

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
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Summer 2011

Volume 46, Number 2

*A Garden Inspires
A Community*

With Style, Grace, and Pride:
The Gardens at the Minnesota
Governor's Mansion

Karine Pouliquen
and Lori Schindler

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*From Thomery to “The Anchorage”
The Larpenteurs and Their Journey to St. Paul*
Michele Murnane, page 3



Minnesota Territorial pioneer Auguste Louis (“A.L.”) Larpenteur (1823–1919) came to St. Paul in 1843. This photo from the late nineteenth century shows him decked out frontier-style with his rifle, knife, and other hunting equipment. Photo courtesy of John W. Waters.

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RAMSEY COUNTY History

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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.

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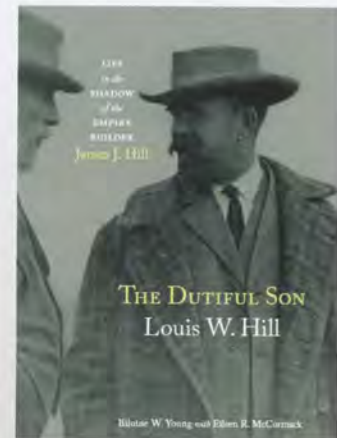
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A Message from the Editorial Board

This month, let the magazine be your guide as you tour the streets of St. Paul. While driving down Larpenteur Avenue, consider the hard-working Auguste Louis Larpenteur, who came to St. Paul in the 1840s, had productive careers in trading and retail, provided important support to the Catholic community in early Ramsey County, and with his wife had a family of ten children. Michele Murnane has dug into Larpenteur history and provides us with a fresh look at A. L. and his influence on the area. Susanne Sebesta Heimbuch writes an evocative memoir of growing up on Rondo Avenue in the late 1940s. And Summit Avenue, street of impressive houses, holds smaller treats as well: Karine Pouliquen and Lori Schindler review the history of the gardens at the governor's mansion, which have evolved to reflect the tastes of different eras and the first families who lived in the former Horace Irvine home.

On a related note, share our pride that Biloine (Billie) W. Young and Eileen R. McCormick's book, *The Dutiful Son: Louis W. Hill; Life in the Shadow of the Empire Builder, James J. Hill*, previously excerpted in this magazine, has been honored with a 2011 Award of Merit from the American Association of State and Local History—the fourth time an RCHS publication has received this national honor. We are thrilled that a wider audience is coming to appreciate the consistent quality of history we have long shared with you, our members. Thanks for your continuing support.

Anne Cowie,
Chair, Editorial Board



The Dutiful Son: Louis W. Hill Life in the Shadow of the Empire Builder, James J. Hill

by Biloine (Billie) W. Young and Eileen R. McCormack

When James Norman, eldest son of James J. Hill, departed St. Paul for the brighter lights of New York City, it was second son Louis Warren (1872–1948) who took his father's place managing the portfolio of railroads that became today's Burlington Northern Santa Fe. When James J. died without signing his will, it was Louis who executed his father's vast estate.

Louis was a worthy successor to his empire-building father. He looked beyond railroads to the nation's natural resources and identified the value of the iron ore deposits in northeastern Minnesota and the wealth inherent in the vast tracks of timber in Oregon. Louis' efforts led to the establishment of Glacier National Park and the Great Northern Railway, under his leadership, became its developer.

Louis rejuvenated St. Paul's Winter Carnival and led his community in relieving the suffering brought on by the Great Depression. His example of leaving a major portion of his fortune to a foundation, today's Northwest Area Foundation, inspired two of his sons' philanthropic efforts—the Jerome and Grotto Foundations.

