

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

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

—page 14

*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

Volume 46, Number 2

Summer 2011

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

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

CONTENTS

- 3 *From Thomery to "The Anchorage"*
The Larpenteurs and Their Journey to St. Paul
Michele Murnane
- 14 *A Garden Inspires a Community*
With Style, Grace, and Pride: The Gardens at the
Minnesota Governor's Residence
Karine Pouliquen and Lori Schindler
- 27 *Growing Up in St. Paul*
The Rondo Years, 1948–1950
Susanne Sebesta Heimbuch

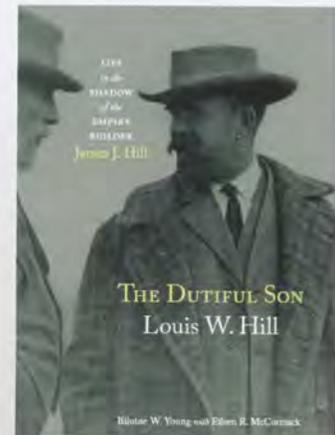
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and by a contribution from the late Reuel D. Harmon*

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.

Published by Ramsey County Historical, Saint Paul, Minnesota.

To order books call 651-222-0701
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Mark Your Calendar for the RCHS Annual Members' Event

Monday, October 24, 2011

Watch your mailbox for your personal invitation to the RCHS Annual Members Meeting. It's always a warm and cordial gathering and a good time to share your interest in history. For further information call 651-222-0701.



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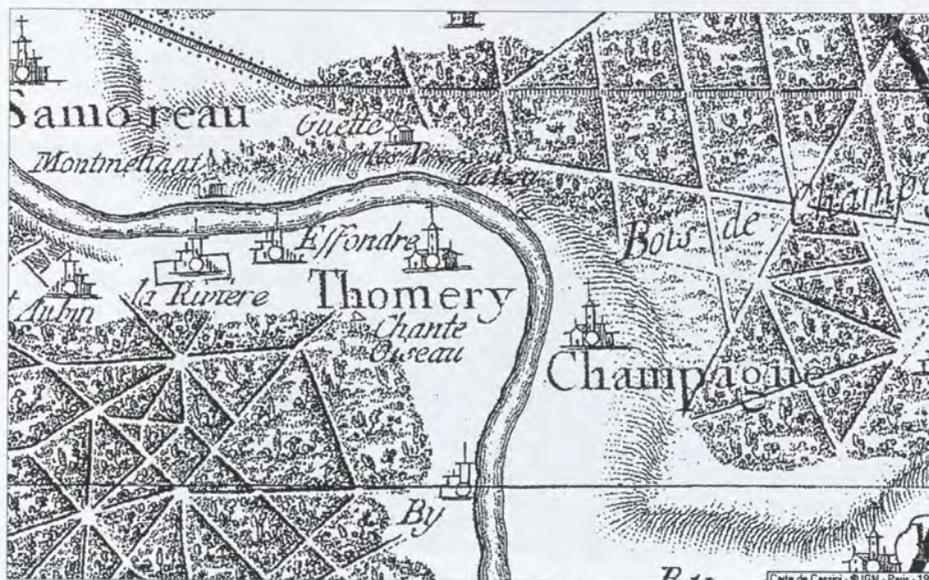
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From Thomery to “The Anchorage”

The Larpenteurs and Their Journey to St. Paul

Michele Murnane

Understanding why the Larpenteur family came to America in the early nineteenth century requires some knowledge of their family history. Around 1641, a few members of the family had settled in the village of Thomery, France, on the Seine. Thomery is located about forty-five miles south of Paris and is about five miles from the town of Fontainebleau, where Napoleon and Josephine spent time at the royal residence, the Chateau de Fontainebleau.



A section of an old map showing Thomery, France, on the banks of the Seine River, surrounded by forests and vineyards. Map courtesy of Michele Murnane.

The fertile land along the banks of the Seine provided a perfect setting for the growing of grapes. For centuries, Thomery has been known for its table grapes which are cultivated on trellised vineyards, on a network of stone walls. The people of Thomery, including the Larpenteur family, particularly Baptiste Larpenteur, claim that they were the first to cultivate the Chasselas grape. This method of grape cultivation ensured production practically all year around. Because the Larpenteurs were for the most part horticulturists, good farm land was very important in their lives.

In addition to their strong connection to the land, the Larpenteurs' relationship with Napoleon Bonaparte played a key role in their lives. According to family lore, members of the Larpenteur family assisted Josephine during the French Revolution, after her husband, Alexandre, vicomte de Beauharnais, died on the guillotine (1794). When Napoleon became emperor in 1804, he and Josephine, according to the history of Thomery, visited Thomas and Anne Larpenteur at their inn for a dish of their fish stew.¹

Louis Benoist Larpenteur, another member of the family, was a great sup-

porter of Napoleon and served in his French National Guard. After Napoleon's defeat at the hands of the British general, the Duke of Wellington, and his allies at the Battle of Waterloo on June 18, 1815, Napoleon was forced to abdicate. Soon thereafter, Louis Benoist left France for the United States. In joining other Frenchmen who had been loyal to Napoleon and chose to seek safety in America, Louis Benoist, like many others, including Napoleon's brother Jerome, thought that "the American government would make some attempt to get Napoleon off the island of St. Helena, but . . . [subsequently] found the [U.S.] government would countenance no such attempt"²

Leaving France

During this time of exile in the United States, Louis Benoist began to appreciate the life and opportunities offered by this new country. In addition, he was unwilling to support the Bourbon dynasty, which was again in power in France. Consequently Louis Benoist decided to bring his family to America and begin a new life. Returning to France, he sold all his property and in January 1818, he left for Maryland with his wife, Marguerite, and their four children: nineteen-year-old Louis Auguste; thirteen-year-old Eugene Nicholas; eleven-year-old Charles Eugene; and their eight-year-old



A 2008 photo of a Larpenteur home on the Effondre in Thomery, France. Photo courtesy of Michele Murnane.



