

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
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A Memoir:
Jimmy Griffin Remembers
His Years on the Force

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Winter, 2002

Volume 36, Number 4

Crises and Panics and Mergers and Failures

St. Paul's Banks and How They Survived 75 Years

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The Merchants Bank building under construction at 333 North Robert Street in 1914. Photo from the Minnesota Historical Society. See article beginning on page 4.

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A Message from the Editorial Board

In this issue Richard Slade, a former St. Paul bank executive who's also an historian of Twin Cities banking, examines the first seventy-five years of St. Paul's banks. Slade's primary focus is on the events and maneuvers during the 1920s that led to the formation in early 1929 of the "Minnesota Twins"—Northwest Bancorporation in Minneapolis and the First Bank Stock Group in St. Paul. During the decade of the 1920s, Minnesota banking experienced significant problems that led to numerous bank failures before the collapse of the New York Stock Exchange in the fall of 1929. As Slade explains, Minnesota's banking problems of the 1920s produced a "combination of enlightened self-interest and fear" that gave rise to the idea of creating a bank holding company as an institutional bulwark against the growing economical and financial uncertainties of the times.

The Ramsey County Historical Society is also pleased to reprint in this issue an excerpt from *Jimmy Griffin: A Son of Rondo, A Memoir*. In the selection reproduced here, Griffin recounts some of his experiences as an African American rejoining the St. Paul police force in 1946, following his wartime service in the U.S. Navy. This firsthand account tells without editorializing of the racism of that era, Griffin's effectiveness as an officer and his unflinching determination to make his way on the force on the merits of his performance on the job.

This issue concludes with another piece of family history from Leo Harris, a local lawyer and historian. In a carefully researched account of his family's iron business, the Harris Forge and Rolling Mill Company, in New Brighton in the 1880s and '90s, Harris gives us a glimpse of the efforts of a small manufacturing firm to prosper in a rural community on the fringe of St. Paul. Despite careful management and a ready market for its iron bar, fire twice destroyed the firm's plant and in 1893 doomed the business, bringing hard times to the Harris family and the community of New Brighton.

John M. Lindley, Chair, Editorial Board

A Memoir

Jimmy Griffin, St. Paul's First Black Deputy Police Chief, Remembers His Years on the Force

Jimmy Griffin with Kwame JC McDonald

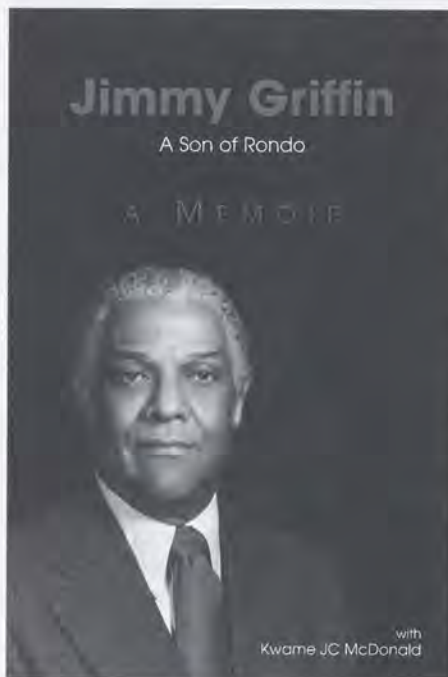
Editor's note: In the following article, excerpted from a chapter in Jimmy Griffin, A Son of Rondo, A Memoir, one of St. Paul's best-remembered police officers recalls his years on the city's Police Force and his struggles to deal with the racism of that time. Written with Kwame JC McDonald, Griffin's memoir begins with his birth in 1906 in "the heart of what was considered to be" St. Paul's black community. He writes of being drafted into service in 1945, of "being 'colored' in the navy," of becoming the first black guard to be hired by the Federal

Cartridge plant at New Brighton, and of being appointed the first black Deputy Chief of Police in the St. Paul Police Department. He also was a legendary official at high school and college athletic events, a member of the Minnesota High School Football Coaches Hall of Fame, and served for many years as a member of the St. Paul School Board. The stadium at St. Paul's Central High School is named for him. Here he begins his chapter, "My Police Career," with his return home in 1946 after service in the navy.

The day after arriving home, I went down to the Police Department and asked when I could go back to work. I don't know why, but I had this feeling of uncertainty about getting back on the force. I walked into Frank Schmidt's office (Chief of the Uniform Division) and he gave me a really warm welcome. He said, "Hello Jim. How are you? Glad to see you back. When do you want to go back to work?" Believe me, these were mighty sweet words to hear. I answered, "Pretty quick, in fact as soon as possible. I'd love to go back to my old crew if I could." He said, "Well, they're going on midnights. So you'll have to work the midnight shift." I said, "That's all right with me, because I want to be with the same guys."