Author Biloine (Billie) W. Young and researcher Eileen R. McCormack depended almost entirely on archival sources to produce this first full-length biography of Louis W. Hill. They reveal the complex personal and business influences on Louis as he succeeded his celebrated father in the management of a vast transportation empire and dealt with the dynamics surrounding his parents' estates and his siblings' disputes. In *The Dutiful Son*, Young and McCormack provide an insightful portrait of a conscientious, generous business leader who left a legacy of continued service to communities from the Mississippi to the Pacific along the route of the Great Northern Railway founded by his father.

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Growing Up in St. Paul

The Rondo Years, 1948–1950

Susanne Sebesta Heimbuch

“Sheeney,” currently offensive, but then a commonly used term, the neighbor women called from house to house up Fuller Avenue ahead of the Jewish peddler driving his horse and wagon slowly west. In the middle of the open wagon’s bench seat, wearing a brimless hat, a large woolen jacket unbuttoned over another woolen jacket buttoned, he sat with his elbows on his splayed knees. He groaned at the old horse and slapped its back with his reins, but the horse maintained its slow trot.

My brother Joey and I were always fascinated with the long hairs covering that old Clydesdale’s hooves as we watched from our front yard at 474 Fuller Avenue, east of Dale Street.

When he stopped, women ran to him with bundles of newspaper, rags, and over-used household items. Balancing his gloves on his knee, he paid in pennies, nickels, and dimes, which could buy a cup of coffee and toast, a newspaper, or ribbon to decorate a girl’s dress. Eggs were 23¢ a dozen; gas was 16¢ per gallon.

His old wooden wagon had rubber car tires. The debris it contained would be recycled. Although that term was available in those days, it hardly had the familiar usage we associate with it today. From mid-1948 to mid-1950, we lived in Cornmeal Rondo, now known as the poorer half of St. Paul’s African-American neighborhood, but many whites lived there, too, especially in the 1940s. When my father called our neighbors “Darkies” or “Jungle Bunnies,” my mother got angry.

“They are called Negroes, Ben,” she would say quietly, well before the 1960s when *Black* or *African American* became correct. They wouldn’t let me play with the two darling girls I saw a few houses away.

When Ben was at work, Mother said to Joey and me, “I don’t agree with your father about our neighbors. People are just people, whatever their color.” Ben had spoken of black men shining his shoes and operating the elevator of the

Pioneer Building in downtown St. Paul where he worked. He was a mechanical engineer, graduate of the University of Minnesota, and had attended The College of Saint Thomas, in St. Paul, where he played football, was a member of the student council and the yearbook staff.

As the oldest child, I almost always called my father “Ben,” but my younger brothers and sister never did. To them, he was “Dad.” For all of us, our mother was “Mom,” “Mother,” or “Mommy.”

As preschoolers, Joey and I, along with the baby Janny, spent much of our time indoors under supervision. We squabbled over toy boxes.

“Red is mine,” I said. I was almost four.

“Me, too. Red.” My brother Joey was two and a half. In our first-floor duplex living room, we were surrounded by toy parts, a naked plastic doll, homemade building blocks of pine, and a Little Golden Book, *The Little Red Hen*, with its pages crayoned.

Following World War II, the housing shortage caused by returning GIs forced us to live with my father’s parents in Minneapolis for a while, and then in Stanley’s Cabins in St. Cloud, heated by a potbelly stove. I learned my A-B-C’s in the outhouse at Stanley’s. Joey was born in Minneapolis, Janny in St. Cloud. I was born in Denver where my father had worked at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal during the war.

Our father’s new job at Toltz King



The author, right, and her brother, Joey, left, accompanied their father, Ben Sebesta, while shopping in downtown St. Paul in the late 1940s. Photo courtesy of Susanne Sebesta Heimbuch.

and Day architect and engineering firm brought us back to the Twin Cities from St. Cloud, where he had worked for Bradley Engineering. We—my parents, Ben Sebesta and Patricia Clancy Sebesta, with three children, rented a lower duplex in the middle of the block between Mackubin and Arundel streets.

