

RAMSEY COUNTY  
**History**  
A PUBLICATION OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**Eliza Edgerton Newport and  
St. Paul's Floating Bethel, 1891-1903**

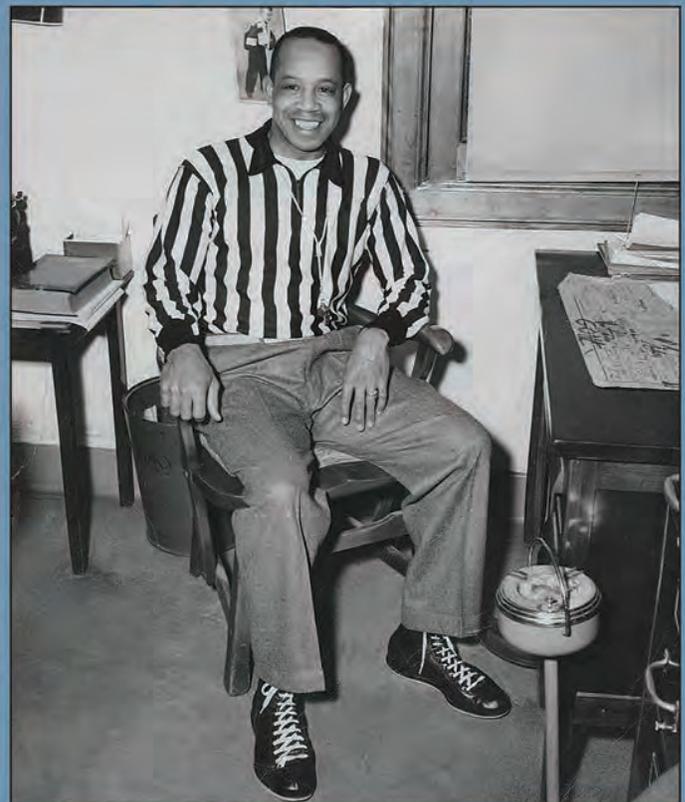
CHRISTINE PODAS-LARSON, PAGE 11



*Remembering One of  
Our Community Legends—*

## **Jimmy Lee**

FRANK M. WHITE, PAGE 1



Jimmy Lee was a respected go-to sports authority in the Rondo Neighborhood, St. Paul, and throughout Minnesota.

**By the Numbers . . .**

*Union Gospel Mission Twin Cities (UGMTC) oversees the Bethel Hotel, located at 435 University Avenue in St. Paul. It is the descendant of St. Paul's Floating Bethel.*

Number of UGMTC locations, including the Bethel Hotel

**5**

Number of emergency shelter beds available for men in need at UGMTC

**194**

Number of beds for men at the Bethel Hotel, UGMTC's transitional housing program

**107**

Number of men served at the Bethel Hotel in 2018

**1,286**

Number of men enrolled in UGMTC's Christ Recovery Center programs

**81**

Number of women and children who found safe shelter through UGMTC in 2018

**108**

**SOURCES:**

Brian Molohon, V.P. Development, UGMTC  
www.ugmtc.org/

Christine Podas-Larson's article, beginning on page 11, brings the story of St. Paul's Floating Bethel to life and celebrates Eliza Edgerton Newport, whose charitable work changed lives.

**ON THE COVER**



Jimmy Lee was an award-winning golfer. His love for golf and all sports led to a decade-long stint as a local sports columnist.

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**Message from the Editorial Board**

Some of the most fascinating parts of local history are the connections between the writers, their subjects, and even the readers. In this issue, Frank White introduces us to his childhood hero, Jimmy Lee, a respected black athlete and sports officiant. Lee wrote a column for the local African-American press and became the first black umpire in the Big Ten. Christine Podas-Larson tells the story of her great-grandmother, Eliza Edgerton Newport, a society woman who championed the working poor. Newport, an ardent temperance supporter, helped establish the Floating Bethel, a boat anchored on the Mississippi that provided beds, meals, and classes for those who needed support. Finally, Eileen and Aine McCormack present the history of the Tazewell Apartments at Laurel and Western. The Tazewell was home to middle-class tenants, including young professionals, teachers, stenographers, and railroad workers. In reading this article, I discovered that the authors included my favorite elementary school teacher, Gertrude Berg, who lived there for forty years. Thus, I happily confirm that Miss Berg did not, in fact, reside on the second floor of Linwood Park School, as I always assumed in fourth grade, but had her own life at the Tazewell, entirely out of school!

*Anne Cowie*  
Chair, Editorial Board

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*Home Is Where We Start From*

## The Tazewell: 100 Years in the Life of a St. Paul Apartment Building

AINE C. MCCORMACK AND EILEEN R. MCCORMACK

*I have fond memories of that apartment.  
Wonderful events took place there that I will  
always be grateful for. It was a stage for our lives.*<sup>1</sup>  
—JIM POOLE

On a recent sunny Sunday afternoon, a small group of people walked north up Western Avenue, crossed Laurel and turned left. As they proceeded on Laurel, the group leader said, “And the next stop on the tour is the birthplace of F. Scott Fitzgerald . . .”

What the group may not have realized was that there was plenty to see and talk about in the block-and-a-half before they reached Fitzgerald’s birthplace at 481 Laurel Avenue. For one thing, there was the handsome, three-story, brick building they passed, with its welcoming courtyard and one-hundred years of history to share. The guide could have offered an entertaining anecdote, “In the early 1920s, there was a grocery store on the garden level of this building. The type of store where Scott may have

stopped for a bottle of milk when he lived at the Commodore Hotel.” In St. Paul, a one-hundred-year-old brick apartment building may not outwardly impress, but you need to look closer. History is “his-story/her-story” and can be found in the lives of the people who called The Tazewell Apartments their home.