Charles Eugene Larpenteur (1807-1872), fur trader in the American West and A.L.'s uncle. Photo courtesy of Michele Murnane.

daughter, Augustine. Armand Larpenteur, Louis Benoist's father, also emigrated with the family. He died in Baltimore ten years later.

The Larpenteurs settled near the city of Baltimore, where there was a small French community and land available for sale. Louis and Armand purchased a sixty-acre farm, which was known as the "French Garden," on Pimlico Road. As young Charles later noted, the farm was "well supplied with fruits, but the soil was poor and stony."³ The decision to go to Maryland was probably due to the circumstances surrounding the founding of Maryland. In 1632 King Charles I of England, who was a Catholic, had granted a royal charter to George Calvert, the 1st Baron Baltimore, who was a convert to Catholicism, to establish a new colony in what later became Maryland. Calvert's sons led the way in bringing colonists to this new land, which soon became a haven for persecuted Catholics, especially after England became embroiled in a civil war (1642-1648) that eventually returned control of the crown to the Protestants.

The Larpenteur family worked the farm on Pimlico Road for several years with little success. At the age of twenty-one, Charles left the farm, eventually being hired by the American Fur Trading Company at Fort Union, which was a trading post in what later became north-eastern Montana at the junction of the

Yellowstone and Missouri rivers. In his letters to the family, he wrote of fertile lands out west and of the Indians he had encountered. Nephews Auguste Louis (also known as A.L.) and his brother Armand Bayard, who were living with their grandfather, Louis Benoist, after the death of their mother, were fascinated by Charles's stories of the West. In the words of A.L., "The departure of Uncle Charles, his experiences and the stories he related when he visited us, are dwelt upon here by me, as they were the direct inspiration of my ambition to seek the west and led me to cast my fortunes in with the pioneers of the great state of Minnesota."⁴



Eugene Nicholas Larpenteur (1805-1877) married Rosa Gambrielle Delatoison Desvarreux (1806-1887). They had six children. Eugene, another of A.L.'s uncles, took A.L. west to St. Louis in 1841 and later settled in St. Paul in 1849. Photo courtesy of Robbi Hoy.

Another Larpenteur, Eugene Nicholas, was also very interested in finding good farm land. In 1841 he decided to go west to St. Louis, Missouri, and, with the permission of grandfather Louis Benoist, took his then eighteen-year-old nephew A.L. with him on the journey. They traveled by rail, canal, horseback, and on boats on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, arriving in St. Louis on October 1, 1841. Eugene set up a four-acre market garden and did very well for a time.

Because of his commitments in the fur trade, Charles was unable to meet

Eugene and his nephew in St. Louis, as had been planned. Fortunately, in September 1843, A.L. met William Hartshorn, who was a *coureur de bois*, a trapper and Indian trader. Hartshorn had partnered with Henry Jackson, who traded goods for furs. As A.L. later explained, Jackson was "from a small settlement called St. Paul, which was at the head of navigation, in the Territory of Wisconsin and near the great falls of St. Anthony. He informed me that it was in the country of the Sioux Indians. . . ."⁵ Jackson subsequently offered A.L. a job with the firm of Hartshorn and Jackson, which he quickly accepted. A.L. then booked passage on the steamer *Iowa* along with some invoiced trade goods and headed for St. Paul, arriving there fifteen days later. The firm "was housed in a log cabin store on the corner of Bench and Jackson streets. . . . It was, of course, a living place as well as store, and later became Jackson's Hotel, the first caravansary in the saintly city."⁶ Unlike his nephew A.L., Eugene Nicholas stayed in St. Louis for a time, but his business never was a great success. Consequently, in 1845 he returned to his family in Baltimore.

New Life in Minnesota

In September 1843, the first Larpenteur, twenty-year-old Auguste Louis arrived in what would become the state of Minnesota. Henry Jackson had hired him to work in his store, which was located in an area known as "Pigs Eye." This small village would later become St. Paul, Minnesota. When A.L. arrived, only a few white families were living there. They included John R. Irvine and his wife; James R. and Rose Perry Clewett; the Henry Jacksons; Abraham and Mary Ann Perry (or Perret); the Vital (or Vetal) Guerins; and the Gervais brothers, Benjamin and Pierre.⁷ August Louis would make this his home for the next seventy-six years, until his death in 1919, by which time "he was celebrated as the Grandfather of St. Paul."⁸

This was a great time to come to St. Paul because this struggling village was on the verge of its ". . . first economic boom. In 1844, fur trappers in the Red River Valley were persuaded to begin shipping their furs east to St. Paul each

year by oxcart and from there south and east by steamboat.”⁹ For the next ten years or so, merchants would prosper from this trade.

