

Tikkun Olam

**Jewish Women Serving Their
St. Paul Community**

KATE DIETRICK, GABRIELLE HORNER, AND
JANET KAMPF, PAGE 11



Our Lady of Good Counsel/Our Lady of Peace

**Two Names, Decades of Daily Mercy, and Innumerable
Blessings at St. Paul's Free Hospice Home**

CHRISTINA CAPECCHI, PAGE 1

By the Numbers . . .

Jewish women in the Twin Cities have served communities in need since the late 1800s and continue to do so today. One organization is the National Council of Jewish Women Minnesota, which formed as separate sections in St. Paul and Minneapolis in 1893. Check out what this now-combined organization has accomplished in the last year—during a pandemic, no less!

Amount spent on programs and services: **\$105,566**

Funding provided to local public school families in financial crisis: **\$13,522**

Books distributed to free libraries in a St. Paul neighborhood through the Books to Borrow initiative: **1,800**

Hygiene products delivered through the Just Periods program: **41,484**

Number of women involved in the Muslim and Jewish Women of Minnesota initiative who contacted state lawmakers about economic security and gender justice at a virtual “Day at the Capitol” event: **66**

The Minnesota NCJW has accomplished much over 128 years, thanks, in part, to the early efforts of their first- and second-generation predecessors—five leaders are featured in “*Tikkun Olam: Jewish Women Serving Their St. Paul Community*” on page 11.

SOURCE: National Council of Jewish Women Minnesota, *2020-2021 Annual Report*, <https://www.ncjwmn.org/2020-2021-annual-report/>.

ON THE COVER



Sister Mary Regina shares a rosary with a patient so she may spend time reflecting at Our Lady of Good Counsel Home. This free care facility opened in St. Paul in 1941. Today it is known as Our Lady of Peace Hospice. *Undated photo by Richard Schweizer, courtesy of the Dominican Sisters, Congregation of St. Rose of Lima.*

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The James Jerome Hill Reference Library, 1921-2021
EILEEN MCCORMACK

Message from the Editorial Board

Legacy builders see needs and deficits and, through personal transformation, become the people who usher in better ways to address issues. Such are the legacies of several leaders featured in *Ramsey County History* this November.

Over fifty years, Mother Alphonsa, her friend Mother Rose, and the Hawthorne Dominicans opened seven free hospice homes for the cancerous poor—including St. Paul’s Our Lady of Good Counsel. Mother Alphonsa’s ministry took her on a long journey from her beginnings as a privileged child of American author Nathaniel Hawthorne.

In the late 1800s, three Jewish immigrant women settled in St. Paul—Hannah Austrian, Sophie Wirth, and Annie Paper. Each helped found or contributed to organizations to provide relief for impoverished Jewish families, embrace the resettling of immigrants, support education and job training, and rally for other basic rights. Their work inspired and mentored a second generation of leaders, including Gretta Freeman and Rhoda Redleaf, who with others from the National Council of Jewish Women, piloted a prekindergarten program—a precursor to Head Start.

Empire Builder James J. Hill centered much of his philanthropy on community building. Hill’s own formal education ended when he was young, but he always nurtured an abiding love of learning through books. The James J. Hill Reference Library in downtown St. Paul was his final gift to his adopted city.

This issue celebrates the vision, determination, and the communities of generosity built by these several extraordinary people and the organizations with which they were associated.

Anne Field
Chair, Editorial Board

Correction: Regrets to Dr. David Lanegran, professor emeritus in the Department of Geography at Macalester College. He was incorrectly identified in “*The Aesthetics of Bridge Design: A Paean to Two of St. Paul’s Elegant Park Bridges*,” which ran in the Summer 2021 issue of *Ramsey County History*.

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Two Names, Decades of Daily Mercy, and Innumerable Blessings at St. Paul's Free Hospice Home

CHRISTINA CAPECCHI

Rosebud, he called her. A tender nickname for his youngest child, his brightest hope.

In 1850, the year before his daughter's birth, his novel *The Scarlet Letter* published. It was selling well and garnering literary acclaim. Nathaniel Hawthorne imagined a promising future for his lastborn.¹

A beautiful redhead with soft eyes and a square jaw, Rose Hawthorne showed great talent early on—writing, painting, and performing. She was well-educated and welcomed into sophisticated social circles. Who knew her legacy would one day play out over a thousand miles away along St. Anthony Avenue in St. Paul, Minnesota?