The Tazewell is located on Lot 4, Block 11, of Cochran’s Subdivision in the Woodlawn Park addition of St. Paul; on the northwest corner of Laurel and Western Avenues. Completed in 1918, the building originally had thirty-six efficiency and one-bedroom rental units, with two retail spaces on the east end’s garden level. The main entrance was at 135 N. Western Avenue. When the apartments were converted to condominiums in 1980, the address changed to 385–391 Laurel Avenue.<sup>2</sup>

The neighborhood on Selby Hill (Cathedral Hill) gradually became part of the expanding city of St. Paul. Western Avenue served as the city’s boundary but soon extended to Lexington

The Tazewell has stood at the corner of Laurel and Western Avenues in St. Paul for over one-hundred years, a witness to the growth, decline, and renaissance of a neighborhood and a city. *Photo courtesy of Kevin O’Brien.*



One of two building entrances located on the south-facing courtyard side. *Photo courtesy of Kevin O’Brien.*

Avenue as more and more people moved up from the urban center on the river's levees. First to build their mansions on the hill were the wealthy, who sought to escape the commercialism of Lowertown and Lafayette Park. Transportation played a key role in this shift with the growth of the railroads.

Transportation was also the link that brought people up Selby Avenue to live in emerging neighborhoods. The arrival of the electric streetcar in 1888 linked the new neighborhoods to downtown. Selby Hill came into its own by the 1900s, when it had desirable homes and apartments and a growing commercial corridor along Selby Avenue. Over the ensuing years, the area experienced the cycles of demographic shifts, worldwide events, and economic trends. As with all other city areas, Selby Hill flourished, had an era of decline, and came back strong.<sup>3</sup>

### The Site before The Tazewell

Years before The Tazewell or even the streetcar, before the urban hustle and bustle spilled onto the dusty streets, a two-story dwelling occupied Lot 4 at Laurel and Western with the address 137 N. Western. In 1882, James Power, Land and Emigration Commissioner for James Hill's St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Manitoba Railway, was head of this household, which included domestic servants and a coachman. For the next dozen years, the home saw owners come and go until 1894, when 137 N. Western became a private girls' school.

Saint Catherine's School for Girls, affiliated with the Episcopal Church, had relocated from 139 Pleasant, the former home of Arthur Driscoll. An ad in the 1895 *St. Paul City Directory* announced the opening day of classes, Wednesday, September 11. The ad highlighted a "Large Corps of Experienced Teachers" and "Special attention to preparation for college." Miss M.S. Dusinberre and Miss M. Murdoch were the principals. In addition to 137 N. Western, the school had a second location at 405 Ashland Avenue. The school had limited space for boarders, who more than likely were housed at the Western Avenue location, as that is where the Misses Dusinberre and Murdoch resided. By the 1899 schoolyear, Saint Catherine's was no longer listed at either address, and it is unclear what happened to the school.<sup>4</sup>

Lot 4 was the site of a single-family home, a school for girls, and finally a boarding house. In the 1900 Federal Census, Fanny Bull rented the house, and with the help of a cook and a housemaid, Mrs. Bull provided room and board to primarily professional men for nearly ten years. The 1910 Federal Census lists Mrs. Clara Roberts as head of household, self-employed in the "boarding house" industry. In 1911, nine men, whose occupations ranged from geologist to stenographer, lived in the house. After 1913, there were no listings for the old place and by 1916, an empty lot appeared on the city plat map. The corner was vacant and waiting for someone with the capital and the vision to add to the growing number of apartment houses on Selby Hill.<sup>5</sup>

Just as the streetcar was a convenient, efficient, and pleasant way of getting people from place to place, the apartment house made it possible for people to live in comfortable, affordable quarters with amenities and privacy. The steep grade of the hill made for a tenuous journey depending on weather conditions until the completion of the Selby tunnel in 1907.

**ST. CATHERINE'S SCHOOL**  
FOR GIRLS.  
137 Western av. and 405 Ashland av. ST. PAUL, MINN. Miss M. S. DUSINBERRE, Miss M. MURDOCH, Principals.

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OPENING OF SCHOOL, WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 11th, 1895.  
LARGE CORPS OF EXPERIENCED TEACHERS.  
Special attention given to preparation for college. Advanced courses of study for older pupils. Ample accommodations and best of care for a limited number of boarding pupils.  
For further particulars apply to the Principals—  
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ST. PAUL, MINN.

An advertisement from the 1895 *St. Paul City Directory* announced the beginning of the school year for the St. Catherine's School for Girls. The school had recently relocated to the future site of The Tazewell. Photo courtesy of Ramsey County Historical Society.

This painted wood sign originally hung outside the building's main Western Avenue entrance. It was salvaged by a condo unit owner during renovations and donated to the Tazewell Condominium Association. It now hangs inside the building. Photo courtesy of Tazewell Condominium Association.



In 1890, three of the nine apartment houses listed in St. Paul were in the Selby neighborhood: Dacotah Flats (Selby and Western); The Aberdeen (Dayton and Virginia); and The Albion (Selby and Western). By 1900, there were sixty-six St. Paul apartment houses. The number of apartment buildings continued their steady growth. In 1909, the city had 138 apartment houses and ten years later, over 280. The recently opened Tazewell Apartment building, 135 N. Western, was one of that 1919 group.<sup>6</sup>

### Construction and Design of The Tazewell

In November 1917, the first permits were filed to build a “brick building to be used for flats purposes.” The building was to be “erected on the north side of Laurel between Western and Arundel, Lot 4 Block 11 of Woodland Park addition,

This early, undated photo of The Tazewell shows the garden level retail space along Western Avenue and the original paned sash windows, one of which holds a “For Rent” sign. Photo courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.