We had one bedroom for us children. Our parents slept on a rollaway bed in the dining room. Our bathroom was through the kitchen. The toilet flushed with a pull chain attached to the cistern water box at the ceiling.

Foldable wooden laundry racks with damp diapers drying on them were always near the living room radiator. Stacks

of dry folded diapers rested on a large console radio.

* * *

"Ben! Ben! Pat, are you home?" demanded the landlady who lived upstairs. She banged on our backdoor. Sitting at the wooden kitchen table, Ben smoked a cigarette. He wanted his coffee. I was eating Wheaties with milk and watching water turn to coffee in the glass bubble percolating on the gas stove.

Our landlady couldn't open our back door, which didn't lock, because Ben had pushed the refrigerator in front of it to keep us all safe.

"There is a phone call for you," she hollered.

Ben turned off the coffeepot, put his shoes on. In a little while he returned.

"Mom and Dad are bringing us their old car," he said to Mother, still in her nightgown. "It will take them at least an hour to get here." His parents, Joseph and Christine Sebesta, lived on 37th Avenue South in Minneapolis. Freeways had yet to be built; they would use the Lake Street Bridge to cross the Mississippi River and traverse St. Paul on Marshall or University Avenue.

"I thought they were afraid of our Negro neighbors." She put her hands on her hips and looked at him.

"They worry about me walking from the streetcar late at night." He lit a cigarette and, after inhaling deeply, handed it to her. "Now I'll be able to work later."

She took a drag on his cigarette and handed it back. Then she had sudden energy.

"Susie, put this doll on your bed," and "Joey, put this truck in an A-B-C box." Dishes were washed. The living room was swept with broom and dustpan. Dirty diapers were re-rinsed and put to stew in a bucket of clean water.

"Grandma! Grandpa!" Joey and I screamed, looking out the front windows. They drove up in two 1940s cars, both long, both black and boxy, and parked them neatly at the curb, one behind the other. They gleamed cleanliness. Ben went out, pulling his coat on as he walked.

From the front window, I watched Ben and Grandpa walk around the two



Ben and Patricia Clancy Sebesta. Photo courtesy of Susanne Sebesta Heimbuch.

cars. They peered under the hoods. All the while, Grandpa kept glancing up and down Fuller Avenue. He checked his wallet. There was no one else around.

Christine wrinkled her nose at the stink of diapers drying and bent down to hug Joey and me.

"I brought raisin and molasses cookies for the children," Christine said, untying the string around the Wheaties box she had packed with cookies and then folded-in.

"Susie, wait. Joey, don't push." Pat coughed at the blackstrap molasses bouquet. Christine looked at Mother, her thin dress under an apron, her bare feet in white canvas Keds.

"I got up early this morning to bake my own bread for you," Grandma Christine said as she handed Mother two heavy loaves of wheat bread, wrapped in a flour-sack dishtowel embroidered with flowers. Christine wore a black woolen coat, and squat-heeled Eleanor Roosevelt shoes, as shiny as the cars.

"Thank you, you are very good to us," Mother said.

"Why would you say such a thing? Of

course, I'm good to you. These are my only grandchildren. You are their mother. Why wouldn't I be good to you?"

All the while, Grandpa Joe and Ben had kept surveillance outside. They didn't stay for breakfast, not even for a cup of coffee. Urban refugees, they ate breakfast at dawn, as they had on the Sebesta and Vacek farms in Beroun, Minnesota, in Pine County.

* * *

"Sing us another one," Joey said. Mother had been singing to us in perfect-pitch soprano. If time could be measured in number of songs, it was very late.

"I'm running out of children's songs. I'll recite you a poem by Robert Louis Stevenson," responded Mother. And so she did. And Shakespeare sonnets.

Usually she sang only a few songs to Joey and me tucked into bed together. On this night, however, things were different.

Ben had not yet come home. Light peeked from next door into our unlit room through curtain gaps, until it was suddenly totally dark.