On the 10th of June, 1946, I returned to duty on the 11 p.m.-7 a.m. shift. When I arrived, I greeted all the guys and was assigned to Seventh and Wabasha, the crossroads of St. Paul. I reported to this assignment as I had done so many times before. The lieutenant said, "Nothing has changed. You go down there and take care of things." I said, "All right." I was pleased to get back on the job. Things were much the same as they were before I left. The assignments really hadn't changed, and it looked like I'd still be getting more than my share of those details. At that time Turpin and I were the only two black men on the force.

In those days, when the downtown



taverns closed at 1 a.m. there was always a crowd that congregated around Seventh and Wabasha. Sometimes a show would run late that increased this crowd. We would always be around to assist with any problems that might occur with the 12:30 and 1 a.m. streetcar lineup.

As I'm standing in front of the St. Francis Hotel, a kid comes running up to me and says, "Officer, you better get down there. There's a real donnybrook going on in front of the Drum Bar." I thought, "Holy balls, on my first night

back." I headed for the Drum Bar and saw that there were as many as 150 people in front of the place. Two men were battling. I thought, "What am I going to do with all these people?" I pushed my way through the crowd. One guy fighting was the bartender who was wearing his apron and white shirt. He had gotten into a hassle with a customer. I grabbed him from the back, pinning his arms and kind of raised him off the ground. I had him under control but what the hell was I going to do with this other guy. As I'm wrestling with the bartender, the other guy says, "Jim Griffin?" I answered, "That's me." It was Dick Kool who played tackle on the Swanson's Tavern football team. We had played together on this east side team and were good friends. He relaxed right away. I told the bartender, "Let's not have any trouble. We don't want to put anyone in jail." I gave these guys a lot of conversation; and, fortunately, the bartender went along with it. I was lucky that Dick Kool knew me. I remember a guy in the crowd saying, "Boy, that cop must be tough. Did you see him break up that fight?" I had only been back from California for ten days and on my first night of work, I got this kind of action.

Changes for the Good

When I took the police examination for patrolman in 1939, the minimum educational requirement was simply a common

school education, which was equal to an eighth grade education. Right after World War II, Bill Lancette, another officer and I brought this educational issue up at our Police Union meeting. Our recommendation was for the union to petition Civil Service to raise the educational standards and require a high school education. We thought this would help in our request for higher wages. The "old timers" really bucked this recommendation and it was tabled.

It took another year to convince the troops that this issue should be pursued. We had to first convince the older officers that they would be "grandfathered" in under the old rule and wouldn't be affected by this change. The recommendation finally passed and Civil Service accepted this request. It certainly helped in our efforts to get a pay increase. The entrance salary at that time was \$136.35 a month, no hospitalization, no overtime pay, no holidays, every eighth day off and we purchased our own uniforms. Believe me, we have come a long way since then.

Over the years, with the help of the Police Union, our benefits have greatly improved. It was certainly a "first" when our work week was reduced from forty-eight to forty hours, and we were offered "paid" holidays. We actually wouldn't be getting the holiday off, but we were allowed to select another day off in place of the holiday. I remember getting called into the lieutenant's office and being asked what day I would like to have off to replace the Fourth of July. I thought, "Hey, this job may have some problems, but these fringe benefits are making the job look lots better."

Another interesting event occurred in 1946. At Roll Call Lieutenant Hendrikson, who (incidentally) grew up next to Roy Wilkins's home, said, "I guess all of you guys have heard by now, except Jim who just returned from the Navy, that we have a Human Relations class beginning in about a week. Everybody is required to attend. It's being put on by the St. Paul Human Relations Office." There was never anything like this before. I attended on the days I had requested. The person who conducted the session was a high ranking police officer in Milwaukee. We

were told that personnel should be assigned to police vehicles without regard to race. In fact, it was recommended that all police assignments be made with race a non-issue.



Jimmy Griffin's birthplace, 587 Rondo Street, ca. 1930. Photos with this article are from the Griffin family collection.

When I returned to police duty after the service, St. Paul had pretty much gone to one-man police cars. This meant that there was no hassle about partners who didn't want to work with a black officer. The only men who had partners were working in the emergency cars. After a couple of years, however, this pattern began to change, and they again began to put partners in police cars. As time went on, I began working with a number of white officers, many of whom became my good friends. Over the years, few questions have been raised about the pairing of white and black officers in St. Paul. It is a practice now that is routinely followed, but it is still not universally accepted in the ranks.