A.L. already spoke English and French and diligently studied the Dakota (Eastern or Santee Sioux) and Ojibwe languages.¹⁰ Learning the native tongues enabled him to work with the local Indians. Jackson gave A.L. the Dakota name *Wamduska*, which means “crawling like a snake.” A.L. felt this name was an injustice to him. But, years later the great Sioux

American Fur Trading Company, which for years had a monopoly on trade with the Indians east of the Mississippi. When he told them the purpose of his visit, he was amused to find himself “escorted” out of the fort to his canoe on the river! Another job he took on was traveling to various Indian “camps and trade with Indians, taking with me a stock of supplies they always stood in need of, such as ammunition, tobacco, calico, etc. and in return I would get muskrat, mink, and

Prospering in St. Paul

The Hartshorn and Jackson partnership lasted only two years, until 1845. “Mr. Hartshorn . . . moved to the old Mortimer claim (on Third Street), and commenced business there on his own account. He also had one or two stores or trading posts in other places at Saint Croix Falls and on the Minnesota River.”¹³ A.L. continued to work for Hartshorn as a clerk. He and his wife Mary Josephine lived in the Hartshorn’s log home and store, helping both with household chores and



Auguste Louis Larpenteur (1823–1919), right, married Mary Josephine Presley (1825–1902) in 1845. They had ten children. This photo of them was taken about 1900. Photo by Sheperd Photo Studio. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

war chief Sitting Bull called him by that name. A.L. writes that Sitting Bull said to him, “I have never seen you, but I know you; you are a friend to us and had we only such as you to deal with there would never have been any trouble between the government and ourselves.”¹¹

Because A.L. was young and eager to learn, the partners gave him many interesting jobs to do for the firm of Jackson & Hartshorn. One of these was to go to Ft. Snelling and collect payment from the Indians for the goods they had bought. On one such visit, he met Henry H. Sibley and Alexander Faribault from the

otter skins.”¹² He had many adventures on these trips, some of which lasted several months at a time. As he travelled about the frontier, A.L. witnessed the real life of the Indians, including some disputes, usually involving the Ojibwe and Dakota tribes.

During a lull in business in 1845, A.L. returned to St. Louis to visit his Uncle Eugene and other friends. While there, he met a young German girl, Mary Josephine Presley, who was twenty years old. He proposed to her and on December 7, 1845, she became his wife.

in the store. “At times it was very lively at the store, and the floor so covered with Indians lying about, that one could hardly step without walking over them.” It was lively in town too, and once a fight broke between the Ojibwe and Dakota Indians on Jackson Street, resulting in stores being shot up and an Indian squaw being killed.¹⁴ Slowly these wild times in the western territories gave way to signs of increasing civilization. One instance of the way St. Paul was changing occurred in 1846 when President James K. Polk appointed Henry Jackson the first postmaster for the area of what is now

Minnesota and the Dakotas. A.L., as his unofficial deputy postmaster, helped him build the first mailbox, which consisted of sixteen pigeon holes for sorting letters. (That original mailbox is in the archives of the Minnesota Historical Society.)¹⁵

Another indication that St. Paul would someday become a great city took place in the summer of 1847. A.L. and other residents "sent to Prairie du Chien for a civil engineer. Mr. Ira Brunson came, and he with his brother, Benjamin Brunson and S.P. Folsom, laid out the original town of St. Paul, about a half a mile square. This was before the government had surveyed it and it was held by us under the act and name of Squatter Sovereignty."¹⁶ "It was A.L. who drove in the first stake and carried the first chain in the original survey of St. Paul"¹⁷ The town ran from Wacouta Street, north to Eighth and west to St. Peter, and back to Jackson Street and the river. "A committee consisting of Henry H. Sibley, Louis Robert and myself [A.L. Larpenteur] was appointed" to make correct the titles to the lots held in the town by residents.¹⁸ "This was quite a difficult task, and required not a little trouble and patience to sift out the real and equitable owners in some cases."¹⁹ A.L. also proudly states "I have the honor of being the one who entered the piece of ground upon which our future Capitol building was located."²⁰ A.L. also helped to name the streets in St. Paul after several of the early residents like Henry Jackson, Henry Sibley, Henry Rice, and Louis Robert. Ironically, A.L. did not name a street after himself. Not until 1904, when the St. Paul City Council renamed Minneapolis Avenue as Larpenteur Avenue, was A.L. honored as the oldest surviving pioneer in the city.²¹

Starting a Family

On September 27, 1847, A.L. and Mary Josephine welcomed their first child, Rosa Marie Larpenteur. She was the first white child born after the town of St. Paul was laid out. At this time A.L. built the second frame house in the city at the corner of Third and Jackson streets (for many years afterward known as the "Wild Hunter Hotel").²² While



In a photo taken late in life, A.L. proudly stands beside the first post office boxes in St. Paul, which he built on April 7, 1846, for use in Henry Jackson's store. Photo from an old newspaper clipping courtesy of John W. Waters.

the Larpenteurs were busy with child rearing, larger events involving the legal status of Minnesota country were about to involve A.L. Iowa had become a state in 1846 and the U.S. Congress had fixed its northern boundary where it is today. Minnesota was thus part of Wisconsin Territory, but its territorial legislature had petitioned Congress to give them statehood and to set their western boundary at the Mississippi. That proposal failed to gain traction and the Congress set the western boundary at the St. Croix River.

On May 29, 1848, the Congress admitted Wisconsin as a state, "fixing the State boundaries as they are now seen on the maps. . . . [and] . . . what is now

Minnesota was 'left out in the cold,' with no government. . . ."²³ This left the triangle of land between the St. Croix and the Mississippi, where it happened most of the white settlers lived, without a formal government or, as some in Minnesota argued, with what constituted a remnant of the Territory of Wisconsin. Neither the lumbermen along the St. Croix nor the residents of St. Paul had wanted to be a part of Wisconsin, where they knew they would have little influence in the governing of the new state.