"What happened?" Mother went to investigate. Joey and I huddled together. She walked room to room, testing lights. When she returned to the bedroom, she looked out our window, pulling the curtains aside. She looked out the bay window for a long time.

"Our neighbors must have gone to bed," she concluded finally, and, after fussing with Janny in his crib, returned to us again.

"What else would you like to hear?" The next time I looked at Joey, he was sound asleep.

* * *

"Hey Sooz, come here." Sitting down to show me three Mr. Peanut wrappers, Ben asked, "Do you want to send in for a Mr. Peanut cup? I'll read you the directions." He began to read the tiny print, "It says right here, 'Send three wrappers.'"

Mother looked up from diapering Janny and said, "Bar food."

Ben looked at her, but said to me, "They just started putting these peanuts in the candy machine at work. I eat peanuts for dinner when I work late." He addressed the envelope on the writing

surface that pulled down from Mother's fancy curved-front desk.

"So, Sooz, Do you want a red cup or a blue cup or a green cup?"

Mother put Janny in his crib. Baby powder floated on stripes of sunshine.

"Green, red, red, green," I chanted happily.

Mother walked across the room to look at the wrappers. "Three wrappers. Three nights late. Bar food."

"Green," I said, at last.

Ben said, "I told you, Pat. They put peanuts in the candy machine. You never listen to me. I don't have to leave work; I can keep working." He found a three-cent stamp in the desk's secret drawer.

"That's good, isn't it? I asked. Stretching across the desktop, I shut the secret drawer for him.

"Yes, it is," he winked at me.

She studied us. She talked to herself. Loud. "Everybody says, 'Poor Pat.' Well, I'm not 'Poor Pat.' I'm not some turnip that just fell off the truck, you know. I can just hear my relatives saying, 'Poor Pat.' Well, 'Poor Pat,' indeed."

I didn't know she had talked with her lawyer relatives about getting a Catholic Church marriage annulment during our days on Fuller Avenue. She was told her marriage had obviously been consummated, with three children as proof, so an annulment would never be granted.

"Let's mail our letter." Ben helped me with my coat. We walked together to the corner, holding hands and kicking leaves.

In houses to the west lived Victor Keiger and Ottis Smith; John Limieu, the piano tuner; Minnie Tessman and John Varva; Bertha Beulke and Ada Todd; Martha McGregor and Clearl Adams; and Lloyd Heidenreich. We knew some of them on sight.

The only other white preschooler was Jimmy who lived in the corner house facing Mackubin. We walked kitty-corner from Jimmy's house to the mailbox in front of St. Philip's Episcopal Church.

"Up you go, Sooz." Ben lifted me. "Put the letter in." I did and he put me down. Holding hands, we walked back on the other side of the street. I saw a very dark skinned woman hanging laundry on a front yard line. A lighter lady carried



In 1950 the author, far right, took lessons at the New Yorker School of Music and Dancing. When the students gave their Spring Dance Review at Wilson High School at Lafond and North Albert streets, she was part of the "Hollywood Square Dance" routine. Photo courtesy of Susanne Sebesta Heimbuch.

two cloth bags, heavy with groceries. A man polished a car.

Then I saw HIM. The mailman! He hopped down the steps next door and was loping on long legs toward our duplex, where two black mail boxes hung, one above the other.

"Daddy, Daddy," I squealed. "The mailman! He's bringing my Mr. Peanut cup. Hurry."

Ben laughed. Looking at me with eyes crinkling at the corners, he hugged me and explained. Then he swung me up onto his back and we trotted home.

* * *

"Aw, Pat, you didn't. You know I don't want you going there."

My mother had told him she fulfilled her holy-day obligation to attend Mass by going to St. Peter Claver Catholic Church on Aurora at Farrington, just five blocks away. Peter Claver, a Spanish Jesuit, was known as "the slave of the slaves," for the work he had done among kidnapped Africans in the Caribbean.