Cops and Robbers

I was working the Rice Street area in a squad with my partner, Don Lombard. We received a radio call that there was a stickup at a Ramsey County gas station. They put the license number of the car on the air and said that two suspects were last seen heading south, toward downtown, on Rice Street. We were at Rice

and Arlington at the time. Lombard was driving, and I was on the passenger's side. We spotted a car going the opposite direction that appeared to fit the description of the stickup car. Lombard said, "We'd better check it out." I said, "O.K., turn around, but not here. Keep going over the hill—then turn around and come back." We went over the trestle at Rice and Ivy, turned around and came back. The car was nowhere in sight. We looked in the local gas station. There, filling up on gas, were the suspects and their car. I went into the gas station and got on the phone to the police dispatcher. I wanted to verify the license number of the stickup car. The dispatcher was a sergeant who started giving me heat about why I didn't write the license number down when he originally gave it over the air. I said, "Just give me the damn license. We think we've got the guys." He finally gave me the number, and sure enough, this was the stickup car.

We shook the occupants down, and there on the front seat was a receipt. When one of the suspects had scooped the money out of the till, one of the receipts from the gas station that was held up was among the loot. Even though we couldn't find a gun, we arrested them. We hauled them down to the station, wrote our report and headed home. It was quitting time, and we felt good about our work that evening. Later, the detectives searched the car again and found the gun hidden under the hood. The suspects went to court and received a sentence of from five to forty years.

A Model Cop

A young police officer, fairly new on the job, was complaining one day about the difficulties he was having in dealing with people in his community. He was having trouble serving warrants, getting information for investigations and getting needed cooperation from the public. My advice to him was simple. I told him to follow officer Bill Skally around for a week or so and take notes on how an expert deals with the community.

Bill Skally was a white officer whose prime goal on the job was to be a helpful and resourceful neighborhood policeman. He made it a point to acquaint him-

self with the people in his assigned neighborhood; and, through his unique down-to-earth approach, he became a part of that neighborhood. He spent a great deal of time talking to people and listening to their needs and concerns. He never talked down to people. When Bill Skally told someone something, they believed him because they knew he could be trusted. I remember one fellow with an outstanding warrant who had been avoiding the police for months. Bill located him and spent time listening to some of the fellow's concerns about the warrant. Bill said, "If you will come in with me, I'll talk to the judge and share some of your concerns with him." The fellow followed his advice, and Bill did just what he said he would do. The judge offered some leniency. Skally had a unique style that sometimes is rare in police work.

When Bill Skally retired, hundreds of people from the community attended his retirement affair. This was a totally different kind of retirement party. None of the police brass, political leaders or friends in the police force were invited. It was organized and attended by the people from neighborhoods that Bill served. It was also held in their neighborhood. It was the "people's" way of saying thanks to Bill Skally for being a friend, a helper, an advocate and a very caring person. It was a tribute that would make any police officer proud. He was the kind of policeman who viewed his job as being a prevention agent and helping service, rather than as an authority or power figure. If it could have been arranged, every new police recruit should have been required to spend some time training with Bill Skally. He is my number one pick for being St. Paul's best, most effective neighborhood policeman.

Good Human Relations

Being one of only three black police officers in those early years, I feel I had good rapport with the majority of white officers. A major summer event for the department was the annual baseball game played between the St. Paul and Minneapolis Police Departments. It was a fund-raising affair for our Benevolent Association. I played on the St. Paul Police team. We practiced two or three

times a week at Dunning Field. The players were the younger men who had just come on the job like me, and we all got to be good friends. On the days we practiced, all of the players would pile into a patrol wagon and travel to Dunning Field. After each practice, we would stop by Herges' Bar located on Chatsworth and University. We'd have a few beers, go to the station to shower and head to work. These social experiences allowed me to make life-long friendships with many officers and certainly helped strengthen my working relationship with others.

Many of the people I knew could simply not imagine me, a black person, being a police officer—a janitor or porter, yes, but not a police officer. One day, for example, one of the men brought his ten-year-old daughter to our baseball practice. She was sitting on the bench while we were practicing. While I was waiting for my turn at bat, she said, "Are you the janitor down at the Police Station?" I answered, "No, I'm not the janitor." She then asked, "What do you do?" I replied, "I do the same thing that your father does." She said, "Oh." Isn't it interesting that, even for a small child, occupational stereotypes for a black person seem to prevail—in spite of the fact her father was a friend and had a good attitude on the race question. I learned years later that as an adult this girl was a teacher at Maxfield School, a school at which my wife Edna and I were active in the Parent Teachers Association.