Consequently leaders in St. Paul and its French-speaking majority decided to hold a convention to address the area's uncertain legal status. On August 26, 1848, A.L. was one of sixty-one delegates to the

Stillwater Convention, where he helped to draft the petition to Congress that led to the establishment of the Territory of Minnesota.²⁴ Henry Sibley was elected as their delegate and sent to Washington to persuade the Congress to establish the Territory of Minnesota, which was created in 1849. President Zachary Taylor appointed Alexander Ramsey the territory's first governor. Also at this time it was "understood that Saint Paul was to be fixed on as the Capital, but Stillwater was to have the State's prison, and Saint Anthony the university. . . ."²⁵ Nine years later, on May 11, 1858, Minnesota was admitted as the thirty-second state in the Union.

In the spring of the year 1848, "Mr. Hartshorn retired from the trade, and disposed of his interest in [his store], with a quantity of real estate, to a new firm called Freeman, Larpenteur & Co. . . ." (John and William H. Randall of New York also had an interest in the business.) At the time, A.L. was twenty-five years old. This new business moved into a warehouse on the levee, at the foot of Jackson Street in August 1848. They were merchants (also known as "General Dealers") who sold dry goods, groceries, and whatever else the residents needed. Goods were hauled up the Jackson street hill by ox-cart and sled, depending on the season. Freeman & Larpenteur's building, as it was called, was used on many occasions for town meetings, school meetings, and other meetings to conduct the business of a growing town. They were also conscientious citizens. In an article in *The Minnesota Pioneer* of August 16, 1849, the newspaper reported that, "Messrs. Freeman, Larpenteur & Co., with some aid from their neighbors, have erected a staircase from the lower landing to the summit of Jackson's point. It renders the passage up and down the bluff a diversified and pleasant promenade."²⁷

In 1849, at the second session of the Territorial Legislature, A.L. became a member of a new men's organization called the "Old Settlers Association Club," also known as "The Forty-Niners." The club was open to any man who was a Minnesota resident, age twenty-one and older, in 1849.²⁸ A.L. was appointed the club's first secretary and remained in this position for "more than 50 years, almost

continuously." In 1903 there were less than thirty of the original members still in the organization, with only nineteen able to attend the meeting and banquet.²⁹

When Minnesota became a territory, St. Paul had about 1,000 residents and the population was slowly increasing. John R. Irvine, Henry Rice, and others put up for sale some newly surveyed lands that were nearby. As things were going so well for A.L., he wrote to his Uncle Eugene and Grandfather Louis Benoist and told them that the land was very fertile for farming and was affordable. This encouraged them to migrate west to Minnesota. In April 1849, they sold their farm on Pimlico

Josephine gave birth to a son, Samuel B. Larpenteur.

A.L. Buys Land

To help his eastern relatives get settled, A.L. "claimed 160 acres in the Midway, near Lexington Parkway and University Avenue, which he sold to his Uncle Eugene to farm."³⁰ Here in 1849 Eugene Nicholas built a farm for himself, his wife Rosa, and their six children. At first they lived in a small log cabin, but later they built a beautiful house, white with green shutters, set in a field of waving wheat, at the end of a tree-lined lane. One of Eugene's sons, James Desvarreux-Larpenteur (1847-1937), moved back



In 1887 James Desvarreux-Larpenteur (1847-1937) painted this pastoral scene showing his family's home in St. Paul, which was known as "The French Chateau." Photo courtesy of Michele Murnane.

Road in Baltimore and began their journey, arriving in St. Paul in May. Tragically, however, Grandfather Louis Benoist Larpenteur, who had brought the Larpenteur family to a new life in America, died of cholera three days after they arrived in St. Paul. He is buried in Calvary Cemetery. The Larpenteurs got some happier news, on the other hand, in December 1849 when A.L. became a father for the second time. Mary

to France around 1870, to study art at the National Academy, under Yvon. He returned to Minnesota in 1886, staying for three years, teaching art classes. He painted some Minnesota scenes, including a beautiful picture of his family farm house.³¹ The family lived in this house until 1876. His father, Eugene Nicholas Larpenteur, died in May 1877 at the age of seventy-three.

In a few years, more family members

found their way to St. Paul, including A.L.'s sister Mararete Anne and her husband Joshua Robertson; and the children of his Aunt Augustine, Josephine Speid Morris and Margaret Emily Morris. A.L.'s Uncle Charles was still working for the American Fur Trading Company at Fort Union in Montana, but eventually he settled his family in Iowa, where he died in 1872. His brother, Armand Bayard Larpenteur, married Octavie Sevin. They settled in Louisiana, where they raised a family.

and trinkets of that class."³³ In the early days merchants such as A.L. learned the various native languages so they could trade with the natives. For years he maintained his friendship and the respect, which he valued, of the native populations. "There were several of the older stores in our city, which were the recognized headquarters of these red men, and were known far and wide among the tribes as such. Larpenteur's was one of such places."³⁴ The Dakota chief Little Crow (Taoyateduta) and the Ojibwe leader Hole

opened the flap of my tent and looking out I saw an Indian standing in front of it. When I asked him what he was doing there, he astonished me by making the reply: 'Go back to sleep, I know you are tired and as I have been told that trouble has been made by whiskey brought into the camp, I thought I would come here to protect your property until daylight.'" The Indian standing guard that night was Little Crow.³⁵

When the Indians were removed by treaty "from Mendota in 1852,



James Desvarreux-Larpenteur, left, in his studio in Paris. Photo courtesy of Anne Marie Desvarreux-Larpenteur Lefebvre. For more information on the art of James Desvarreux-Larpenteur, see Marguerite Miller's The Larpenteur Story.