In 1871, at twenty, she married a writer named George Lathrop. Five years later, they welcomed a baby boy—Francis. But life did not go as planned. Their son died from diphtheria at age four. The couple tried to cope, moving frequently, writing, changing jobs, and, eventually, their religion—both converted to Catholicism in 1891. Rose, especially, focused on her personal spiritual journey, attending daily Mass and praying countless novenas—many for her husband. After twenty-five years of marriage, the couple separated permanently in 1896.²

Slowly, her newfound faith and gaping grief reshaped her heart. Nothing looked the same. Then when two friends died of cancer, Rose was struck by their fate. One friend was wealthy and received the best care. The other, a seamstress, was poor and left to die on Blackwell's Island, now called Welfare Island—"New York City's last way station for the penniless."³

At the time, cancer was considered contagious, like scarlet fever. Some families cast cancer-stricken relatives out on the streets, "... they are avoided more than any other class

of sufferers."⁴ Rose vowed to embrace them, "I set my whole being to endeavor to bring consolation to the cancerous poor."⁵

Dignity for All

That same year, Rose returned to New York and appeared at the city's Cancer Hospital, requesting doctors to teach her how to attend to the very worst cases. For several months, the earnest forty-five-year-old student observed the best care afforded to those who could pay for it. She then set out to provide care for those who could not.⁶

That meant living among the poor in the noisy slums of New York's Lower East Side. A visiting reporter commented on Rose's living quarters, "The plastering has fallen from the walls . . . the house itself looks as if it had the skin diseases in which Mrs. Lathrop is so interested."⁷

Yet, Rose saw only hope and possibility. She believed she could make a difference. She recalled her visit to the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, where George Westinghouse demonstrated electricity, illuminating much of the fair with light bulbs. She wanted to provide that same spark as he had, lighting the way for others.⁸

Reflecting on that experience, she set to work, getting down on her knees and scrubbing. She painted the floors in a vivid yellow, manufacturing her own sunshine. The once-pitiful rooms were soon "gladdened in the mornings by a miraculous sunbeam."⁹

She was undaunted by the slum dwellers, "My manner was all trust and good cheer—the only preparation needed for success among the poor."¹⁰



Alice Huber (left) had heard of Rose Hawthorne Lathrop's work and volunteered to help. Little did the two realize that their friendship and focus to comfort the cancerous poor would bring them together as "sisters." Mother Rose (Alice) and Mother Alphonsa (Rose) worked together for over a quarter century. Mother Rose opened more homes after her friend's death in 1926. *Courtesy of the Dominican Sisters, Congregation of St. Rose of Lima.*

Rose's strategy worked. An old woman living on the ground floor—referred to as “that thing” by other tenants—was transformed by Rose's kindness. She “shines with happy smiles now,” Rose wrote. “Everybody is growing to like her, because I liked her and said respectfully that she had a soul, and Our Lord loved her.”¹¹

Rose's confidence in God's providence and the daily mercy of the public was so high she refused any payment from patients. Instead, she placed ads and wrote appeals in newspapers, hoping to interest potential benefactors.¹²

She was not without critics, however. Some questioned her insufficient nursing training, others the “dirty” occupation, and still others suggested she encouraged beggars. To Rose, she could not, in good conscience, neglect the poor, even when the work was endless. Rose also suffered. Twice during the first year of her work, she nearly died of pneumonia.¹³

An Order is Born

Something deep was at work in Rose as she eventually began fundraising to purchase her first freestanding, free cancer home. All money raised and all donor names were printed from time to time in *The New York Sun*.¹⁴

She was buoyed by an art instructor named Alice Huber who decided to join Rose's cancer outreach. The two women forged a close friendship and together founded the Congregation of St. Rose of Lima.

Rosebud—the laughing, dancing girl from so long ago had finally realized her calling and had become the very determined Sister and, later, Mother Mary Alphonsa.