Poor Judgment

Very early in my police career, about the time I was considering going into the service, I did a really dumb thing. A man named Miller, whom I had known for many years, conned me into something that almost got me jammed up. He told me he had gotten a guard job with some company involved in the war effort and he said he had to have a gun. I had an old beat-up gun that I figured I could sell to him. He said as soon as he got paid, he would pay me. The next thing I heard was that this fool was going around Minneapolis flashing that gun. Now, I'm hotter than a .45. I thought one of best things I could do was find him and confront



Griffin as a patrolman in 1941.

him. I shared this situation with Lieutenant Mondike, my boss. He didn't seem excited about it at the time, but the problem magnified when I couldn't locate Miller.

Lieutenant Mondike was a very fair, but tougher than nails, policeman. When he learned that I couldn't locate Miller he called me in and said, "You get that gun back right now!" I intensified my search for this guy, but I couldn't track him down anywhere.

I also knew that if the lieutenant in charge of the homicide unit, a prejudiced old guy, learned about this, I was really in serious trouble and my job was in jeopardy. I then decided to go right to the top with this matter and met with Chief of Police Charlie Tierney. I told him the story and he really gave me hell. "I just sat there, listened and didn't say anything. He finished his tirade with, "You better get that gun back." He then said, "When you come to work tonight, look up Pat Lannon and George Hein. These detectives are working the same shift as you. They will help you resolve this problem—now!"

That evening I met with these two detectives, and we immediately headed to Minneapolis. We met with two Min-

neapolis police detectives, Erickson and Colston. I didn't know Erickson, but I did know Colston. He was a black officer who could easily pass for being white because of his extremely light complexion. These two had worked together for years. They took us around to a number of joints that evening, trying to locate Miller. I'll never forget one that we visited called "The Porters and Waiters Club." The manager was Sy Oliver who looked just like one of those gamblers you see in the newspaper or in the movies. He really was a slick character and dressed fit to kill. I especially remember his multi-colored vest and flashy tie. What really impressed me however, was the glad-hand-welcome that these two detectives got in each joint we visited. Frankly, it was an evening I'll never forget.

What I feared most happened. The lieutenant in charge of homicide called me in, and I got more hell. He said, "Damn it, the chief is going to raise hell when I tell him about this." I replied, "I'm here to tell you, I already talked to him." He asked, "What do you mean you talked to him!" I said, "I didn't want to create any trouble. So I went right to the 'horse's mouth' and told him what my problem was. I told him we were chasing this guy down." That took the wind out of his sails.

A few days later the Minneapolis police informed us that Miller was sitting in jail in Minneapolis. He had returned to "The Porters and Waiters Club" and was picked up. We went over to Minneapolis to talk to him, and I asked, "Where is my gun?" He replied, "Things really didn't work out so good so I hocked it. Here's the slip." He got just ten dollars for the gun because of its poor condition. I picked up the gun, wrote up the report and went to see the chief. I told him the whole story and that the gun was returned. He gave me more hell—but I got over that.

As I look back on this situation, I realize what a great learning experience this was for a young rookie cop. I discovered you don't try to hide or cover up a problem. Instead you bring it out in the open to be shared. Use others to help find a solution to the problem. In this instance it

was the involvement of others that helped me get out of a real pickle.



Griffin at work clearing Maryland Avenue, Winter, 1941

The Mad Dog

Speaking of attacking problems, I remember receiving a call about a mad dog at an address on the West Side of St. Paul. I drove up to the house, walked up to the porch door and encountered a dog barking its head off. I took a close look, and I realized that something was seriously wrong. The dog was frothing at the mouth. The woman living in this house came out, and I said, "Lady, this dog is sick and needs to be destroyed." She said, "O.K. but you'll have to take care of her away from here." I said, "Lady, this dog is mad, and I don't plan to get bitten by a mad dog." She said, "Well, you're a policeman aren't you, you take care of her." I said, "Lady, I know I'm a policeman, you know I'm a policeman but that dog doesn't know it. I'm going to destroy her right here." We all got a chuckle about this dog story at the station.

Speaking Police Language

Just before I was transferred from the Morals Division and was still in plain-clothes, I was directed to pick up a suspect. In those days, they didn't require and seldom used warrants. There was no

Miranda Warning. So the police could pick up an individual for a record check, suspicious activity or, as a matter of fact, for any reason. When I confronted this person that afternoon, I told him I was unaware of the reason for his arrest but that he would have to come with me to the station. He was a quiet guy and didn't give me any initial trouble. But he said, in a very forceful tone of voice, that he didn't think he was going to go with me. I told him, "I can understand your position, but there is nothing I can do about it. If you refuse to go with me, I will have to call for assistance. The department will send more police officers, and if you still refuse to come, they will send more officers. This will mean a lot of wear and tear on your part." I continued, "If, on the other hand, you go with me, you won't have any trouble or anything like that." He decided to go with me. I guess there really is something to that old saying, "It's not what you say, but how you say it."