Officially, we were members of the parish of the Cathedral of Saint Paul, which would have been twice as far for her to walk in weather. Funny thing was, I didn't remember her leaving the duplex at all that day, and no babysitter had come.

* * *

"Pat, Pat, open the door. It's freezing out here. Pat!"

Mother opened the door and her sister, my Aunt Sis, Mary Clancy McIntyre, stamped off snow. She was dressed in matching boots and purse, and a fashionable winter coat.

"I brought you these," she said to Mother, indicating an armful of attire. "They were Janet's. She's the only one tall enough for you."

She set the clothing down, pulled out a cigarette, lit it, and blew smoke at the ceiling. Many of my mother's friends and relatives lived in the nearby parishes of Saint Luke's Catholic Church and the Cathedral of Saint Paul—Clancy, Conway, DeLaMare, Dodd, Holper, Lawler, McIntyre, and Sharood were just some of them.

Others—the Flynn and the Moriarty clans—lived in Saint Mark's parish in Merriam Park where Mother had grown up with Joanie Flynn Dreyspol (Janet's sister), Georgiana Haas Knapp, and Mariana Blakeslee Walby Cervenka as her best friends. Almost no one visited us, but we visited some of them from time to time.

Later, Aunt Sis and Mother drank tea in the kitchen from white and blue Lenox china teacups with matching saucers. Joey was still napping, but I woke up restless.



To celebrate the August 11th birthday of Mamie Moriarty Clancy, the author's grandmother, her adult family members had dinner at the newly opened Criterion Restaurant (formerly Harry's Café), located at 739 University Avenue at North Grotto Street in St. Paul, just seven blocks from the Sebesta home at 474 Fuller Avenue in Rondo. In its heyday, the typical patron of the Criterion ordered a steak rare with a baked potato and a wedge of lettuce. Today's label for this popular place would be "upscale," but no one used that term in the 1950s. In addition, people always dressed to go there because the Criterion was considered one of the best restaurants in St. Paul. Today this University Avenue location contains Trung Nam French Bakery, featuring Vietnamese cuisine. Seated, left to right, were Mamie's son, Luke Malachy Clancy; daughter Mary

"Aunt Sis" Clancy McIntyre; granddaughter Barbara Ann Clancy; daughter-in-law Esther Mary Defiel Clancy; Mamie; her son, John F. "Jack" Clancy; daughter-in-law Helen Kavanagh Clancy; son-in-law Benjamin Christian Sebesta; and her daughter and Ben's wife, Patricia Constance Clancy Sebesta. Luke and Helen Clancy were godparents to Susanne Sebesta Heimbuch. At the time this photo was taken in 1948, Jack, Esther Mary, and their daughter Barbara Clancy lived in Los Angeles, Calif., and were in St. Paul to visit Mamie. After being bed-ridden for several years, Mamie died November 11, 1953, in the Lynnhurst Nursing Home, just off University Avenue, across from Iris Park. This was the last family reunion photo of Mamie and her children. Photo courtesy of Susanne Sebesta Heimbuch.

"Really, Pat," Aunt Sis was saying. "You have no food in the refrigerator except olives. This is no way to raise children."

"I have Christine's farmer bread, full of healthy wheat and molasses." Mother made a face and they both laughed.

I sat on my telephone book and chair. A white and green Lenox china teapot sat on the faded cotton tablecloth printed with green stripes and red roses. For me, Mother poured tea into a cup that matched the teapot but didn't have its saucer.

"It is just us girls, now," Aunt Sis frowned at me. She wore peachy lipstick and pancake make-up. Her hair was trimmed and curled. She smelled of perfume.

Mother spooned sugar into my tea

with her sterling silver teaspoon. Then she handed me her special spoon, one of my favorites among her fancy things.

* * *

"Stay on the sidewalk," Mother ordered us. Snow was packed down, made slippery. Behind us, I could hear Janet's sling-back, high-heel shoes scrunching on the ice and snow. In her big fabric tote bag, she had placed her straw purse, extra diapers, and baby powder.