Cochran’s subdivision,” at an estimated cost of \$80,000. The owner of the property, H. Wicklund of Minneapolis, hired contractor L.N. Wilkinson and architect Perry E. Crosier (also both of Minneapolis) for the project.<sup>7</sup>

The brick building would be three stories with a flat roof covered with pitch and gravel; exterior walls were thirteen inches thick with nine feet between floors. The dimensions of the building foundation measured 157 feet wide by 69 feet deep. Boilers would provide steam heat. Concrete floors in the basement, hardwood floors on the upper levels, and walls of plaster and lath were used in the interior.<sup>8</sup>

With the permits filed, construction commenced. Assistant inspector Gates A. Johnson Jr. filed records of inspections which indicated “steam shovel on ground” on November 22, 1917, and “getting up forms” on December 6. Construction continued through the winter, and two fire escapes were added at the front ends of the building by St. Paul Iron Works in April 1918.<sup>9</sup>

Original plans, photographs, or contemporary documentation on The Tazewell were not found. Crosier’s plans for later apartment houses provided insight to his vision for how individuals and families might live. Although later in his career, the architect did not design exclusively in the Craftsman style, The Tazewell, his first recorded commission for a large apartment building was influenced by that architectural school. The Tazewell showed a thoughtfulness in the design and interior details that relate it to the Arts and Crafts credo with an “appreciation of the dignity and value of good design and ordered arrangement.”<sup>10</sup>

Crosier’s design for The Tazewell put an emphasis on the horizontal line and flat roof, with minimal exterior decoration, apart from variance in brick color. The courtyard was a way to bring light and air into a building. Window bays provided a unit with additional light and air movement. Courtyard apartments were often designed with the courtyard either incorporated with the stairway at a front entrance or placed at the rear of a building. At The Tazewell, the orientation of the lot meant greater advantage could be gained from positioning the main entrance on Western Avenue, the primary street, with a south facing courtyard on the side.<sup>11</sup>

### Perry E. Crosier (1890–1953)

Perry Crosier, the architect of The Tazewell Apartments, designed at least seventy-six known apartment buildings/complexes in the Twin Cities, mostly in Minneapolis. In St. Paul, in addition to The Tazewell, he also designed the Highland Village Apartments.

In 1909, at the age of eighteen, Crosier worked for a year as a draftsman in the office of noted architect Harry Wild Jones. By 1916, Crosier had an independent practice. The Tazewell construction, which began in 1917, was certainly one of his first large apartment buildings. The Perry Crosier Papers at the Northwest Architectural Archives do not contain any blueprints before 1917 except for a Minneapolis, four-flat apartment, built in 1915.

Crosier designed in a variety of styles, including the Craftsman-early Prairie School design of The Tazewell. His design emphasis utilizing natural light and air movement

throughout the building was refined and enlarged in his subsequent apartment complexes. Crosier drew the plans for other types of buildings, including residences and commercial buildings.

While the number of apartments he designed is significant, he is best known today for his movie theater projects of the 1920s to 1940s. Most of the theaters Crosier designed were in Minneapolis, including the Boulevard Twins, Avalon, Parkway, Hopkins, St. Louis Park, and Westgate. The West Twins Theatre in West St. Paul was also a Crosier design.

Perry Crosier is almost completely unknown today despite his immense body of work (much of which may yet be unattributed) and the fact that many of his buildings are extant.<sup>12</sup>

The clean and simple lines of the building's exterior carried over to the interior's common spaces. Beveled glass doors opened to staircases leading to wide hallways lit by skylights.

Four separate entrances allowed occupants to use the closest door and thus lent a sense of privacy to the individual apartments. Each apartment entry was fitted with a transom window above the door, which allowed for air circulation.

Within the apartments, design details were often unexpected and welcomed, as they improved the daily experience of the resident. Although no units measured more than 700 square feet, space was considered on multiple levels and was never wasted. The use of built-in elements reduced the need for additional furniture. Beds, which disappeared into the wall

or wall cabinets, meant that spaces would have dual functions—public and private.

The efficiency apartments were designed around a central unit. A walk-up dressing room/closet (with pull-out steps in the smaller apartment units; stationary steps in others) created a space on the floor level for a pull-out bed hidden in a lower cabinet. Over the bed cabinet was a drop-down desk, drawers, and glass-doored shelves. The upper dressing room had a vanity with drawers and a large mirror. There was space for hanging clothing, as well as a small window to the dining room for light and ventilation. French doors separated the living and dining areas. A galley kitchen with cabinets on one wall and, at times, a built-in banquette/dinette table, opened to a hallway that led to the bathroom.



Space-saving features make for comfort, convenience, and privacy in apartment living. In this efficiency unit, the bed disappears, sliding under a walk-up dressing room and behind the built-in desk when not in use. In early years, when modesty was a concern, this made it possible to have guests in to visit. *Photos courtesy of Kevin O'Brien.*

One-bedroom apartments included dining rooms featuring built-in buffets, with glass doors above a mirror and drawers below. The bedroom or living room contained a dressing room/closet, similar to the design in the efficiency apartment. Original plans may have included sunrooms separated by French doors from the main living space in the corner units. A number of these features are present in other later Crosier-designed apartment buildings. Since The Tazewell has so many unique features, perhaps the architect was experimenting with the best solutions for efficient use of available space.

