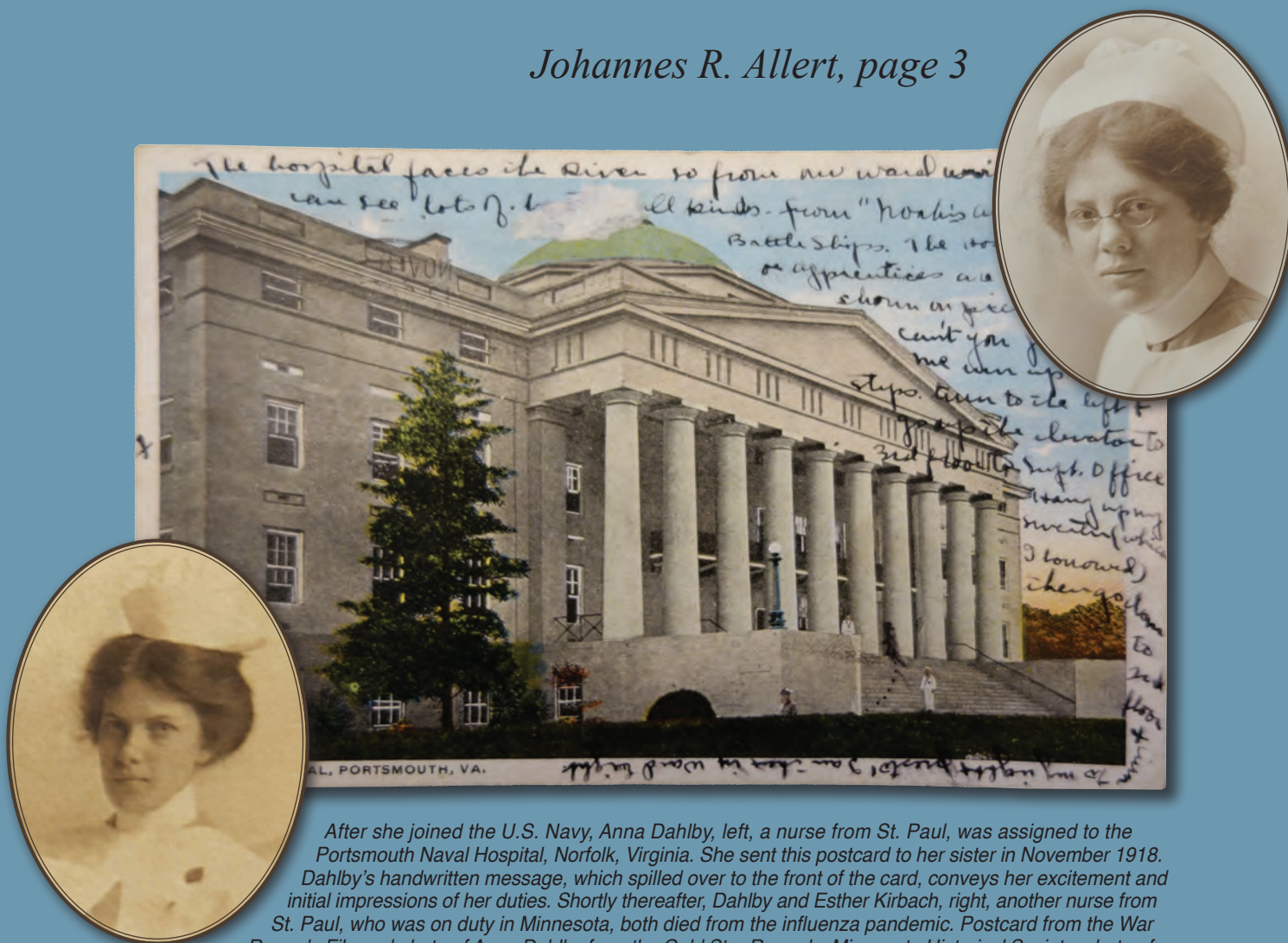


The Ties That Bind: Mounds-Park Nurses and the Great War

Johannes R. Allert, page 3



After she joined the U.S. Navy, Anna Dahlby, left, a nurse from St. Paul, was assigned to the Portsmouth Naval Hospital, Norfolk, Virginia. She sent this postcard to her sister in November 1918. Dahlby's handwritten message, which spilled over to the front of the card, conveys her excitement and initial impressions of her duties. Shortly thereafter, Dahlby and Esther Kirbach, right, another nurse from St. Paul, who was on duty in Minnesota, both died from the influenza pandemic. Postcard from the War Records File and photo of Anna Dahlby from the Gold Star Records, Minnesota Historical Society; photo of Esther Kirbach from the Mounds-Midway Nursing Museum, St. Paul.

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THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Preserving our past, informing our present, inspiring our future

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A Message from the Editorial Board

In this issue, Johannes Allert shares the stories of nurses trained at the Mounds-Park Nursing School who volunteered to serve in the military during World War I. In addition to helping wounded servicemen, they faced an unexpected challenge: the devastating influenza epidemic of 1918. At the same time, as Don Empson tells us, John Wardell was operating his Highland Spring Company, which furnished water from a natural spring near Randolph and Lexington to homes and businesses throughout the city. During Prohibition, Wardell's associated soft drink business had a spike in popularity! And M.D. Salzberg describes how, at the Minnesota State Fair, a Boy Scout Service Camp gave scouts the opportunity to live in a tent city while assisting visitors during that Event. Don't miss John Guthmann's review of our latest book, *Fort Snelling and the Civil War*. Come out to hear Steve Osman, its author, at our annual Members' Event on September 14! Please see our website at www.rchs.com or call 651-222-0701 for more details or to reserve tickets.

Anne Cowie
Chair, Editorial Board

William Nettleton, John G. Wardell, and the Highland Spring Water Company in St. Paul