Under her Janet-used coat and dress, she wore stockings held up by garters, which fascinated me when I watched her dress. She had put on seriously red lipstick; then rubbed a bit of it onto each cheek with Vaseline for rouge. She had bright hazel eyes, high cheekbones, and bad teeth.

When Mother had doctors' appointments for the Baby Janny and herself once again pregnant, Joey and I stayed with Jimmy on the corner, whose yard was fenced. To Jimmy's mom, she said, "I'll be back as soon as I can." She repacked her restless baby to walk to the streetcar.

* * *

We didn't know that the Golden Age of Radio was coming to an end after television had been introduced in 1941. We listened to Gene Autry sing "Rudolf the Red Nose Reindeer," and Bing Crosby sing everything else. We listened to The Lone Ranger, Jack Benny, Orson Welles as The Shadow. We pictured their antics in our imaginations.

Our radiator did not always put out enough heat for Minnesota weather. Mother had rolled up the rug so we could all dance on worn hardwood floors to keep warm.

The huge radio blared. She sang along with Swing, Bebop Jazz, Dixieland and Ella Fitzgerald, knew the lyrics by heart.

"Run, Susie, run," chanted Mother. "Run, Joey." After I was running as fast as I could in the tempo of the song, huffing and puffing and overheated, she shouted, "Run faster." She turned the volume up, hoping to keep us warm and wear out our cabin fever.

I tried, but couldn't. Joey couldn't keep up either. We collapsed on each other, laughing. Janny clapped through it all.

* * *

The new baby Jimmy slept in the bassinet in the dining room, while Mother rested kitty-corner across the folded-out rollaway bed. Atop the bureau, the large fan with its frayed cord lamely offset the late August heat and humidity.

"I made pancakes," Ben called. He wore a bib apron, and was cooking breakfast in our windowless kitchen with lights turned on. Janny sat in the high chair, now his. Joey had graduated to phone books stacked on a chair.

Ben put two small pancakes on my plate. I reached for the maple syrup, but he stopped me.

"No, Sooz. Put butter on first." He demonstrated. Joey and Janny took turns showing each other the chewed and drippy contents of their mouths—like boys.

I stabbed my top pancake with my fork, lifting it entirely.

"Oh, no, Sooz," said Ben. "Keep them in a stack. Watch." With a carpenter's precision, he restacked and cut a perfect pie slice. I forked it into my mouth. He smiled at me. I smiled back with my lips closed—like a girl—over sweet syrup, salty butter, and warm pancake.

The new baby Jimmy was baptized at the Cathedral of Saint Paul by my father's brother, Father Eugene Sebesta, who was ordained in 1946 and was assigned from 1946 to 1950 to a parish in Montgomery, Minnesota, as an assistant pastor.



The author kept warm by wearing her grandmother's cape, as she watched St. Paul's Winter Carnival Parade in the early 1950s. Photo courtesy of Susanne Sebesta Heimbuch.

* * *

On Friday September 2, 1949, we went to the 13th Annual City of St. Paul Pop Concert at the St. Paul Auditorium sponsored by the Ford Dealers of St. Paul and South St. Paul. Our show was called "The Great Waltz Showboat." Members of the St. Paul Figure Skating Club twirled and glided to light classic, opera, show tunes, and popular music. Several soloists and the Civic Opera Chorus sang with the orchestra accompanied by a Steinway piano.

"Look, Sooz," Ben said. "You could do that if you practice." He pointed to an ice skater doing a spin.

I loved the lights and the action. I loved the music, much of which I knew from the radio. I did love ice skating, although my only experience had been skating on the frozen river near St. Cloud wearing, on my baby feet, my mother's size nine ice skates with socks stuffed into the toes.