The building was wired for electricity at a time when just 35 percent of Americans had electricity. In the basement, there were dual boilers, bringing heat and hot water to the apartments, as well as a laundry room and a drying room. The drying room was outfitted with gas-fired drying racks, the height of modern efficiency.<sup>13</sup>

### **What's in a Name?**

From the 1880s, it was not uncommon for apartment buildings to be given regal-sounding names—those of aristocratic families and their ancient English country estates or exotic Spanish villas. These names lent prestige to the apartment building and its residents. Neighboring St. Paul buildings such as The Balmoral Flats (561–563 Laurel), The Marlborough (138 W. Summit), and The Umatilla (620–630 Ashland) are examples.

Tazewell is a family name with origins in England, where the Tazewells were “Lords of the Manor” in Bedfordshire. A descendant, Henry Tazewell, was an eighteenth-century U.S. Senator from Virginia, for whom several towns and counties are named. Likely the origin of the name meant less than the sound of it to the ear of the Tazewell owner, Mr. Wicklund. “I live at The Tazewell,” had a nice ring to it.<sup>14</sup>

### **Residents of The Tazewell**

From the 1880s through the 1920s, there were social and economic shifts that brought more people to the city's workforce and increased the demand for housing. World War I and women's resolve to attain the vote and equality in society increased the number of women working outside the home in education, medicine, and

social services. Jobs were available to women that had not been open to them before the war. They became high school teachers, not only elementary school teachers, with the resulting increase in pay; department store managers, not just store clerks and stockers; stenographers and secretaries, not only file clerks.<sup>15</sup>

Young men and women came to St. Paul in increasing numbers from rural areas of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa. Lack of life opportunities in the early 1920s coincided with plummeting grain and livestock prices. The Great Depression came early in rural areas as banks tightened lending requirements; families lost farms, and communities offered no employment opportunities for young people. Young adults would leave home in pairs, or, sometimes, the eldest would go ahead to secure work and a place to live, and others would follow. The Tazewell was the shiny new apartment house on the block with modern amenities not found in older buildings, which made it attractive to potential residents.

The Tazewell Apartments, in the 1918 *St. Paul City Directory*, listed only a handful of residents, including Alfred Dahl, a manager at the Emporium in downtown St. Paul, his wife Flora, and their daughter, Edna, who was employed as “clerk for the Tazewell Apartments.” By 1919, fifty people resided at The Tazewell—twenty-one women and twenty-nine men lived in the thirty-six units. The residents came from many walks of life: young professionals, widowed mothers living with adult children, salesmen, teachers, stenographers, railroad workers, and clerks. Ida Keller was a buyer for Mannheimer Brothers, and Everett Rockhill was a salesman for the St. Paul Motor Car Company.

Anna Goodell, the widow of Northern Pacific Railway manager, George A. Goodell, moved into The Tazewell after living in a home on Summit Avenue. Fred Albrecht was a resident who worked as the janitor at the apartment building. In the previous year, Albrecht was a firefighter, residing at 281 W. Fourth Street. Dr. J.D. Geissinger, with his office at the Lowry Medical Building, lived for a year at The Tazewell. By the following year, he lived in a home at 1886 Fairmount.

Teachers and other education professionals lived at The Tazewell from its opening. In

1920, it was home to twelve teachers, including Charity Moulton (Sibley School), Adelaide Neill (Como Park School), Isabel Hutchinson (Douglas School), sisters Edna and Dena Gould (Mechanic Arts High School), Nora Egan (Jefferson School), and Florence and Mary Connolly (Jefferson School and Hill School).<sup>16</sup>

Mary Connolly's younger sister, Florence, spent nine years at The Tazewell from 1919 until 1928. The Connollys grew up in Stillwater, Minnesota. The sisters moved into The Tazewell shortly after it opened. Florence left Jefferson School and got a job closer to home at Webster School on Laurel and Mackubin, two blocks from her apartment. After her years at The Tazewell, she moved into the Commodore for a few years before settling at 23 Lexington Parkway. The younger Connolly was a lifelong teacher in the Saint Paul Public Schools.<sup>17</sup>

Occupying the corners of The Tazewell on Western Avenue were two retail spaces, each with a step-down entrance. In 1921, a grocer, B.J. McArdle, opened his shop in the northeast corner of the building. In 1922, Esther Krieger took over as grocer. Mrs. Krieger resided at 165 Summit Avenue and had previously worked at the Golden Rule Department Store. In 1922, a beauty shop opened in the other retail space, with Neoma Walker fashioning hairstyles, giving permanent waves, and doing dye jobs. Mrs. Walker had one employee, Jeanette Pantzar.<sup>18</sup>

When the people who lived at The Tazewell returned home after work, they might wave at Mrs. Krieger sweeping the steps down to the grocery store. Entering the building, they would likely pick up their mail, hoping for something from home. The paned glass door led into a small entry with a chandelier, rich wood paneling, and a wide, welcoming staircase. Home! The smell of new paint was slowly fading, being overtaken by fresh floor wax on the tiled entry, wood polish on the staircase, and a lingering scent, equal parts cigarette smoke and hair setting solution.