In 1900, the two friends were accepted as Third Order Dominican religious. They were called the Servants of Relief for Incurable Cancer. Later after the establishment of the motherhouse in Hawthorne, New York, in 1901, they become known informally as the Hawthorne Dominicans. Over the years, they and their congregation would accomplish the unimaginable, eventually establishing seven free cancer homes across the country.¹⁵

At every turn, the nuns battled foreclosures and a multitude of other issues, but just as happened in the early years, volunteers and benefactors poured in to help, and contributions multiplied. Mother Alphonsa even received encouragement from Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain), who wrote of her cancer ministry, “I know of this lofty work of yours . . . This prosperity will be continued . . . for that endowment is banked where it cannot fail until pity fails in the hearts of men. And that will never be.”¹⁶

Settling in St. Paul

The sixth cancer home established was in Minnesota. It proved, in some ways, to be the most difficult and the most meaningful to found.

War clouds loomed over the nation in 1941 when plans began developing for Our Lady of Good Counsel Home in St. Paul. Taking over for Mother Alphonsa, who died in 1926, Mother Rose had high hopes for the order's westernmost home. She had seen the profound impact of their cancer facilities and yearned to reach the Midwest.¹⁷

“Do you think it wise to begin such a venture in these troubled times?” Bishop James Cassidy, the head of the Fall River Diocese in Massachusetts asked Mother Rose as he worried about American involvement in World War II.¹⁸

Mother Rose spoke of the pressing need, making a compelling case. But privately, she, too, was worried.

As I write, the world is in great distress, and there seems no chance for improvement . . . Hitler and Mussolini have caused so much destruction that if we are not near the end

of the world, there seems little chance to rebuild . . . As far as our work continues, there will always be the poor incurable cancer patients to care for, and our Homes will be kept well filled. Death is sometimes a daily visitor. We hope in a few months to open a Home in St. Paul, Minnesota.¹⁹

Despite her fears, Mother Rose found allies, beginning with the head of the Preparatory Seminary in St. Paul, Very Reverend James L. Connolly. “Our Archbishop has a heart wide open to every charitable work,” he wrote Mother Rose, “and I have not the least doubt that he will welcome it.”²⁰ Indeed, Archbishop John Gregory Murray did.

A few months later, a location was chosen: a two-story brick toll office owned by the Tri-State Telephone Company, situated on the southwest corner of Cleveland and St. Anthony Avenues. It needed work. Some fretted about wartime conditions causing a shortage of building materials and labor, but those who knew Mother Rose well knew she would not be deterred.²¹

Nine nuns were chosen to make the journey and operate the St. Paul cancer home, with Sister Mary Paul as their leader. They departed New York on November 26, 1941, following a rousing farewell address from Father Joseph Clune, their chaplain, “That lovely city on the Mississippi is to welcome a band who come as pioneers, yes, but seeking nothing, begging only to be allowed to give their all.”²²

The long train ride carried them across the Heartland, showcasing servicemen that hinted at imminent military engagement. The nuns arrived in St. Paul as the last rays of the sunset glistened on the Mississippi River.²³ War was very possible. Winter was near. But the warmth of the Minnesotans and the depth of the nuns’ faith shone brightly.

A Surprise Attack, A Quiet Opening

Archbishop Murray celebrated Mass the next day in a makeshift chapel, consoling the newcomers with the reminder that “[o]ur home is where our Lord is.”²⁴

The grand opening for Our Lady of Good Counsel’s home was set for Sunday afternoon, December 7—a day that would go down in history—when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor

early that morning, and the country waited to see if the US Congress would declare war. As news trickled in, the nuns proceeded with their opening that somber afternoon. The Axis powers would not stop them.

Ray Wey was eight when he attended the opening with his family. During the tour, he heard the radio buzzing and folks trying to piece

Servants of Relief for Incurable Cancer
**AT ROSARY HILL HOME,
 HAWTHORNE,**

Westchester Co., N. Y., are continuing to beg for the money to build a Fireproof Home for 100 patients—deslitute sufferers from the Disease now widely known to be an affliction as terrible as the wounds of warfare. There men and women are of all creeds and nationalities, and are supported entirely by the public, without State aid, for reasons beneficial to these poor. They have been housed in a wooden home for 25 years

In Fund, \$158,500.00—Needed, \$642,000.00

MOTHER M. ALPHONSA LATHROP, O. S. D.
 Treasurer,
 Servants of Relief for Incurable Cancer

The Wooden Rosary Hill Home,
 Hawthorne, Westchester Co., N. Y.