Donald L. Empson

In St. Paul's Highland Park, one block south of Juno Avenue, and on the east side of Lexington Parkway, lies a short street, which is used primarily as an alley for the adjacent residents. Officially designated as Nettleton Avenue, the street was platted in 1886, but for over 100 years it was so insignificant it wasn't even paved and there was no street sign.¹

In Duluth, Minnesota, at the corner of First Avenue East and Sixth Street, squats an elementary school built in 1905. It is named the Nettleton School.

On the west side of Spokane, Washington, another Nettleton Street spans the city from the Spokane River north, almost to the city limits.

All are named for William Nettleton who, between 1871 and 1885, owned a 130-acre dairy farm in the area around St. Paul's Randolph Avenue and Lexington Parkway.

His property and house were purchased a few years later by the Wardell family who, for three generations, lived in the Nettleton house and supplied the city with pure drinking water from a bountiful spring on the property.

Who Was Nettleton?

In 1822 William Nettleton was born in Ashtabula, Ohio, where he grew up on his father's farm. Upon the urging of his brother, George, an Indian trader on Madeline Island, William, at age 28, left Ohio forever to come west.

Crossing the Great Lakes to La Pointe (Madeline Island), he went by canoe to the St. Louis River which he followed to the Ojibwe Indian Agency at Sandy Lake in Aitkin County. Here he was engaged as a teacher for the Ojibwe; it was his task to set the Indians up as farmers, and assist them in any way he could. In this capacity, he opened a large farm for the Indians on Gull River, near its junction with the Crow Wing River.

A correspondent to a newspaper in

1852 describes the 300–400-acre Indian farm, located on "Paul's Prairie" in some detail. Nettleton is characterized as an "energetic and persevering Yankee" who had ten teams "well manned" at work.

The following year, in 1853, William and his brother, George E. Nettleton (1824–1923), formed a business connection with several land and town-site speculators, among them Daniel A.J. Baker, Daniel A. Robertson, Rensselaer R. Nelson, Edmund Rice, and Benjamin W. Brunson, all of St. Paul.