As the years went by, many people would call The Tazewell home. Lucille Gaudian was born in Bayport, Minnesota, one of twelve children. After graduation from Stillwater High School in 1929 at the age of seventeen, Lucille headed to St. Paul to find work. She joined her sisters (Vera and Inez) and a friend from home (Arletta

Huenke) in their efficiency apartment at The Tazewell. It may have been tight quarters, but the young women were all used to sharing living space. The quartet stayed in number 210, where they paid forty-seven dollars and fifty cents per month. Lucille worked as a stenographer at Bannon's Department Store and earned about fourteen dollars per week. Vera was assistant credit manager at Bannon's, and Inez was a secretary at Raymer Hardware. Arletta worked as a stenographer at Finch, Van Slyke, and McConville.<sup>19</sup> They walked down the hill every morning to their jobs and back up in the evening. They worked until noon on Saturdays and then went home to Bayport for the night and the important Sunday family dinner. In 1931, they moved into number 109, a one-bedroom apartment.<sup>20</sup>

Kevin O'Brien, a lifelong St. Paul resident, recalled many encounters in St. Paul (at the Minnesota State Fair, church, or the post office) that his mother, Lucille Gaudian, had with former neighbors, people she "knew from The Tazewell." Lucille and her son were in downtown St. Paul one day in the late 1960s when she met Mr. Poses in the street. They seemed genuinely happy to see one another and exchanged the usual pleasantries. After Mr. Poses left them, O'Brien asked his mother who the man was. "Oh, he had the grocery store at The Tazewell," she replied.<sup>21</sup>

The original Webster School building was located two blocks west of The Tazewell, on the corner of Laurel and Mackubin. Several Webster teachers, including Florence Connolly, resided at The Tazewell. In 1926, the school moved to 707 Holly Avenue, and the building was torn down. McQuillan Park occupies the corner today. *Photo courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*



In Lucille's later years, O'Brien did her grocery shopping. One day he called to say he was running late. His mother responded, "Oh, that's fine. I'll just stop downstairs if I need milk." This puzzled O'Brien until he realized she was thinking about The Tazewell in the years when she could just stop at Mr. Poses' shop for groceries.<sup>22</sup>

Alice Carroll moved into the building in 1933. Miss Carroll was a nurse, although the *St. Paul City Directories* indicate her place of employment was her home. Unless the building had its own nurse, she likely worked as a private duty nurse in a nearby household. Her tenure at The Tazewell spanned an interesting expansion period in the history of the building. With the shortage of affordable housing during World War II, The Tazewell was at full occupancy. By 1942, the garden-level retail space had been partially converted to living quarters, and an additional six apartments were constructed on the lower level.<sup>23</sup>

The Great Depression found one in five St. Paul families without a working head of household. The teachers at The Tazewell had some job security, but other kinds of employment could be tenuous, and wages were not guaranteed. Sometimes rents were lowered; often neighbors did what they could to help one another. Until President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal and relief programs took effect, the people of St. Paul did their best to survive, using timeless methods involving mutual support and personal thrift.

### **After World War II**

With the end of World War II, people were looking for fresh starts. Home ownership accelerated in the 1950s and 1960s due to new construction and affordable financing, often with low-cost mortgages provided by the G.I. Bill. Many families left the inner city and moved to outer neighborhoods and newly developed suburban areas. When people left, money left; and the commercial enterprises in the neighborhood and in the urban core felt the downturn. From the river bluffs north to the Rondo neighborhood and west up Selby Avenue, the change was dramatic.

For The Tazewell, this was the beginning of decades of severe decline. Where previously residents moved out to move up, in jobs and housing or marriage, now residents moved out to escape the poor conditions in the apartments

and the neighborhood. There were few residents who remained, although there were exceptions, such as Wisconsin-native Gertrude Berg, who taught at Linwood Park School. She lived at The Tazewell from 1929 to 1970. With the changing demographic of the neighborhood during these years, the aging buildings languished. Plumbing and electrical systems, once state-of-the-art, became outmoded and unreliable. Owners, because of lower occupancy in apartments and lower real estate value, did not make necessary improvements.<sup>24</sup>

By 1970, twelve units were vacant, including a block of four apartments on the third floor. Only one person lived in the converted basement living quarters. The decline continued through the late 1970s. In 1978, only twenty units were occupied at The Tazewell. Several apartments were listed as vacant, while others simply were not listed. The once gleaming wood staircases and window trim were covered in dust and grime.<sup>25</sup>

"Dark and dank" is how resident Jim Poole remembers it. Poole moved into number 205 in August 1977. He fondly remembers his eighteen months at the building despite the persistent cockroach infestation, drug-dealing neighbors, homeless people sleeping in the courtyard, and frequent wake-up calls from squirrels circling his bed when a screenless window was left open. Poole was young, creative, living the bohemian lifestyle of a poet. "It was the seventies," he explained. Poole acted as caretaker for the building, cutting grass and shoveling snow. He decorated his walls with a friend's avant-garde artwork and filled the dining room with plants. He remembers the explosion at the Commodore Hotel<sup>26</sup> on February 15, 1978, that blew out several of his windows.<sup>27</sup>

Poole arrived home one day in 1979 and found a notice plastered on the front door. The building was condemned, "Unfit for human habitation." He remembers wondering if that judgment also applied to him. Or to Julius Larkin, a ninety-one-year-old World War I veteran who had lived in number 301 for forty years, or to the other residents for whom The Tazewell was home.<sup>28</sup>

### **Rebirth of The Tazewell**

The Portland Group purchased The Tazewell in 1979 and converted the building into forty efficiency and one-bedroom condominiums.