Mother Alphonsa worked endlessly to raise support for her free cancer homes. In the 1920s, she was especially worried about a potential fire destroying the Rosary Hill Home. She even temporarily renamed the home—“The Wooden Rosary Hill Home”—in her public plea to emphasize the urgency. *In the Diocese of Brooklyn’s Catholic newspaper, The Tablet, May 22, 1926.*



In 1941, Mother Rose helped secure a former telephone company building at 2076 St. Anthony Avenue and transformed it into the Hawthorne Dominicans’ sixth free hospice care facility. *Courtesy Our Lady of Peace Archives.*

together what had happened far away in Hawaii. Despite the uncertainty of the day, visitors were awed by the cancer home with its tall windows and long rows of tidy beds. “We thought it was quite a generous organization—there was nothing else like it,” said Wey, a St. Paul resident who is now eighty-seven, a former priest, and former associate director of Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis. “Everyone saw it as an innovative undertaking—the idea that you didn’t have to pay and could come in your last days and get incredible care!”²⁵

The nuns, smiling in their crisp white habits, impressed his family and other curious visitors. “They had a spirit of innovation and adventure,” he said. “. . . Even as a kid, I sensed their warmth and friendliness.”²⁶

Looking back, Wey said, it seems fitting that Our Lady’s opening was eclipsed by an enormous news-making event. It has remained low profile over the decades. “Even though it’s not well known, it’s well loved. It’s had tremendous support . . .”²⁷

After the humble introductory gathering, the nuns had no time to rest. Their first patient arrived the following day. Word spread. Soon, some very sick men and women had settled into the cancer home.²⁸

The sisters’ learning curve was steep, but their guiding light directed each step through Mother Alphonsa’s mission to set out to love everyone. Despite having little medical background, the nuns committed to learning every aspect of end-of-life care. In the coming decades, many earned nursing degrees. They were ahead of their time, said Dr. Wayne Thalhuber, who served as the facility’s medical director for four decades from 1968-2009.

“They were so devoted to the care of their patients,” he said. “They lived in the same building. They were around all the time. When I walked in there, I experienced something different. I said, ‘What is this? This isn’t like [other] hospitals or nursing homes in town.’ There was such a peacefulness conveyed by the nuns. I don’t know if you can measure it, but you can feel it.”²⁹

From the first patient he encountered—a woman with a large sarcoma of the hip that was fungating—Dr. Thalhuber was stunned by the complex medical situations with which the nuns were tasked:

The overwhelming disease they were facing—that you would never even see in your residency or a county hospital. These people were down and out. The more I went, the more I wanted to go. . . . I felt more fulfilled as a physician there than in sitting in my office trying to take care of somebody with diabetes or hypertension that wouldn’t listen to [me] anyway. At Our Lady, I felt that I was really helping . . .³⁰

Bedside Prayers

That calling was extended to the Catholic seminarians who visited Our Lady. “It was something the seminarians took very seriously,” said Wey, who had grown from an eight-year-old boy into one such seminarian receiving a real-world education far beyond any textbook.³¹

With time and a beautiful example from the nuns, the seminarians, Dr. Thalhuber, and many others learned to lean into the spirituality of their work “I wasn’t a great religious guy,” said Thalhuber, “but when I couldn’t do anything else and their symptoms were as reasonably controlled as I could get them, I would say, ‘Tell me about your spirituality.’ And I’d try to identify something they were really grateful for. . . . Suddenly, we were praying. Gratitude opens the door.”³²

Spirituality turned out to be the most important tool in his toolbox. “It was the hug that sent the patient off on their travels.”³³

The modern idea of hospice care—a holistic, person-centered approach to palliative care that addresses a patient’s physical, psychological, and spiritual needs—was introduced in the late 1960s in England by Dr. Cicely Saunders.³⁴ Yet, by then, the sisters at Our Lady had quietly been providing hospice care for decades.