These speculators, with admirable logic, foresaw the important relationship between St. Paul at the head of the Mississippi River (which stretched south to the Gulf of Mexico) and Lake Superior, head of the Great Lakes (which stretched to the east coast). These two waterways, connected, could be the major inland waterway at a time when there was little overland transportation in the West.

In the spring of 1854, the syndicate platted Superior, Wisconsin. William Nettleton, as the agent of the company, set up housekeeping in the fledgling town, and helped run a general store there.

His brother George set up an Indian trading post across the bay in what is now Duluth. Although the exact chronology is a little uncertain, it appears



This elegant pioneer house, architect designed, was built during the Civil War by Edwin A.C. Hatch, an Indian agent. It was one of the finest and most expensive homes ever built in the Highland area of St. Paul. The drawing is from the Andreas Atlas of 1874.

that William, the following year, moved across the bay and pre-empted 160 acres of land, the first land claim in the area of Duluth. Next William, his brother George, and three other speculators laid out the original town of Duluth on Minnesota Point. An old book of Jesuit writings in the library of George Nettleton provided the source for the name “Du Luth.”

Although George Nettleton returned to Ohio after the severe financial crisis of 1857, William remained in Duluth for sixteen years serving in many positions, among them state legislator. It is said at the time that Duluth was so remote, in order to reach the Legislature meeting in St. Paul in 1860, William had to travel by way of Chicago and La Crosse.²

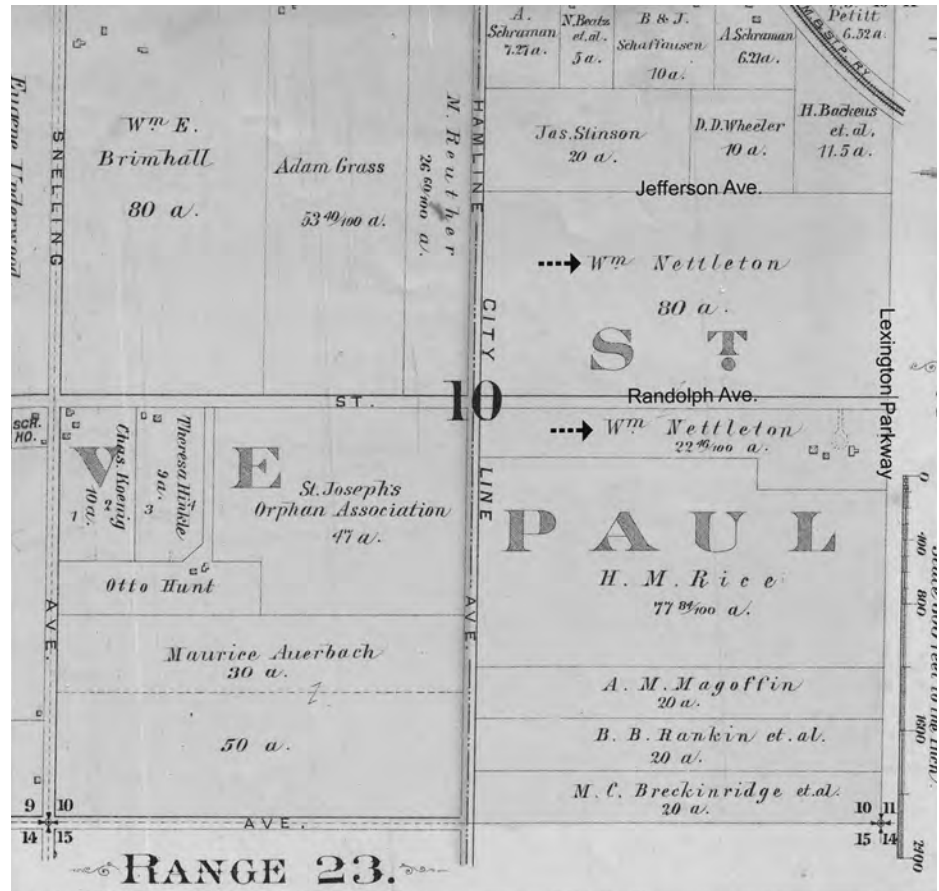
Around 1871, William Nettleton left Duluth and moved to St. Paul where he bought a 130-acre dairy farm around the intersection of today’s Randolph Avenue and Lexington Parkway. According to journalist and Union Army veteran Thomas M. Newson, Nettleton paid about \$10 per acre for the farm.