The firm of Freeman, Larpenteur & Company dissolved in 1850 upon the death of David B. Freeman and was taken over by the other investors, John and William Randall.³² A.L. decided strike out alone and establish a new store. To obtain the necessary stock and goods for this venture, he had to travel to St. Louis by boat because no railroad reached that far west. Consequently, merchants relied on river travel or made their way cross country on either a cart or by horseback.

In the 1850s the native population around St. Paul was not faring as well as in early days when "they used to supply the local markets with fish, wild fowls, venison, bear meat, cranberries and other wild fruit, furs and products of the forest generally; besides moccasins, bead-work,

in the Day the Younger (Bagoneglizhig) were among those with whom A.L. traded. Later both men become celebrated in the history of Minnesota, primarily due to the events surrounding their deaths.

A Friend to the Indians

Because A.L. was considered a friend to the Indians, they respected him. According to A.L., "I would pause a moment to pay a tribute to the honesty of the Indians whom I knew in those days and which is well deserved." He relates an incident that happened on one of his trips to an Indian camp to trade. A party of men from St. Paul also came to the camp, but they had liquor with them and soon A.L. felt uneasy when he heard a noise outside of his tent. "Hearing a noise, I

their direct trade with St. Paul ceased, but [the city] always remained headquarters for outfitting traders for the various tribes."³⁶ Often hundreds of carts, coming from all the surrounding area, including Canada, were camped around Larpenteur Lake. Although this lake no longer exists, a description of it and what happened has survived. "Larpenteur Lake was a fine body of clear water. The east end was at a little distance west of Dale street, between Carroll and Marshall streets, and it extended to a little beyond St. Alban's street. It was directly opposite the Protestant Orphan Asylum (south-east corner of Marshall Avenue and St. Albans Street). A good many years ago a land owner, whose south line was in

The Next Generations of Larpenteurs

Auguste Louis (1823–1919) and Mary Josephine Presley Larpenteur (1825–1902) had ten children, all of whom were born in St. Paul. In birth order they were: Rosa Marie (1847–1921); Samuel B. (1849–1926); Theresa E. (1852–1927); Caroline Stella (1854–1919); Louis Auguste (1856–1942); Martha Jane (1859–?); Clara Josephine (1860–? [sometime after 1920]); George Albert (1863–1947); Willis Amherst (1866–1962); and Paul (1869–1926). The ten Larpenteur children produced eighteen grandchildren. Those grandchildren produced in the next generation thirty-three great-grandchildren. Today the descendants of A.L. and Mary Josephine number nearly 300 persons, living across the United States. Research by family members has yielded varying amounts of information about the lives of those ten Larpenteur children. Today descendants continue to seek information about their forebears and relations. Reproduced below are photographs of those children of A.L. and Mary Josephine Larpenteur of St. Paul that the family has found to date.



The members of A.L. and Mary Josephine Larpenteur's family on the lawn of *The Anchorage* in 1885. A.L. is seated at the far right and Mary Josephine is also seated on the far left. Larpenteur descendants believe that Paul Larpenteur is sitting in front of the tree and granddaughter Mary ("Mae") Josephine Stanton is leaning against the tree. George Albert Larpenteur is the man standing closest to A.L. with his wife Mary to his right. Rosa Larpenteur Stanton may be the woman standing next to A.L. The others in the photo have not as yet been identified. Photo courtesy of Vicci Rudin.



A photo from a 1913 St. Paul newspaper of four generations of Larpenteurs. They are identified as Auguste Louis Larpenteur (1823–1919), left, George Albert Larpenteur (1863–1947), center, George Earl Larpenteur (1889–1957), right, and Allen Louis Larpenteur (1913–1977) on his father's knee. Photo courtesy of Vicci Rudin and Michele Murnane.



Rosa Marie Larpenteur Stanton Harrison. Photo courtesy of Robbi Hoy.



Theresa E. Larpenteur Briggs. Photo courtesy of Robbi Hoy.



Caroline Stella Larpenteur Hill Steigers Nolan. Photo courtesy of Robbi Hoy.



Clara Josephine ("Dodie") Larpenteur Sutter. Photo courtesy of Robbi Hoy.



Willis Amherst Larpenteur in a newspaper photo from 1958. Photo courtesy of John W. Waters.