Justice on McBoal Island

My West Side squad assignment included a unique area called "McBoal Island." A number of squatters lived on McBoal Island right under the Robert Street bridge, in throwing distance of downtown St. Paul. The residents included a number of poor whites, low income blacks and American Indians who lived in tiny shacks with few modern conveniences. Most of these squatters were well acquainted with the police and were more comfortable dealing with officers they knew on a first name basis.

I received a call to go to McBoal Island one Saturday afternoon. The dispatcher reported a complaint of a drunk man and a woman cussing and complaining. When I arrived at the scene I immediately recognized both the man and woman involved. The woman said to me, "Griffin, my old man (also calling him some other choice names) just got paid. He comes home drunk. He's only got four to six dollars left, and we have kids who have to eat. He won't give the money to me." I tried to calm her down and said, "Wait a minute. Let's see what I can do." I went up to him and said, "Empty your pockets and put

everything on that packing case lying there." He pulled out five or six dollars and some loose change. I said to him, "Pick up that money and give it to your wife so she can get some food for these kids. If I have to come down here again and you're acting up and as drunk as you are, I'll call the wagon." That ended it. These folks wanted action right now. That satisfied everyone.

A few months later I received another call to McBoal Island about a drunken man who was harassing and terrorizing the other residents. He had a long arrest record for drinking and belligerent behavior. I read the riot act to him and sent him home to sleep it off. Unfortunately he didn't heed my advice. After I left, he continued to harass the neighbors, kicking over every out-house in sight and threatening them with bodily harm. After kicking over "The Scotsman's" out-house and knocking him to the ground, he made one fatal mistake. He kicked his dog! This dog was the Scotsman's pride and joy. At that point, the Scotsman, an elderly gentleman about 75 years old, said, "Nobody kicks my dog." He went into his shack, grabbed his shotgun and proceeded to blow this drunk away, right on the spot.

When I returned to the scene the next day one of the neighbors said, "Jim, you should have arrested that guy when you had the chance—but then, I guess it turned out OK." The Scotsman was arrested and sent away to prison just long enough for him to change his shirt and have a hot meal. When he returned he was the hero of McBoal Island. I think there was more than one person who felt things, "turned out OK." and peace came to McBoal Island.

Ratings are Important

The year was 1947 and I was looking forward to taking the detective's examination. I met the criteria, having at least four years as a patrolman, and I felt my ratings would meet the required "C" average. In those days they rated (or graded) candidates the way it is done in school—A,B,C,D. I had received only one C-minus rating due to a conflict I had just before I entered the Navy. Wouldn't you know they averaged my last four grades

and that C-minus brought me below the required "C" average. This made me ineligible to take the detective examination. This rating also made me ineligible to take the Civil Service sergeant examination as well. I was really angry and upset about this decision, but I vowed I would be eligible the next time a promotional examination was given.



Griffin on patrol in downtown St. Paul.

Moving Up the Ladder

Seven years passed before the next detectives' examination was given. This time I was eligible, and I passed with an 89 on that test. Of the group that took this examination, I had one of the higher scores. My subjective evaluations (or ratings) however, were always C's, while many officers were given A's and B's. So, when they averaged your service rating scores with the written scores, I dropped to number 33 on the detective list. Six months later they gave the sergeant's examination. Fortunately, my lieutenant retired, and Herb Warner was appointed in his place. He was an "all business guy" and not too popular with the troops. But he was fair and honest. My first rating

under him was a C-plus and my second rating a B. When the test scores came out, I ranked number seven out of 180 men. There were two non-veterans ahead of me. After I filed for my Veteran's Preference, I ended up number five on the list. It was 1955, and my chance for a promotion was finally looking up.

Bill Proetz was Chief of Police at that time. He came from our neighborhood, having lived on Carroll between Avon and Fisk. He had attended Central High School, dropped out and came back to graduate. He was a senior when I was a sophomore and we had come to know each other. He became prominent in the American Legion and, I believe, was commander of the Public Safety Post at one time. In 1955 the National American Legion Tournament was hosted in St. Paul, under his leadership at Lexington Ball Park. I attended one of the tournament games, and who walked by but Chief Proetz. "Hi, Jim, How are you? Has anyone told you that you are number five on the sergeants list?" I answered, "Yes, I heard about it. Since you brought it up, what's going to happen?" The Chief responded, "Well, if I were you, I wouldn't worry about it." That sounded good to me. That evening I shared this news with my wife.