Our finances must have improved because we also went to the Shrine Circus during this time. And in September 1949, my parents went to see Uncle Ted, Thaddeus Clancy, my mother's older brother, play the part of Archie Beaton in the road cast

of the musical *Brigadoon* at the St. Paul Auditorium when it toured from New York. In May 1950, Ted performed the same part in the play's Broadway revival, choreographed by Agnes de Mille.

Uncle Ted acted in seven Broadway plays from 1928 to 1950. In 1932, he played a Greek Warrior to Katharine Hepburn's Antiope in *The Warrior's Husband*, the role that propelled her to stardom. When Katharine was in St. Paul to play in *A Matter of Gravity* in 1977, she visited the Little Sisters of the Poor where Ted spent his last years. Oliver Towne wrote about this visit for the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. Katharine called him "Thaddeus," not Ted.

* * *

"I want to study ballet," I wailed, enchanted after seeing other toddlers in snug leotards, but instead, in the fall of 1949 and the spring of 1950, I took tap dancing, baton twirling, and acrobatics on Saturday mornings at the New Yorker School of Music and Dancing, located in the New York Building on Sixth and Robert Streets in downtown.

One day, I tiptoed down the hallway to ballet. When the door opened to let the first class out, I went in. I held onto the barre behind the second class of girls and stood on my tip toes—relevé en demi-pointes.

As I swung my arm out in a beautiful arc, I heard my mother's panic, "Where's Susie? Who's seen Susie?" High heels clomped down, then up the mezzanine stairs and I flexed my knees in a plié.

The classroom door swung open and she was not pleasant about my willfulness. That she herself in her sixties took tap dancing lessons at the St. Paul YMCA explains a lot.

In our recitals, Tommy Young always wore his cowboy suit and black hat and was always in the middle. We girls carried the themes with our cotton red-plaid skirts for Scotch Lassies and our silver and black taffeta-check skirts for Hollywood Square Dance.

My classmates were Carol Rolof [or Rolff], Kathleen Ruedy, Gayle Pickler, Mary Ellen Linder, Joyce Anderson, Diane Schmitz, Patty Ann Smith, and Sandra Smoliak.

My best tap dancing was none too

good. Being the shortest, I was placed at the end, where I looked down the line to see what to do. I got scolded for this. During recitals, the audience laughed when I couldn't remember. Maybe they thought I was cute, but my feelings were hurt.

Often, mother and I took the streetcar to my dance class, walking east on Fuller to Western and then the two blocks to University Avenue, where the Art Deco building of the Minnesota Milk Company, now Old Home Foods, dominated the corner then as it does now. "We girls," Mother said, and that was the best part of it, our times alone, without the boys along.

* * *

"Sit over there with Joey," Grandma Mamie Moriarty Clancy told me. "And be quiet, Susie." She lived at 709 Portland Avenue, now renamed the Delina Condominiums, three brick apartment buildings with a pretty central courtyard.

She pointed at a dining room settee, opposite the kitchen door. A white linen cloth covered the table. Chantilly by Gorham sterling silverware, which I have now inherited, gleamed in candlelight.

Mother helped Mamie put out ham and turkey, potatoes and green beans for the buffet. There were olives, pickles, and delicate dinner rolls. Mamie's sister Nora Moriarty Dodds was there, too.

Mother was wearing Janet's dress and shoes, even though Janet Flynn Duscha was in the living room with her husband, Harry Duscha, my father's shirttail cousin. Janet had been Winter Carnival Queen in 1939, and she was engaging.

I was not happy, banished with Joey. From the settee, I was impressed with the fashionable clothing, perfect make-up, new hairdo's and precise language. They entertained each other with smart cocktail banter. My godparents, Helen and Luke Clancy, talked with the Duschas, Aunt Jule Moriarty Sharood, and her grown daughter Rosemary, and others that I can't remember now.

"I'm taking you to meet your cousins Molly and Larry," Mother had said in preparation. "They are my sister's children, your Aunt Sis. You remember, Susie, we drank tea together."