According to Dr. Thalhuber, the staff—doctors, nuns, and lay people—often introduced to patients and families the concepts of asking or giving forgiveness and saying I love you, thank yous, goodbyes, and, sometimes, assurances that those left behind will be fine and it’s okay to let go.³⁵

A Garden, Good Will, and Faith

Staying true to Mother Alphonsa’s vision of a free cancer home was no small feat. Since its founding, Our Lady of Good Counsel depended entirely on donations of goods, money, time,

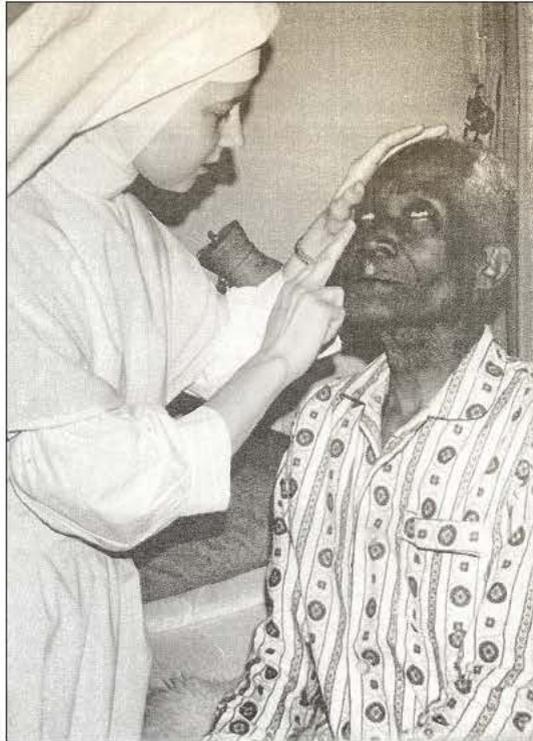
and service. No payment was ever accepted from patients, their families, insurance companies, or government agencies.³⁶

In 1980, a new building was erected on the grounds, including a sun-drenched, brick-lined chapel near the entrance, a central courtyard with a large fountain, and two floors for patients offering twenty-one beds in total, two per room. And, there were gardens.

The sisters knew their flowers as well as their patients. “A nun would humbly ask, ‘Can you put some more moss out near the rhododendrons?’” recalled Greg Deacy, director of maintenance at the facility today, who served as groundskeeper from 1997-2000.³⁷ Roses bloomed beside the windows, and the nuns sometimes added them to floral displays in the chapel or shared them with a resident.

“Simple things matter,” said Sister Mary de Paul Mullen, who served at Our Lady from 2007 to 2009. “Bringing a patient a perfectly bloomed flower from outside could spread such joy.”³⁸

Being responsive to patients has always been a priority. For Deacy, that meant keeping the building a comfortable temperature. When a patient who loved baseball lost power on his TV during



In this undated photo used in early informational brochures, a nun carefully and compassionately examines a patient's eyes. *Courtesy of Our Lady of Peace Archives.*



In the original Our Lady of Good Counsel facility, women were cared for on the second floor and men on the first floor. The open ward design was purposeful so patients would not be alone in a room. *Courtesy of Our Lady of Peace Archives.*



The sisters replaced the old facility with a new one in 1981 at the same location. Forty years on, the building is still in use, although the sign now reads Our Lady of Peace Home. Plans are in development for future renovation. *Courtesy of Our Lady of Peace Archives.*

the World Series, Deacy replaced the set immediately. All the staff delighted in granting wishes: a Schmidt beer, a pontoon ride, a delicious blueberry scone, or the chance to pet a cat again, hop on a Harley, or even visit the Twins stadium.³⁹

The nuns' devotion to their patients never wavered. When Kim Perez, volunteer director and department manager, began working at Our Lady in 1989, she asked, "Who works the

night shift?" The answer from the administrator stunned her: "Well, we do, of course!"⁴⁰

Perez believes the nuns at Our Lady, with their trust in Mother Alphonsa's daily mercy of the public, would've made their foundress proud. "One of the sisters would say, 'Oh, I need this' or 'I need that,' and it would come in the next day!" Perez exclaimed. "Once, a sister said, 'My patient loves pink. It would be so nice if she had a pink gown.' A few days later, a beautiful pink gown showed up. My mind was blown, and the sisters were like, 'Oh, sure!'"⁴¹