I had made arrangements to attend the Milwaukee Braves-Brooklyn Dodgers series to be played in Milwaukee. I was going with my good friend Matty Joyce, a fellow policeman, and Don Esch, owner of the Pipeline Oil Company on Como Avenue. I went to the union meeting that evening before we were to leave. This must have been my lucky night, because I won the five dollar attendance raffle. Pete Kramer, president of the Union said, "Well, I guess everybody wants to know what's going to happen with the sergeants exam. The Chief told me that he is going to appoint the top six veterans off that list. Whoever is in that six will be appointed." I felt really good about that news. Let me tell you, it made that trip to Milwaukee even more exciting.

By the way, we had great seats in the Milwaukee Stadium, courtesy of Roy Campanella, the Dodgers All-Star Catcher. I had gotten to know Roy while he was playing for the St. Paul Saints. We stayed



The Griffin family: left to right, Vianne, Edna, Griffin, Helen, Linda, ca. 1950.

in Milwaukee for two nights, and I had a chance to introduce Campy to Matt and Don. It was an exciting, fun-filled trip. When I returned home, my three daughters Vianne, Linda and Helen were all excited about their dad's picture in the *St. Paul Dispatch*. There were pictures of the six officers who were promoted, and I was one of them. I had received my promotion!

I'd like to share one interesting incident that occurred prior to my appointment. Bill Konopatski, a good policeman friend of mine, said to me, "Jim, I didn't know how deep-seated racism is with some of the men." He had overheard a small group of policemen talking about the test results. Apparently, one officer inquired of another, "You're on that sergeant list, aren't you?" The other officer answered, "Yes, I'm either seventh or eighth on the list and the Chief is talking about appointing ten before the list runs out." He then asked, "Isn't Griffin number five on that list?" The other officer's answer was, "Yeah, but don't worry, they'll never make a nigger a boss on this job." That obviously was the thinking of a number of the men. They didn't know Konopatski overheard what was said.

On September 15, 1955, I was appointed sergeant. There was one big

question on everyone's mind. Will they put Griffin in charge of men? Well, I was assigned as Desk Sergeant. I didn't have any men to supervise, but I decided I was going to be the best Desk Sergeant the St. Paul Police Department ever had.

Another Good Position

One of my better assignments with the department was that of Court Officer. I really enjoyed this position and felt I was doing an excellent job. One day Captain LeRoy Tynan called me into his office and informed me of a number of mistakes showing up on my reporting sheets. He asked that I be more diligent about improving my accuracy. For the life of me, I couldn't figure out what I was doing wrong.

Judge Clifford James was one of the most astute judges in Municipal Court. He was precise, a stickler for following the rules, and extremely knowledgeable about the law.

About the same time I was having my "accuracy problem," a lawyer contacted the judge about one of his clients. He said that he went to see this client in the workhouse, and he was not there. Judge James asked, "What do you mean, he isn't there?" The attorney answered, "The workhouse supervisor said, 'he's not

here, and there's no record of him ever being here.'" The judge kept his own meticulous records and in checking them he noted this particular client had paid a \$100 fine and was released. The judge began an investigation that uncovered a number of discrepancies resulting in the arrest of a courthouse clerk who had embezzled over \$10,000 of court monies.

Lieutenant Tynan informed me of the judge's investigation, showing that my records had been totally accurate. Apparently, this clerk would pocket the fines and change his records to indicate that these persons were being given a workhouse sentence. Lieutenant Tynan indicated that the clerk was a very competent fellow, but he spent a lot of time at some of the downtown bars living a pretty fast life. It was just another "get rich scheme" that backfired.

Have Bag-Will Travel

During my tenure as a patrolman and sergeant, I was assigned on a number of occasions to transport prisoners from St. Paul to federal and state institutions. I also traveled to other communities to bring prisoners back to St. Paul for prosecution. These prisoners would be under the jurisdiction of the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office but, in a number of instances, our department would assist in bringing them back to St. Paul. My first trip involved returning a prisoner to Jackson, Michigan. On my next trip, I was sent to Buffalo, New York, to return a prisoner to St. Paul. Both trips were made by train, and I traveled alone with the prisoner.

On another trip, I was sent to Indianapolis to pick up a person on a grand larceny warrant and return him to St. Paul. This case had a strange twist because Officer Hank Loe and I had previously made the arrest of this same prisoner who was then transported to Indiana. Apparently I got him coming and going.

In the 1950s and '60s the airlines would not allow the transporting of prisoners by air. Later the airlines rescinded this policy. My next trip was with Detective Ernie Williams to Omaha, Nebraska. We returned a prisoner to St. Paul for prosecution on a felony assault warrant.