On the property was a two-story, thirteen-room stone mansion in the Italian Villa-style, which Major Edwin A.C. Hatch (1825–1882) had constructed in 1862–63, reportedly for a cost of \$12,000, a very great sum of money at the time. The *Pioneer Press* reported that the house was “very elegant” with rooms that were “finished up in a very elaborate style” so that each one had “a different kind of wood” and that the effect was “very pleasant.”³

When Hatch, who later led a cavalry battalion in the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, built the house it was one of the first homes in the western part of St. Paul.⁴ The house was set on a plateau halfway up the hillside from the southwest corner of the intersection. In this large, comfortable house, with its several barns, Nettleton raised his family and tended to his farm.

Although the dairy farm prospered, the house was lost to fire on May 9, 1876.⁵ The *St. Paul Dispatch* provided a colorful account of the attempt to save the house:

... owing to the condition of the streets in that locality, ... all efforts on the part of the firemen to get as far as Stahlmann’s brewery, where the road turns off, failed, and they



When Nettleton’s 80 acres north of Randolph Avenue were divided into lots for sale, the realtor’s ad pointed out that: “For beauty of situation, this property cannot be surpassed. It lies high and level and commands extensive views of the city, the river, and surrounding country.” Superimposed on the map are selected street names. Note that the western limit of the city of St. Paul at the time the map was drawn was Hamline Avenue. The map is from the 1886 Hopkins Atlas of the Environs of St. Paul. Photo courtesy of Donald Empson.

were forced to stop within full view of the burning building, but totally powerless to render any aid, and had to return and leave the house to its fate.

Steamer No. 3 was stuck in a slough, and it required four horses and two mules to pull her out.

The origin of the fire could not be ascertained, but it is supposed to have been a defective flue.⁶

Little remained of it other than the stone walls. Undeterred by this loss, Nettleton and his wife built a new house on the site, but this twenty-two-room house was a wood-frame building. According to the *City Directory*, its street address was 1100 Randolph Avenue and the 1880 U.S. Census lists the principal residents of the house as William, his wife, son George O., and two daughters.

Sensing the opportunity for further

real estate investments, Nettleton turned his attention toward the far west, and in 1883, he moved to Spokane, Washington. Here he platted “Nettleton’s Addition” today an historic district on the west side of Spokane, and dealt in other real estate under the name of the Hypotheek Land Company. On January 20, 1905, William Nettleton, one of the pioneer builders of the Northwest, fell from a railroad bridge high over the Spokane River, and, striking the abutment below, was instantly killed.⁷

After William departed from St. Paul, he left his property in the hands of George O. Nettleton, his son, and Edward W. Nettleton, his nephew—and a one-time deputy U.S. marshal. In 1886 they platted the farm into building lots under the name “Lexington Park Addition.” In so doing, they named Nettleton Avenue and Juliet Avenue for Julia, the youngest daughter

of William Nettleton.⁸ (She moved to Spokane with her father; later she married Robert Insinger of that city). Various Nettletons continued to live on the St. Paul property through the 1890s until George, the last family member in St. Paul, departed for Portland, Oregon in 1897.

John Wardell Buys the Property

On the West Side of St. Paul, John G. Wardell (1857–1935), manager of the Spa Bottling Company, a soda pop franchise located at 61 East Fillmore Street, looked enviously across the river at the Nettleton property, and particularly at the abundant spring flowing from the hillside near the Nettleton house.