Similar rehab projects took place all around the Selby-Dale neighborhood. Young couples bought Victorian-era houses for \$10,000 and fixed them up themselves. Some were visionaries; others were speculators. Many were thought crazy by relatives who knew of the neighborhood's sketchy reputation. In bringing the houses and apartment buildings back to life, many of these men and women were not unlike the people who lived in them in the first place.<sup>29</sup>

Photos taken by Kevin O'Brien during the Portland Group's renovation of the building show that, in most areas, the walls were taken down to the lath. The renovators saved as many interior features as possible. Most units still contain the walk-up dressing room/closets and built-in cabinets. Some have French doors and original wood trim and doors. Windows were replaced, electric heating installed, and carpeting was put down. Updates to plumbing and electrical systems were made to The Tazewell, while modern amenities such as dishwashers, garbage disposals, and electric ranges were added. Most of the units retained their original floor plans, but in the absence of original blueprints, some mysteries remained.

In the early spring of 1980, Kevin O'Brien had his first look at the unit he had chosen in the "new" Tazewell building. There was still much work to be done. O'Brien had lived in the neighborhood for a few years and had many friends involved in rehabbing houses; so the state of the building and the area did not shock him. These were days of "dumpster parties." When a friend rented a dumpster to clean out a new rehab project, they'd get a keg and stay up all night keeping watch over the dumpster to prevent random TV sets and recliners from mysteriously appearing overnight.<sup>30</sup>

O'Brien accompanied a new friend up to the third floor to check out her unit, and when the door was opened, all they saw was a big hole. At some point, fire had destroyed the unit—floors, walls, quaint built-in features—all gone. The only thing his new friend could do was cry. This was what she put \$500 down on? In the end, this unit received some special attention, with finishes, new built-in bookcases and, appropriately, a fireplace.<sup>31</sup>

When The Tazewell Condominiums were incorporated in 1980, the neighborhood was experiencing a gradual upswing. Urban decay

certainly didn't set in overnight, and rebuilding took time. At The Tazewell, dedicated homeowners made the difference, building a strong condo association and providing an affordable option for home ownership in one of the most sought-after neighborhoods in St. Paul. That The Tazewell continued its popularity with teachers, nurses, and salesmen was no surprise. Other residents in the recent past have included a pilot, a playwright, realtors, bartenders, lawyers, authors, and a retired priest. Birthday parties were celebrated, break-ups and make-ups occurred, people grew older, and friends moved away.

In St. Paul, somehow the past never feels that long ago. Hundreds of people called The



Official certificate of incorporation for The Taxewell Condominium Association. Chalk the misspelling up to the fact that condos were a relatively new entity in St. Paul in 1980. And judging from early Board meeting minutes, they were more concerned with collecting unpaid dues and managing the new association to catch a spelling error! Photo courtesy of Tazewell Condominium Association



This is what investors saw when they visited their future home at The Tazewell. Amazingly, many original features were retained and exist today. *Photos courtesy of Kevin O'Brien.*

Tazewell home. For many of its residents, it was just another apartment, a place they lived for a year or two. The stories of their years at “The Taz” are not known. For others, like Lucille Gaudian, Kevin O’Brien, and Jim Poole, we have heard how The Tazewell played an important role in their life stories.

The apartment where F. Scott Fitzgerald was born, or the hotel where he lived for a short time, are interesting parts of St. Paul’s history, but they don’t tell the full story. Maybe someday those walking tours will pause for just a moment in front of The Tazewell, and the guide will say,

“For over one-hundred years, this has been the home of other remarkable men and women. People like your great-grandfather, your third-grade teacher, your aunts or your uncles. This was once their home, their neighborhood, their city.”

They might even add an off-the-cuff remark or two: “At the shop on the garden level is where, in the early 1930s, Lucille Gaudian stopped in for a bottle of milk on her way home to apartment 109” and then point to a second-floor window saying, “A poet, a proofreader, and a student of life, Jim Poole, lived there in the late 1970s.”<sup>32</sup>

View of The Tazewell today. Brick columns and wrought iron fencing were added during renovation to enclose the courtyard. The neighborhood continues to grow and change as residents come and go, but The Tazewell remains to keep watch over the intersection of Laurel and Western. *Photo courtesy of Kevin O'Brien.*



*Aine McCormack purchased a condo at The Tazewell in 1997 and often wonders about the history of the building and the people who once called it home. Her writing has appeared in Irish America, Dialogue, and Irish Lives Remembered magazines. Aine is the creator of TheIrishInAmerica.com. Eileen McCormack is*

*an independent researcher and writer who has contributed a number of articles to RCHS. She also collaborated with Bilione Young on The Dutiful Son: Louis W. Hill; Life in the Shadow of the Empire Builder, James J. Hill (2010) published by RCHS.*

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## NOTES

1. Jim Poole oral history through email with the authors. Poole lived at The Tazewell for eighteen months, which was certainly a time of decline for both the building and the neighborhood. Poole had interesting and humorous insights of his time there just prior to The Tazewell being condemned in 1979.

2. *St. Paul City Directories* (herein after *STPCD*), Ramsey County Historical Society, St. Paul, Minn. (hereinafter RCHS). These directories provided a wealth of information on the buildings at 135–137 Western Avenue, the occupants of the former home on the site, the people who lived at The Tazewell, and the employers of the building's occupants.

3. Virginia Brainard Kunz, *Saint Paul: The First 150 Years* (St. Paul: The Saint Paul Foundation, 1991).

4. *STPCD* 1894–1899; St. Catherine's School Collection, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minn.

5. Census records at Ancestry.com, accessed 9/10/2018.

6. *STPCD* 1890, 1900, 1909, 1919.

7. St. Paul housing permits, RCHS.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*

10. Perry E. Crosier Papers, Northwest Architectural Archives, Andersen Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minn.; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arts\\_and\\_Crafts\\_movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arts_and_Crafts_movement), accessed 9/4/2018.