(continued on page 23)

same ability to promptly and fully discharge my legitimate obligations. Misfortunes of various kinds have crowded in upon me. . . .⁴⁹ Yet, Abraham Harris lived on for an additional thirty-four years, seeing his two sons build and operate a company which dredged the swampy river bottom area around Holman field, creating St. Paul's downtown airport, and which also dredged Lake Calhoun in Minneapolis, among other large projects.⁵⁰

Leo J. (John) Harris, an international lawyer and a small press publisher, writes for a hobby. He has authored books and articles on law, philately, and postal, local and regional history. His article on "Taxes, Assessments and Fees Between 1856 and 1904: A Snapshot of the Lives of the Flanagan Family" appeared in the Fall, 2000, issue of Ramsey County History.

Acknowledgements

The author, grandson of Abraham Harris, wishes to acknowledge the enthusiastic assistance of Sig Harris, Jr., Jerry Bensing, Ray Greenblatt, and Edward Arundel.

Endnotes

1. Genesis 4:22. Tubal Cain was the first worker in iron.
2. *Minneapolis City Directory, 1888-1889*.
3. Leo J. Harris, "Wrecking to Save—The Chicago House Wrecking Company," *Journal of the West*, October, 1999, p. 65.
4. Goodrich Lowry, *Streetcar Man. Tom Lowry and the Twin City Rapid Transit Company*, Minneapolis: Lerner Publications Company (1979) 77.
5. *Minneapolis Journal*, October 29, 1891, p. 5.
6. *Twin City Live Stock Reporter*, May 20, 1891. A great deal of information about the rolling mill came from this local newspaper. Unfortunately, significantly earlier copies simply have not been preserved.
7. *Ibid.*, April 29, 1891.
8. *Ibid.*, September 8, 1891.
9. *Ibid.*, March 11, 1892.
10. *Ibid.*, May 18, 1892.
11. *Ibid.*, June 19, 1891.
12. *Ibid.*, October 5, 1891.
13. *Ibid.*, February 25, 1892.
14. *Ibid.*, February 25, 1892.
15. *Ibid.*, May 23, 1892.