Paul Larpenteur. Photo courtesy of Robbi Hoy.

the water at the east end of this lake, filled in to his line, but did not improve the property. Iglehart Street was graded through it, and St. Albans Street across it; the remaining part was filled in, terminating its existence.”³⁷

A. L. also ventured into the political arena. In 1850, at a town election, he was elected as one of the election trustees, and in that same year he was named

he had purchased between St. Paul and St. Anthony. Finally, in May 1860 he completed his house, which stood on the corner of Rondo and Dale streets and named it “The Anchorage.” All was ready for his growing family to move in. At this time his family also included children Louis August born in 1856, Martha Jane born in 1859 and Clara Josephine born in 1860. A.L. and Mary Josephine were to have



A 1936 photo of “The Anchorage” (1860–1959) at 341 North Dale Street in St. Paul, the home of A.L. and Mary Josephine Larpenteur. The Larpenteurs made their home a place of refuge for those in need. Photo by A.F. Raymond. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

to the first grand jury in Ramsey County. During the charter election of 1851, he ran for the office of president, but was defeated by Robert Kennedy, but only by a slim margin of eight votes. In the first city elections, after the City of St. Paul was incorporated on March 4, 1854, A.L. was elected for a two-year term as an alderman for the Second Ward. He was reelected in 1855 and 1857, serving until 1860.³⁸

Two more children were born to A.L. and Mary Josephine—Theresa E. born in 1852 and Caroline Stella born in 1854. As A.L.’s business improved and his family grew, he purchased more land. “In 1855, he built the four-story brick block on the corner (Jackson Street), and used it several years as a store, carrying on a large business.”³⁹ In 1856 he started hauling rocks to build his family home, on five acres of land

three more children, George Albert born in 1863, Willis Amherst born in 1866, and Paul born in 1869, making it a total of ten healthy children, ranging in age from one to twenty-three. The Anchorage was full! The property on which the home was built was large enough to provide A.L. and his children opportunities to hunt with their dog, Nellie. Mary Josephine lived in this home until her death in 1902. A.L. lived in the house until 1916, when he sold it to Archbishop John Ireland. It became a Catholic Infants Home for unwed mothers and later The Fellowship Club, a residence for the rehabilitation of alcoholics. The Anchorage was located at 431 N. Dale Street and was razed in 1959 to make way for section of Interstate-94 running between Minneapolis and St. Paul.⁴⁰

The treaties of Traverse des Sioux and

Mendota in 1851 made more than twenty-one million acres of Dakota land west of the Mississippi River (known at the time as the Suland) available for white settlement at a cost to the U.S. government of about \$1.5 million. As more people started to establish farms on these lands, agriculture grew, helping the territory to become more self-sustaining for food, so it was no longer necessary to import it all. And, for the first time, trade with the settlers became as important as trade with the Indians. But the needs of these settlers were changing, as they became more interested in civilized items, such as silk dresses and bonnets for the ladies, which could only be acquired from merchants in the East. In 1856, the river was still the main means of transportation for most of these goods between St. Louis and St. Paul (a four-day trip), but in the winter, ice closed the river to steamboats and other forms of transportation, like sleighs, were quite expensive. So A.L., like many other merchants, had to make the trips to Galena, Dubuque, and St. Louis, to stock up on more diversified goods. These trips in the autumn required stock that would carry the settlers through the winter months. A.L. reminisced in his later years that “there is nothing now . . . to equal the palatial steamers which plied the Mississippi in the fifties and before railroad travel had superseded them as a means of conveyance.”⁴¹

Financial Panic and War Comes to Minnesota

In the years following the opening of the Dakota lands to white settlers, St. Paul boomed. Real estate speculation flourished and, as was later discovered, numerous instances of fraud underlay many get-rich-quick schemes in the city of St. Paul. In 1857 when the Ohio Life Insurance and Trust Company of New York failed, St. Paul was hit hard. “Business was paralyzed, real estate actually valueless and unsaleable at any price, and but little good money in circulation”⁴² after several local banks closed. A.L. and other merchants were hit very hard. He had to sell his store, sell some of his real estate holdings, and try to collect debts owed to him. In the end, he was lucky and able to clear all of his



Armand Bayard Larpenteur (1824-1896), A.L.'s brother who settled in Louisiana and married Octavie Leocadie Sevin (1830-1886). Photo courtesy of the Jerry Larpenter family.

own debt. Finally in 1862, he went to work for the firm of James C. and Henry C. Burbank at their store which carried boots, shoes, and other dry goods. During his stay there, he went on business trips to Chicago, New York, Boston, and Baltimore to order various goods.

Between 1861 and 1865 when the nation was torn apart during the Civil War, Minnesota sent many troops to fight in the Union Army. At the time, A.L. was diagnosed with ophthalmic inflammation of the eye; thus he was unfit for duty. Unfortunately, his brother Armand Bayard Larpenteur in Louisiana, who was raising a family of twelve children, enlisted into the Confederate Army. He thought, like many others, that the war would only last a short time. After the war, he returned to his home, only to find it devastated and his family scattered.

Treaty violations and hardships among the Dakota Indians came to a head in 1862, in the midst of the Civil War. A.L. later recalled in a 1909 newspaper interview that "the Indians told me that they were starving, that they couldn't get ammunition to hunt game, and that they couldn't collect their annuities [that were

to be paid to them under the 1851 treaties] . . . the result of the discontent engendered by the taking of their land was the Massacre of 1862."⁴³ The Massacre of 1862 (also known as the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862), was led by Little Crow in southwestern Minnesota. It resulted in the deaths of between 1200 and 1800 settlers (unofficial); unknown number of deaths of the Dakota by the military; the capture and internment of more than 1,000 Dakota men and the mass execution of thirty-eight Dakota men; and the internment of more than 1,600 Dakota women, children and old men near Ft. Snelling. During this bad time, many of the fleeing settlers sought refuge and safety at A.L.'s home, "The Anchorage," where he gave them shelter.