A native of Battle Creek, Michigan, Wardell had come to Minnesota in 1882. After a year in Minneapolis, he had lived for a short time on McBoal Street in St. Paul, but, in 1885, he moved his bottling operation to the West Side. When the 1900 Census was done in June, John Wardell, his wife, and two sons were living on the West Side.

At that time, dissatisfied with the Spa Bottling Company, he formed his own Consolidated Bottling Company, and moved, in late 1900, across the city into the Nettleton house.

With the new residence came another name: The Highland Spring Company. Settling into his new property, Wardell cleaned up one of the barns and began the bottling of spring water, a family enterprise that was to continue for the next 65 years.

The Highland Spring Water Company was incorporated on July 30, 1900. The articles of incorporation state that the nature of the business was the “manufacturing of carbonate mineral waters” and its place of business was in St. Paul. The capital stock of the new business was \$20,000 consisting of 200 shares of stock with a par value of \$100 per share.

The original incorporators and directors of the company were John G. Wardell, president; John M. Wardell, son of John G. Wardell, vice president; and Edmond A. Chrisham, secretary and treasurer. Previously Chrisham had been the secretary and treasurer of the Spa Company. Given that the company’s vice president at the time of incorpora-



Looming on the hilltop, surrounded by a stone wall, part of which remains today, the 22-room Nettleton/Wardell house was photographed in 1930. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

tion was only a little over four years old, this family-owned business was a very closely held corporation.⁹

The spring which was to supply a livelihood to the family for so many years, delivered a constant flow, summer and winter, of 27 gallons per minute. The temperature was a constant 42 degrees, no matter what the season. The water had 25 grains of hardness (13 calcium, 12 magnesia) and was said to flow from a drainage basin between Syndicate and Saratoga; Summit and Montreal Avenues,

where it percolated down about 20 feet before flowing southeast.

When people think of the sources of fresh drinking water today, they typically identify either water provided by a city or municipality that comes out of a faucet or water drawn from a well by means of a pump. They tend to forget that in the past urban residents often got water from local springs.

St. Paul has a good number of springs, most of which are invisible to the public today because they flow into a sewer line. In addition to the Highland Spring that John Wardell exploited so effectively for his business, St. Paul also has well-known springs at the Fish Hatchery and at Carver’s Cave.

The geology of the Highland Spring is typical of the Twin Cities. It’s found in the glacial drift-Decorah Shale that is common to the area and is part of a great loop (a necklace) of two dozen springs, about eight miles long, that starts near the St. Paul Cathedral and loops south through Highland Park at an elevation of about 850–900 feet and then heads north through the campus of St. Catherine University to the grounds of the Town &



This remarkable photograph shows the spring-fed pond from which the ice was cut. In the background is one of the company’s delivery wagons, and beyond that is the Nettleton/Wardell home. The barn on the left was most likely the ice house storage and bottling facility. The photo appears to have been taken about 1910. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Country Club near the Lake Street Bridge. These springs all are found in a layer of porous rock that is underlain by an impervious bed.¹⁰



Although Reserve Township had been incorporated into St. Paul 23 years earlier, the author of this 1909 advertisement from the St. Paul City Directory apparently thought the township's name added luster to the spring water. Photo courtesy of Donald Empson.

Supplier of Fresh Spring Water

The Highland Spring Water Company supplied pure and fresh drinking water to both businesses and private homes. Every weekday morning, a wagon loaded with bottles of spring water, plus a generous helping of crushed ice, made its way down the Randolph hill, and into downtown St. Paul. Following a regular route, Wardell carried fresh water bottles into office buildings, setting them up in coolers, and surrounding them with crushed ice so that employees could have a cold drink during their day's work.