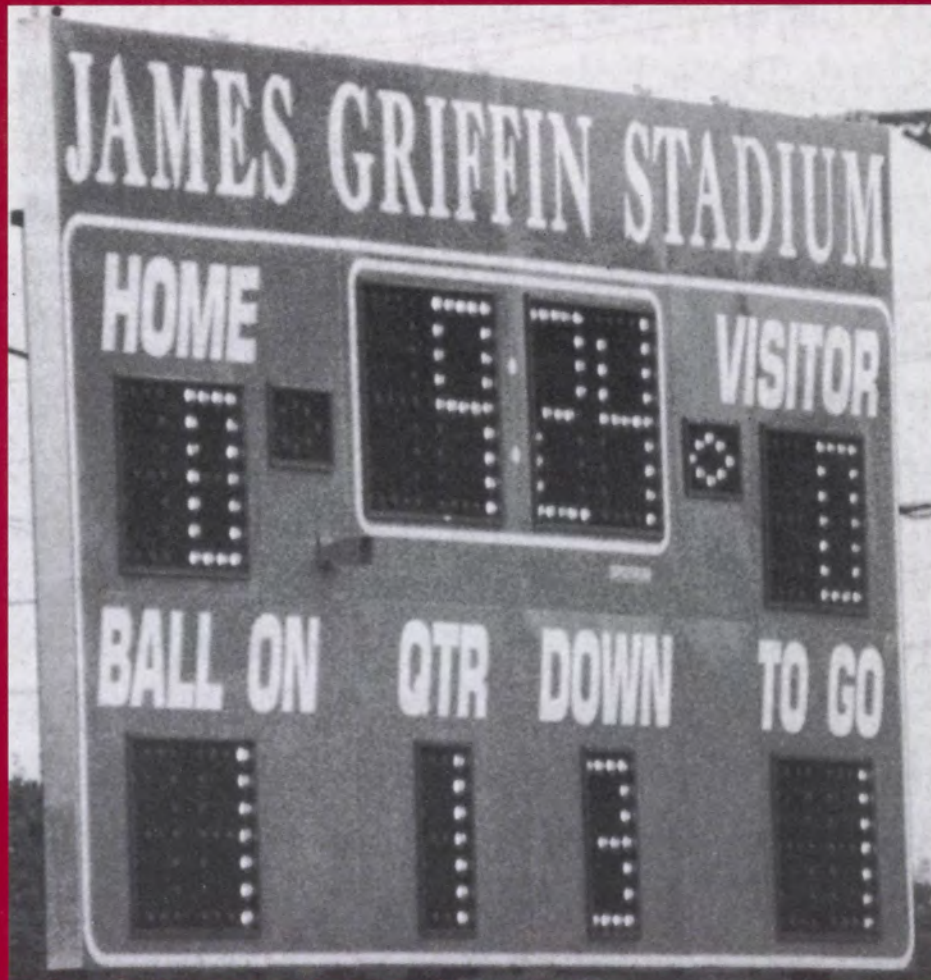
16. *Ibid.*, April 21, 1891.
17. *Ibid.*, April 30, 1891.
18. *Ibid.*, April 29, 1891.
19. *Ibid.*, June 15, 1891.
20. *Ibid.*, October 20, 1891.
21. Gene F. Skiba, *A Centennial History of New Brighton, Minnesota*. New Brighton: New Brighton Area Historical Society, 1987, p. 91.
22. *Twin City Live Stock Reporter*, May 26, 1891.
23. *Ibid.*, July 9, 1891.
24. *Ibid.*, August 18, 1891.
25. *Ibid.*, August 18, 1891.
26. *Ibid.*, April 22, 1892.
27. *Ibid.*, September 3, 1892.
28. *Ibid.*, October 5, 1892.
29. *Ibid.*, October 31, 1892.
30. February 1, 1893.
31. *Ibid.*, October 29, 1891.
32. *The Iron Age*, November 5, 1891, p. 796.
33. *Minneapolis Journal*, *op. cit.*
34. *Twin City Live Stock Reporter*, October 29, 1891.
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*, November 11, 1891.
37. *Ibid.*, December 10, 1891.
38. *Ibid.*, December 23, 1891.
39. *Ibid.*, February 27, 1892.
40. Lowry was the principal owner of the Twin City Rapid Transit Company and the Ryan Hotel, and held other major investments in Minnesota.
41. Letter dated January 10, 1893, addressed to Thomas Lowry, in the files of the author.
42. The Minneapolis Rolling Mills Company continued on with its business and was listed in the 1895-1896 *Minneapolis City Directory* as having offices at 120 Temple Court, with its mills being located in Columbia Heights. J. F. Conklin was president, and Alfred D. Arundel was general manager.
43. *Minneapolis Live Stock Reporter*, February 4, 1893.
44. Gene F. Skiba, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
45. *Minneapolis Journal*, February 4, 1893, p. 4.
46. Grandson of Marks Harris, in an oral history reporting session with the author.
47. Gene F. Skiba, in a conversation with the author.
48. Tombstone bankruptcy announcement, dated July 15, 1903.
49. Form letter to creditors, dated June 22, 1903, in the files of the author.
50. They built (as the Minneapolis Dredging Company), among other things, the Geo. P. Kingsley Dam in Ogallala, Nebraska, at the time of construction the second largest earth filled dam in the world.

Griffin (continued from page 18)

St. Paul police officers would also be used to assist the U.S. Marshall in transporting prisoners to federal institutions. As a rule, the means of transportation was by automobile. On one trip, Manley Rhodes, a black Deputy U.S. Marshall, and I picked up a prisoner at the Ramsey County Jail in St. Paul to return him to Springfield. En route to Springfield we were to pick up a federal prisoner in Austin, Minnesota, who was also slated to go to Springfield. This trip was made by car with a heavy screen between the front and back seats. Federal regulations also required that their prisoners had to be handcuffed along with wearing heavy leg irons. At that time U.S. Interstate 35 was open only as far as Ames, Iowa. In Ames, there was a large cafe, a gas station, and other business establishments nearby. We went into the cafe and uncuffed the prisoners so they could eat and use the rest room. This was done one prisoner at a time.

A few minutes after leaving the cafe, we were pulled over by two deputy sheriffs. They asked for identification and wanted to know why we had two white men in chains. Rhodes introduced himself as a Deputy U.S. Marshall and identified me as a sergeant with the St. Paul Police Department. Rhodes produced the papers that authorized us to transport these prisoners to a criminal facility in Springfield. We asked them the reason for stopping us. They said that a citizen had complained that two black men had two white men chained up in a car with Minnesota license plates, going south from Ames. As soon as this situation was clarified, we proceeded to Springfield with no further problems. I wonder if this citizen would have called the police if two white men had two black men chained up in a car?

Jimmy Griffin, A Son of Rondo, A Memoir, was published privately and in a limited edition in 2001 by the Ramsey County Historical Society, with assistance from The St. Paul Foundation. The excerpt here is reprinted with permission. The book is available by calling the Society at 651-222-0701.



Griffin Stadium Scoreboard and Signage. See excerpts from Jimmy Griffin's memoir beginning on page 13.

R.C.H.S.
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