In 1866 Burbanks and Co. dissolved and became the firm of Amherst H. Wilder, Channing Seabury, and A.L. Larpenteur, but profits went down following the end of the war. Consequently that business lasted only two years. With the capital that A.L. received from the dissolution of that business, he "opened the first exclusive Produce Commission house in the city."⁴⁴ Once again A.L.'s business prospered until 1877, when a new financial panic hit St. Paul and the west. At the age of fifty-four, he once again had to give up his business, this time leaving everything to his creditors. All of his hard work and the struggles of making a living had begun to affect his health. Impaired by rheumatism, he left St. Paul and spent three months in Hot Springs, Arkansas, regaining his strength. He also took a trip to Louisiana to visit his daughter Stella, and most likely his brother Armand and his family. In May 1877 A.L. returned to St. Paul because of the death of his Uncle Eugene.

With his health restored, A.L. got himself out of debt and started a new retail business on Jackson Street, which succeeded with the help of many of his old customers. As St. Paul prospered once more in the early 1880s with railroad building and an inpouring of immigrants seeking farmland and economic opportunity drove the local economy, A.L.'s fortunes improved. He wanted to turn the business over to his sons, but they were not interested, so he sold it in

1887. Wanting to stay active in business, A.L. recognized that real estate was again a good investment. So he built two houses at 583 and 585 Selby Avenue, as income property.

Now A.L. and his wife, Mary Josephine, had time for themselves, which they used so to travel, accompanied by their single daughter, Martha. They went to New Orleans, Louisiana; took the sunset rail route to Los Angeles and San Francisco, California; and then took the Union Pacific train, via Salt Lake City,



The cover of the program for the 1889 World's Fair in Paris. A.L. and Mary Josephine visited the fair while traveling in Europe. Photo courtesy of Michele Murnane.

Utah, back to St. Paul. In 1889, they took a trip to France and Germany to visit relatives. While they were in Paris, they visited the World's Fair, which included the newly constructed Eiffel Tower, which was the fair's main attraction. One of the pieces of memorabilia in A.L.'s papers is an original program from their visit to this World's Fair.

In addition to touring Paris with A.L.'s cousin James Desvarreux Larpenteur, they visited Thomery, France, the family home of his beloved grandfather Louis Benoist Larpenteur, with his cousin

Edmund Barbara, grandson of his great Aunt Veronique Souillard. Many French cousins were there to welcome the American cousins. They visited Mary Josephine's cousins in Strasburg and Offenburg, Germany, where she was born and grew up. They visited London before finally returning to the United States in July 1889. While they were in the east, they spent some time in Baltimore, Washington, and New York, visiting old friends. Their final visit was with their daughter Clara Josephine Larpenteur Sutter in South Bend, Indiana.

Work With the Catholic Church

Since his earliest days in St. Paul, A.L. had been an active supporter of the Catholic Church. He had served on the building committee for the third Cathedral of St. Paul in the mid-1850s. Bishop Joseph Cretin described him at the time as "one of our most respected citizens and an edifying member of our Catholic congregation."⁴⁵ The cornerstone for the third Cathedral of St. Paul was laid in July 1854. "By the beginning of September 1855, the committee [to raise money to build the cathedral], headed by Auguste Larpenteur, had managed to raise locally \$1,350, only a fraction of the overall cost."⁴⁶ In the end, A.L.'s committee was able to raise a total of \$10,000, but further construction was suspended following the onset of the Panic of 1857. Despite the city's financial hardships, work on the cathedral resumed and on Christmas Eve in 1858 some 2,000 worshippers were able attend midnight Mass there. Unfortunately Bishop Cretin died on February 22, 1857; thus he never saw his cathedral completed. Following the bishop's death, Fr. Augustine Ravoux "was named diocesan administrator in 1858, and he was determined to complete the Cathedral. Due to lack of funds, he removed all architectural ornamentation from the original design, including the towering steeple. What remained was a solid, spacious and inexpensive structure." The Cathedral of St. Paul was completed in the 1860s at a final cost of \$33,647.⁴⁷

In November 1889 Archbishop John Ireland, the first archbishop of St. Paul, appointed A.L. a delegate to the Catholic Congress in Baltimore. Then in 1893 he served a delegate to the World's



A.L. late in life formally dressed with his top hat and gloves. Photo courtesy of John W. Waters.

Catholic Congress in Chicago. In 1904 Archbishop Ireland secured the land for the building of the fourth Cathedral of St. Paul on the top of Summit Hill, the highest point in downtown Saint Paul. Once back in St. Paul following his travels in Germany and France, A.L. served on the budget committee for the building of the fourth cathedral. Construction of this new and larger cathedral began in 1907. By 1915, Easter Mass was held in the new Cathedral of St. Paul and Catholics from all over Minnesota were able to celebrate this latest accomplishment.⁴⁸

The "Grandfather of St. Paul"

Auguste Louis Larpenteur was a larger than life personality. At various times, he was an Indian trader, merchant, and real estate investor. Throughout his adult life, he was a full participant in the growing community of St. Paul. In his later years, he was considered the unofficial "grandfather of St. Paul."⁴⁹ He loved to go to the Minnesota State Fair and hold reception in the old log cabin there. "Dressed

in silk top hat and suit, he joined other early settlers in regaling fair goers with tales of the frontier—some of the tales a little taller than others."⁵⁰ He was a prolific writer of letters and a collector of all manner of documents about himself, early life in Minnesota, and the people he knew. These he kept in his many scrapbooks, which are now preserved in the archives of the Minnesota History Center and the Cathedral of St. Paul. Each year in these later years, he made his birthday, May 16, into a public celebration. Each year, from his mid-80s on, the local newspapers would run an article about the birthday of this old Pioneer of St. Paul. A.L. had a long and full life, dying at the age of ninety-six, on February 24, 1919. He is buried in Calvary Cemetery, which was established in 1849 by Bishop Joseph Cretin. Many of his family and old friends, including Bishop Cretin and Archbishop Ireland, are also buried there.

