Lange had not been feeling well when on November

18, 1940, a Monday afternoon, he gathered up a few books and took them to a upstairs room for a quiet, late afternoon perusal. While sitting there and reading, his seventy-seven-year-old heart faltered and he passed away. The next morning, a front-page headline in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* carried the news, "Dietrich Lange, Educator and Conservationist, Dies." Below the headline, next to a 4" by 5" portrait of Lange, was an extensive article describing his long and varied career and praising him as "one of the most widely known and best loved men in Minnesota."

A memorial ceremony in the school auditorium on Wednesday morning provided graduates, among them Harry Blackmun, teachers, and students, an opportunity to speak in final tribute to Dietrich Lange. They spoke of his love of people, nature, life and work, of his having been a truly simple, human, man. But more than anything, an article in the *Cogwheel* revealed the depth of student feeling for their former principal. A student described Lange's last appearance at the school:

He walked up the steps [to the stage] last year, a straight, white-haired man. A hush of surprise filled the great assembly hall—and then a huge, suddenly excited roar burst

from a thousand throats—a roar that rolled on and on reechoing the welcome through the halls. He raised his hand. Like magic the crowd was silenced. He stood there, tall and stately, his strong voice disdaining the microphone, and in direct, simple terms, told of his happiness to be back. As he finished, a prolonged and heartfelt clapping bade him farewell. And so he left—!

Source Notes

A number of institutions and individuals cooperated to make this history of Mechanic Arts possible. I began my research at the Minnesota Historical Society. Its staff provided access to the society's extensive collection of papers, relating both to Dietrich Lange and to Mechanic Arts High School. A research librarian at the Library of Congress successfully shepherded my request for information regarding Harry Blackmun through the halls of that august institution. I would not have known where to go and what to search for without the help of Linda Greenhouse, author of the biography *Becoming Justice Blackmun*. Fortunately Roy Wilkins told his own Mechanic Arts story in his autobiography, *Standing Fast: The Autobiography of Roy Wilkins* (New York: Viking Press, 1982).

Equally important, I found helpful

persons with memories reaching back to people and events that are central to my story. John Mittelstadt of Anoka, Lange's grandson, provided photos and access to family papers not available elsewhere. Without the help of Richard Cutting of St. Paul, I would not have been able to piece together the story of his aunt, Mary Copley. Milton Hurwitz of St. Paul helped me find Gilbert Kreidberg of Minneapolis who was able to fill me in on the career of his father, Irving.

Although space prohibits thanking each and every person who helped to put this history of the Lange Years at Mechanic Arts together, you know who you are, and you must know that I am truly grateful.

Now retired as a civilian employee of the U.S. Department of Defense, John W. Larson is a 1941 graduate of Mechanic Arts High School, where he served as class president. He went on to earn a bachelors degree from Haverford College in Pennsylvania and an advanced degree in history from the University of Minnesota. He has published several articles in this magazine over the years.

St. Paul Public Schools Celebrate 150 Years in 2006

In 1849 the Minnesota legislature established funding for the new territory's public schools and in 1856 an election was held in St. Paul for members of the city's first school board. That first school board consisted of nine elective and two ex-officio members.

Central High School, which was first known as St. Paul High School, opened its doors for classes in 1868 at Minnesota and Tenth streets. Two years later Fannie Hayes and A. P. Warren were the first students to graduate from the high school. Mechanic Arts High School evolved from a manual arts training program at Central High that was started in 1887. Two

years later this program moved to a separate building at Park and Central avenues and was called the Manual Training School. Increased enrollment in this program led to the construction of Mechanic Arts in 1911. Mechanic Arts closed its doors in 1976.

As part of its sesquicentennial celebration in 2006, the School District has published *Footprints of Saint Paul: Echoes of the Past, Present, and Future*, a 132-page softcover book that was entirely written and produced by St. Paul public school students who participated in the District's Fresh Force Service-Learning and Leadership program.

Footprints includes fifteen brief

articles about such famous St. Paul landmarks as the State Capitol, the Cathedral of St. Paul, Landmark Center, Assumption Church, Rice Park, the Central Library, Mickey's Diner, and the Original Coney Island Café and Tavern. Student photography of the sites featured and original student artwork accompanies many of the articles. The book also has a section that describes the Fresh Force Service-Learning and Leadership program and profiles of the students who worked on this project. Available from the Fresh Force Service-Learning and Leadership office at 900 Albion Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55116, the book costs \$25.00.



This 1966 yearbook photo of Mechanic Arts High School was provided by Robert Cramer of the class of 1955. See John Larson's article beginning on page 4.

R.C.H.S.
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