Afternoons, the wagon's route extended out into the residential areas where the weekly six gallon containers were delivered to those who desired (and could afford) the best of drinking water. The Midway business area was also supplied with water on a weekly basis, but the ice, a daily necessity, was obtained on a contract basis from an ice house in the immediate vicinity. Sundays, the delivery wagon made the long trip to White Bear so that people of taste there might have their fresh water.

Because providing drinking water also meant providing ice, the Wardells had created a pond on their property by overflowing the spring into a dry creek bed. The pond, which was as much as nine feet deep, had dimensions of approximately 100 feet by 200 feet.

The first crop of ice came just after

Christmas, and, as the grandson, Edward Wardell, remembers vividly, the last crop of ice had to be in by February 11, for after that date, the ice would thaw more than it would freeze. The ice harvest for the season from this small pond amounted to about 300,000 tons, all neatly cut with a rotary saw into foot-thick, 11" by 22" blocks. The blocks were horse drawn, via pulley, up an iced track into the three-story ice house built into the hillside.¹¹

The Highland Spring Water Company also manufactured and sold carbonated beverages, also known as soft drinks or pop. Simply described, soft drinks consist of a flavor concentrate, the syrup, and some sugar added to water, which is then mixed and carbonated under pressure with CO₂ gas.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the U.S. Census reported that there were some 64 manufacturers of carbonated beverages in the country. That number would grow steadily over the next half century as organizations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), which was founded in Ohio in 1874, sought to prohibit the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages of all kinds. The WCTU's stated purpose was to create a "sober and pure world."

Thus the organization widely advocated abstinence from drinking beer, wine, and liquor. By 1890 the WCTU was the largest organization of women in the world and it vigorously pursued the enactment of prohibition laws at the federal, state, and local levels. One unexpected consequence of the WCTU's prohibition campaign was the development a market for other beverages besides water that had no alcoholic content.

An illustration of this change in the marketplace was the founding of the Hires Root Beer Company. Charles E. Hires was a devout teetotaler who wanted to manufacture a drink that could replace beer. As a pharmacist in Philadelphia, he was skilled in mixing medicines and thus applied that talent to developing a drink made up of a variety of roots, herbs, and berries. Hires called this drink "root tea" until he was encouraged to change the name of the beverage to the manly name of "root beer." By 1884 he was selling his root beer in kegs

and six years later he incorporated the Charles E. Hires Company.

The name "soft drink" soon became associated with Hires Root Beer and other carbonated beverages to distinguish them from "hard" drinks such as whiskey and beer. Thus a lucrative market developed with these beverages promoted as socially acceptable replacements for alcoholic beverages. In 1895, for example, Asa Candler, who owned the Coca-Cola Company, advertised his beverage as "the Great National Temperance Drink." By 1900 the Census reported there were 2,763 soft drink manufacturers in the nation with their total revenue exceeding \$23 million. Thus the Highland Spring Water Company was riding the crest of this new alternative to alcoholic beverages.¹²



Highland Spring Water was a regular advertiser in the St. Paul City Directory. This page is from the 1909 Directory. Photo courtesy of Rich Arpi.

Over the years the company grew, although not always steadily. A twelve-horsepower Stickney engine was purchased to power the bottling machinery, and trucks began to replace wagons. In addition, the company's location at 1100 Randolph was no longer on the western edge of St. Paul. The Twin City Rapid Transit Company opened its Randolph Extension along Randolph Avenue in 1891 and completed tracks from West Seventh Street all the way to Snelling Avenue in 1909.¹³

By 1920, the company employed about twenty-five people, but during that same year, nationwide Prohibition dealt the

company a blow. The soda pop business, carried forward from its years on the West Side, had to be discontinued. Saloons, where soda pop was consumed at that time, were largely controlled by the breweries who, with the advent of Prohibition, were forced into the manufacture of their own soda pop. With few retail outlets for their product, the Wardells had to depend solely on the spring water business.