"Yes, Mama, they live in New York."

"They did," she answered. "Now they live here." Their father John Francis McIntyre had taken an overseas position with the CIA where families were not allowed.

But Molly and Larry were not there. When Joey and I were introduced to the adults, our charms were short lived. Mother fixed dinner plates for us. Ben stopped by to help us cut our turkey. No other adults talked to us.

On the way home, Mother asked Ben, "Why didn't Sis let me know she wouldn't bring her children?"

"We don't have a phone," he said. Focused on the street, Ben was driving home carefully. The distance was only a mile or so of city blocks, but he had drunk more than a few drinks.

"And Janet was there. I didn't know Janet would be there. I was wearing her clothes. Did she say anything about it? Ben, did she say anything?"

* * *

For Christmas 1949, Joey and I went on our parents' shopping trip to Schuneman's Department Store on Wabasha at Sixth Street, and the Emporium and the Golden Rule on East Seventh and Robert Streets, and walking the four blocks between them in snow. Holiday lights were everywhere and I remember the bustle and the last-minute crowds.

In one store, Ben asked Mother, "What should Santa bring Susie?"

"A doll," she answered. I was elated. "She already has one."

Afterwards, when Joey, Ben, and I ate in a booth, probably at Walgreen's on Seventh and Wabasha, Ben asked for an extra glass of water, so we could wash our hands at the table instead of his having to take us to the bathroom, or maybe they didn't have one.

They had bought the Little Golden Book, *The Night Before Christmas*, to read at bedtime—Ben read it to us while we waited for our food—but everything else they purchased secretly, one distracting us while the other acquired. Mother locked these secret items in the car trunk while we ate, and joined us later, with snow in her hair.

When Christmas came, Santa had

brought Joey an erector set and Janny a Rudolf the Red-Nosed Reindeer stuffed animal. Even though Ben didn't agree, I did get a doll, but with a blank plastic face and a crayon, so I could draw a happy face or a sad one. I was not happy—I wanted a REAL doll.

* * *

In late summer 1950, Joe, Jan, the new baby Jimmy and I stayed overnight at Grandma Christine's home in south Minneapolis, where she fixed us fried bologna sandwiches with butter for supper and Ovaltine for bedtime.

When Ben and Mother picked us up, they drove us not to Fuller Avenue in Cornmeal Rondo, but to our new three-bedroom, yellow bungalow in Circle Pines, where a farmer had built a couple dozen houses and a curving road in his back field.

Somewhere during the commotion, Jan lost his stuffed Rudolf the Red-Nosed Reindeer and wailed himself to sleep for many nights crying, "Rudolf" over and over. Ben finally bought him another one so we all could sleep.

Circle Pines, in Anoka County, in those days, with Rice Creek running through it, and its thick woods, open fields, and nearby farms was an enchanting place for four young children to explore nature in Minnesota's extreme seasons.

Circle Pines was not such a great place for our mother, however. Living in Rondo, she had been physically close to her St. Paul family and friends, and the duties of raising four young children so close in age occupied more time than she had.

In Circle Pines, her physical isolation, with no respite from the tasks of caring for four preschoolers, and her husband often working late proved overwhelming. In 1956, to help her mental health, we moved back to St. Paul, where so much of our lives had been focused anyway.

Susanne Sebesta Heimbuch is a graduate of the University of Minnesota who currently teaches English to middle-school students in Los Angeles. Her "Growing Up" in our Summer 2007 issue describes her years on Dayton Avenue, after her family returned to St. Paul.

R.C.H.S.

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This recent photo of a section of the gardens at the rear of the Governor's Residence on Summit Avenue in St. Paul shows how they have flourished. In the foreground are pinkish Hydrangea macrophylla along with bright red Begonia and green-hued Hosta and orange Canna in the background. For more on the history of these gardens, see page 14. Photo courtesy of Pete Sieger.