11. James M. Goode, *Best Addresses* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 1988).

12. For additional reading on Perry E. Crosier's contributions, see William Beyer, "An Apartment Idyll: Five Decades of Light and Air at the Fair Oaks," *Architecture Minnesota* (May/June 1987) and Alan K. Lathrop, *Minnesota Architects: A Biographical Dictionary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 53–54.

13. Goode.

14. Goode. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry\\_Tazewell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Tazewell), accessed 2017.

15. Kunz.

16. Saint Paul Public Schools Directory 1920–1921, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minn.

17. *Ibid.*

18. *STPCD* 1920–1922.

19. The name Finch, Van Slyke, and McConville also has been listed as Finch, Van Slyck, and McConville in various historical documents over time.

20. Kevin O'Brien interview. Lucille Gaudian was the mother of Kevin O'Brien. Formal and informal interviews with O'Brien, lifelong St. Paul resident and real estate agent, over the past two years were used in the writing of this article. His mother was a Tazewell resident in the early 1930s. O'Brien has owned a unit at The Tazewell Condominiums since 1980 and has served on the association's Board of Directors for many of those years. His knowledge of the building, the neighborhood, and St. Paul is vast, and his insights have been invaluable to the authors of this article.

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.*

23. *STPCD* 1931, 1942.

24. *STPCD* 1929, 1970.

25. *STPCD* 1970–1978.

26. On February 15, 1978, two explosions caused by a natural gas leak at the historic Commodore Hotel (79 N. Western Avenue) injured 70 people and damaged many nearby buildings, including The Tazewell, located about one block from the Commodore on the same side of the street.

27. Jim Poole, oral history.

28. *Ibid.*

29. St. Paul Housing Permits.

30. Kevin O'Brien interview.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Jim Poole, oral history.

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# RAMSEY COUNTY History

A PUBLICATION OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Preserving our past, informing our present, inspiring our future.

*The mission statement of the Ramsey County Historical Society  
adopted by the Board of Directors on January 25, 2016.*

The Ramsey County Historical Society's vision is to be widely recognized as an innovator, leader, and partner in preserving the knowledge of our community, delivering inspiring history programming, and using local history in education. Our mission of *preserving our past, informing our present, inspiring our future* guides this vision.

The Society began in 1949 when a group of citizens acquired and preserved the Jane and Heman Gibbs Farm in Falcon Heights, which the family had acquired in 1849. Following five years of restoration work, the Society opened the Gibbs Farm museum (listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974). Originally programs focused on telling the story of the pioneer life of the Gibbs family. In 2000, with the assistance of a Dakota Advisory Council, the historic site also began interpreting Dakota culture and lifeways, building additional structures, and dedicating outdoor spaces to tell these stories. The remarkable relationship of Jane Gibbs with the Dakota during her childhood in the 1830s and again as an adult encouraged RCHS to expand its interpretation of the Gibbs farm to both pioneer and Dakota life.

In 1964, the Society began publishing its award-winning magazine, *Ramsey County History*. In 1978, an expanded commitment from Ramsey County enabled the organization to move its library, archives, and administrative offices to downtown St. Paul's Landmark Center, a restored Federal Courts building on the National Register of Historic Places. An additional expansion of the Research Center was completed in 2010 to better serve the public and allow greater access to the Society's vast collection of historical archives and artifacts. In 2016, due to an endowment gift of \$1 million, the Research Center was rededicated as the Mary Livingston Griggs & Mary Griggs Burke Research Center.

RCHS offers a wide variety of public programming for youth and adults. Please see [www.rchs.com](http://www.rchs.com) for details of upcoming History Revealed programs, summer camps at Gibbs Farm, and much more. RCHS is a trusted education partner serving 15,000 students annually on field trips or through outreach programs in schools that bring to life the Gibbs Family as well as the Dakota people of Cloud Man's village. These programs are made possible by donors, members, corporations, and foundations, all of whom we appreciate deeply. If you are not yet a member of RCHS, please join today and help bring history to life for more than 50,000 people every year.

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# William Shields Fallon (1931–2018): A Tribute

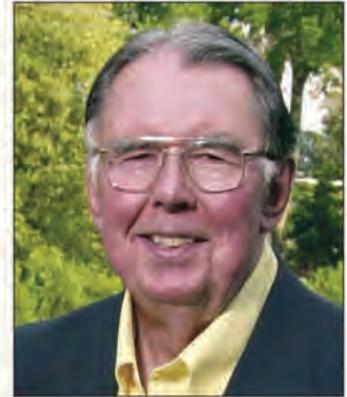
William Fallon, former president and chairman of the board of the Ramsey County Historical Society (RCHS), couldn't get enough of his history. Fallon was born in the midst of the Great Depression, October 2, 1931, in St. Paul, and his father, William H. Fallon, served in the U.S. Seventh Army under George S. Patton from 1942 to 1946. Both monumental events shaped the way the younger Fallon thought about history beginning early in his life, and as he grew older, he operated with a global view of how important the past is.

Fallon passed away November 27, 2018. He'll be remembered as a loving husband, father, uncle, and grandfather, as a local attorney for half a century, and as a pillar in his community and church. The one interest of his that connected all of these roles was his hunger for history.

According to his longtime friend Father Kevin M. McDonough, "History was not so much an acquired taste for Bill, as it was a genetic inheritance." McDonough explained that Fallon was proud of his rich Minnesota heritage that included a familial connection to General James Shields, a Minnesota pioneer and Civil War general. In addition, Fallon's father was a mayor of Saint Paul (1938–1940), and his wife Jean Marie (Landherr) Fallon's family helped shape the town of Rose Creek in the southern part of the state.