The incorporation records for the Highland Spring Water Company show that in 1930 the officers filed the necessary papers with the state to reincorporate the business for another thirty years, but this time John M. Wardell, now grown to adulthood, was the president and his father, John G., was the vice president. Frank A. Kohout, who was the superintendent of the company's bottling operations, served as the corporation's secretary and treasurer.

In 1951 the Wardell family sold off a part of their property fronting on Randolph Avenue and Lexington Parkway. While apartment buildings were being constructed on these lots, the company used the money to buy some electric coolers so that, for the first time in fifty years, the family was freed from the labor of cutting ice.

By 1965, the old Nettleton property, home of the Highland Spring Water Company, was a choice piece of real estate with a commanding view. At the same time, the business of deriving a livelihood



Today the spring bubbles to the surface from an eight-inch pipe installed by the previous owners of the property. Recent measurements indicate the water flow is 3 gallons per minute. Photo courtesy of Greg Brick, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

from a spring in a totally urban area had become a rather risky one. A break in the sewer, an excavation in the wrong place, pollution in any form, and the company would likely be out of business overnight.

Primarily for these reasons, the Wardell family members, Edward H. Wardell, Alice O. Wardell, and John H. Wardell Jr., who were running the company at the time, decided to formally dissolve the

Highland Spring Water Company.¹⁴ For a substantial figure, the Wardell family sold their property to a developer, and their machinery and equipment to the Chippewa Spring Water Company. The old Nettleton house was torn down in September 1965, and a large, expensive high rise, Montcalm Estates, was subsequently constructed on the hillside.

Today, the observant pedestrian, walking on Randolph Avenue, can follow the original wall to where it curves in toward the apartments, marking the abandoned and filled entrance to the William Nettleton estate. These are the only reminders of when the founder of Duluth lived in Highland Park over a 100 years ago, and when one of nature's most precious gifts, a pure and bountiful spring, provided drinking water for three generations of St. Paul residents.

Donald Empson is a former librarian at the Minnesota Historical Society who has been researching and writing about St. Paul history for nearly a half century. The author of The Street Where You Live: A Guide to the Place Names of St. Paul (2006), he thanks Greg Brick; Jim Sazevich; Mark Youngblood, a frequent contributor of photos to the Old St. Paul pages on Facebook; and John Lindley for their help with the research for this article.

Endnotes

1. Donald L. Empson, *The Street Where You Live: A Guide to the Place Names of St. Paul* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 196.
2. Nettleton biography: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Nettleton, accessed June 7, 2017; www.leg.state.mn.us/legdb/fulldetail?id=14155, accessed June 7, 2017;
3. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 10, 1876.
4. Hatch biographical materials are in the Minnesota Historical Society Scrapbooks, vol. 1, p. 113 and T.M. Newson, *Pen Pictures of St. Paul Minnesota, and Biographical Sketches of Old Settlers: From the Earliest Settlement of the City Up to and Including the Year 1857* (St. Paul: Published by the author, 1886), 82–83. Newson estimated that at time he wrote his book, the acreage Nettleton owned was worth about \$1,000 per acre (p. 83). Larry Millett, *Once There Were Castles: Lost Mansions and Estates of the Twin Cities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 136 has

- a detailed description of the house. The estimated \$12,000 cost of the house is from the *St. Paul Pioneer and Democrat*, December 11, 1863.
5. The fire that consumed the house is reported in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 10, 1876.
6. "Wm. Nettleton's Fine House Burned," *St. Paul Dispatch*, May 12, 1876.
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This is a 1910 bottle that once contained a soft drink sold by the Highland Spring Water Company in its early years. The bottle is particularly significant because its paper label is so well preserved. The backside of the bottle, visible through the glass, reads: CONTENTS OF THIS BOTTLE MANUFACTURED BY HIGHLAND SPRING WATER. Within a decade, the company discontinued its soft drink business. Bottle courtesy of Mark Youngblood. For more on the origins of the Highland Spring Water Company, see Donald Empson's article on page 18.