While "Grandfather of St. Paul" is certainly an apt name for Auguste Louis Larpenteur, he needs also to be remembered as historian Marvin R. O'Connell does. The Rev. O'Connell writes that A.L. "represented . . . a melding together within the Catholic community in St. Paul of the old French Canadian strain, the recent Irish and German immigrants, and a newer, more native element. For, though his surname and paternal ancestry were French, Larpenteur was born in America of a woman herself American-born, and he married an American wife. . . . [This process of amalgamation meant that A.L. was] perfectly comfortable within the larger society, and notably among the commercial élite of the town, largely Anglo and Protestant."⁵¹

Michele Murnane is a blood descendant of Eugene Nicholas Larpenteur, who was the uncle of Auguste Louis Larpenteur. Throughout her life she heard the Larpenteur story told by family members and acquired a deep interest in learning more of the family's history and genealogy. The Larpenteur family is holding a reunion from August 11-14. For more information contact Michele at mmurnane@msn.com. She currently resides in Seattle, Washington, where she is retired from the Department of Homeland Security.

Endnotes

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2. Charles Larpenteur, *Forty Years a Fur Trader on the Upper Missouri: The Personal Narrative of Charles Larpenteur, 1833–1872*, ed. by Elliot Coues (New York: F.P. Harper 1898; Chicago: The Lakeside Press, R. R. Donnelley & Sons Co, 1933), 4.
3. *Ibid.* The photo on page 4 of this article is the frontispiece to Charles's autobiography.
4. Auguste Louis Larpenteur, *My Recollections*, edited by Caroline M. Beaumont, 2. This memoir is the basis for much of the information in this article. A.L. Larpenteur's *My Recollections* is an unpublished document, which became the basis for many other articles and lectures he gave during his lifetime. One of these lectures is known as his "Recollections of the City and People of St. Paul, 1843–1898," which was first read at the monthly meeting of the Minnesota Historical Society's Executive Council, September 12, 1898. It was later printed in *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society*, 9 (1901): 363–94.
5. *Ibid.*, 7.
6. *Ibid.*, 9.
7. This information was taken from one of several St. Paul newspaper articles that A.L. kept in his many scrapbooks in the Auguste L. Larpenteur and Family Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minn.
8. Paul Coplecha, *The Highland Villager*, 35, no. 22, (January 20, 1988).
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15. Henry A. Castle, *The History of St. Paul and Vicinity* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1912), 818.
16. A.L. Larpenteur, *My Recollections*, 24.
17. *The Minneapolis Star*; March 12, 1959, page Z2.
18. Castle, 819. On August 14, 1848, Henry Sibley represented the squatters of St. Paul at a land sale at St. Croix Falls, where he acted as their agent and formally purchased their lots for them.
19. Williams, 185.
20. A.L. Larpenteur, *My Recollections*, 26.
21. Donald L. Empson, *The Street Where You Live: A Guide to the Place Names of St. Paul* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2006), 159.
22. Williams, 133.
23. *Ibid.*, 181.
24. For a summary of the events that led up to the Stillwater Convention, see Mary Lethert Wingerd, *North Country: The Making of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 177–79. Minnesota Territory was officially recognized on March 3, 1849.
25. Williams, 182.
26. *Ibid.*, 133.
27. *Ibid.*, 233.
28. Unidentified newspaper article dated June 1, 1903, entitled "Early Settlers of Minnesota In Session." Auguste L. Larpenteur and Family Papers, Minnesota Historical Society.
29. *Ibid.* For a detailed account of the Old Settlers' Association and its rival the Ramsey County Pioneer Association, see Mary Hawker Bakeman, "The Oldest House in St. Paul: A Sesquicentennial Parable," *Minnesota History*, 61, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 24–35. This article not only includes a photo of A.L., but also has a large photo reproduction of the list of members who were present at the Old Settlers' Association annual meeting on June 1, 1895. A.L. was present that day.
30. Empson, 159.
31. Miller, 20–21.
32. Williams, 133.
33. *Ibid.*, 274.
34. *Ibid.*, 275.
35. "Many Good Indians Are Live Indians," unidentified newspaper clipping, May 29, 1909, Auguste L. Larpenteur and Family Papers, Minnesota Historical Society.
36. A.L. Larpenteur, *My Recollections*, 31.
37. Empson, 160. The quotation is from Josiah Chaney writing about the lake in 1904. A.L.'s home, "The Anchorage," was nearby.
38. Williams, 258, 291, 349, 357, and 374.
39. *Ibid.*, 133.
40. *The Minneapolis Star*; March 12, 1959, page Z2.
41. A.L. Larpenteur, *My Recollections*, 34.
42. Williams, 380–81. For an in-depth analysis of the effects of the Panic of 1857 on the city of St. Paul, see Jocelyn Wills, *Boosters, Hustlers, and Speculators: Entrepreneurial Culture and the Rise of Minneapolis and St. Paul, 1849–1883* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2005), 90–96 and Mary Lethert Wingerd, *Claiming the City: Politics, Faith, and the Power of Place in St. Paul* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001), 29–32.
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44. A.L. Larpenteur, *My Recollections*, 44.
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49. *The Minneapolis Star*, March 12, 1959, page Z2.
50. Coplecha.
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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.