Fallon majored in history at the College of St. Thomas, moving on to earn a law degree from the University of Minnesota. His son Martin Fallon imagines his father might have become a history professor, if he had it to do all over again. Fallon continually read about, studied, and jumped into all things history.

"He was a voracious reader," said Martin Fallon. "In fact, starting in 1982, he kept lists of every book he read. He had three manila envelopes of legal pads listing books; general history, ancient history, modern history, Russian history ... He had a very curious mind."



Fallon got involved with RCHS in the 1980s and served several terms in the 1990s as president and chairman of the board. He was active with the organization as a board member until he retired in the early 2000s and remained an honorary board member until his death. Fallon's son remembers that his father liked working with the Society's first magazine editor, the late Virginia Brainard Kunz.

"He was most proud of that magazine," said Martin Fallon, who himself is now a member of the RCHS Board of Directors and Editorial Board. "For a local historical society, [my father] knew they had a top-shelf scholarly journal."

In his later years, Fallon worked as chancellor of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis and, according to Father McDonough, part of Fallon's job was that of chief archivist of the Archdiocese. "He always told me that he considered the chancellor position to be the best job of his life because of the Catholic faith he treasured, because he admired his coworkers, and because he became a steward of 150 years of Minnesota history," McDonough said.

Certainly William Fallon, this man who loved history, will be remembered as an important figure in St. Paul's own history. It was an honor working with Mr. Fallon, and we are grateful for all he did for the citizens and organizations of St. Paul and the Ramsey County Historical Society.

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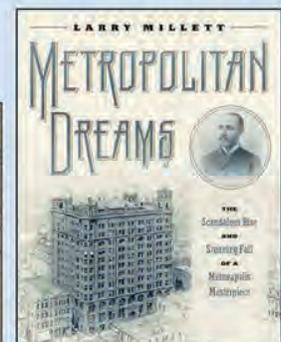
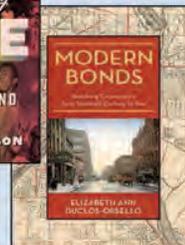
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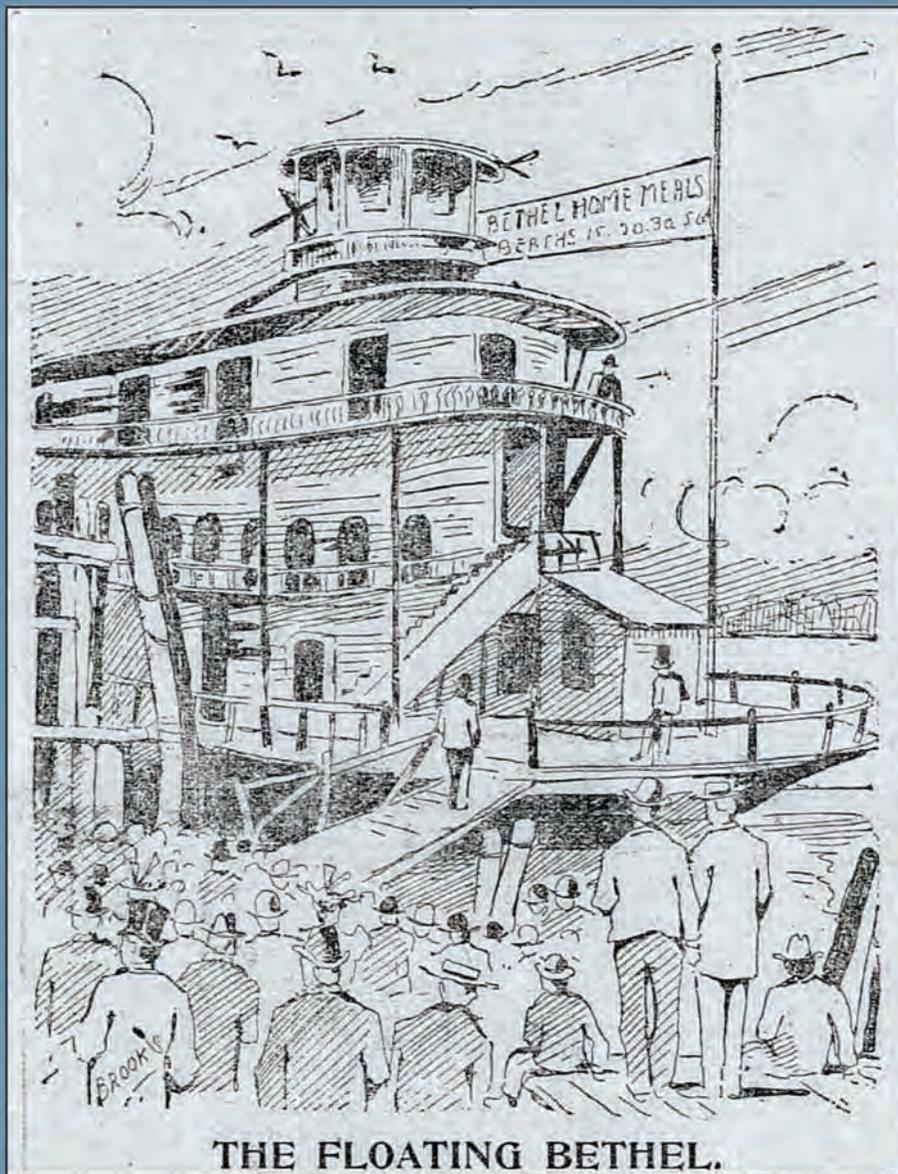
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The Floating Bethel, 1893, two years after it opened on the St. Paul Riverfront at Jackson Street. *The Saint Paul Globe*, July 7, 1893. Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.