Still, generosity didn't keep staff members from worrying. For one, there was such a great need, evidenced in the ongoing waiting list for beds along with the continual call for donations. In a 2011 interview for *The Catholic Spirit*, Director of Nursing Matthew Stafford emphasized Our Lady needed new donors to continue its mission. "The younger generation has not quite picked up the support of the home the way that their parents did," he said. "When we call, they say it was their parents' favorite charity. We need to encourage people to pick up the torch again and support."⁴²

It was a heavy weight that fell on the nuns, who had to be skilled nurses, savvy fundraisers,

Welcome the Child, Welcome the Lord

Though the Dominican Sisters at Our Lady of Good Counsel focused their care on adults with cancer, they made a few memorable exceptions, caring, on occasion, for children. One child was Mark Mandell. Around 1960, one-year-old Mark suffered a severe brain injury from a car accident. Doctors performed two surgeries and warned that he would die soon. His mother, JoAnn Mandell, who was pregnant with her fifth child, was struggling to care for him and her other children.

A devout Catholic, Mandell prayed to St. Jude, the patron saint of hopeless causes. "Pray for me, who am so needy," she read from a prayer card. "Make use, I implore you, of that particular privilege accorded to you to bring visible and speedy help where help is most despaired."^a

A relative volunteered at Our Lady and proposed the idea that the sisters there could help. The Mother Superior agreed to keep the toddler in their care, assigning him to a nun with an unforgettable name—Sister Jude. "It was an answer to prayer," said Mandell, who is now ninety.

Mark lived briefly at Our Lady, where he was wheeled around, always smiling at patients. His family visited from Farmington, Minnesota, on weekends, giving him haircuts and bringing toys. He turned two.^b

A column in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* described him as "sunshine personified in a building where the human stories too often are in their last chapters." The columnist Gareth Hiebert, under the pen name Oliver Towne, described Mark's room at Our Lady as filled with toys, dubbing him the "King of Our Lady of Good Counsel."^c

Knowing Mark was in such good hands was a tremendous relief to the Mandell family. "The nuns were absolute lifesavers," Mandell said. "They helped us through the most difficult time in our lives."^d

When he died on May 16, 1961, the nuns made the arrangements for his funeral.^e Over the years, Sister Jude never forgot the Mandell family, and the Mandell's, for their part, never stopped praying to St. Jude for intercession.

and fervent prayers. Decade upon decade, they put in long days, drawing on their education and their faith to serve the dying.

Listening, Learning, Loving

A hallmark of the excellent care provided is symptom management. What can be done to make patients more comfortable? This is approached through a broad lens, with some measures requiring advanced medical knowledge and others involving basic hygiene.⁴³

The day after patients are admitted, they receive a warm bath in the hot tub. Nails are trimmed, a man's face may be shaved. These simple measures make a big difference, and visiting family members are often comforted to see the patient looking fresh, clean, comfortable. Other times, symptom management requires selecting exactly the right medication at the right time—a decision that is made by a medical director with input from the nursing team.⁴⁴

This commitment to listening, learning, and loving spurs on the staff. Comfort was and is further amplified through an array of therapies—from music to dog to, at one time, a roller skating nun—and enhanced by volunteers who come simply to hold a patient's hand.

Harpist Jennifer Wilson, a former volunteer at Our Lady, understood the power of music to transport someone to another time or place—before cancer. “There’s that trail down to Lake Superior,” she said one long-ago Monday morning, perched beside a patient after playing the final chord of *Forest Stroll*, a sunny Celtic melody. “The North Shore is my favorite travel spot.”⁴⁵

“Can I join you?” the patient asked.⁴⁶

The benefits of music are wide ranging—from lowering blood pressure to lessening the perception of pain. It’s not taking the place of medication, but it can help make a person more comfortable.

Sometimes, Nuns Just Want to Have Fun

The deep faith of the Dominican sisters operating Our Lady of Good Counsel was matched by their bright humor. The nuns liked to have fun! As they witnessed death on a near-daily basis, they did their best to celebrate life among themselves and with their patients.

They made the most of holidays. Their favorite non-religious holiday was the Fourth of July, which the nuns marked each summer with a party and picnic. “That was like their reunion,” said Steven Geis, a longtime volunteer whose father, Dr. Leroy Geis, worked at Our Lady for more than twenty-five years. Long after the doctor passed away, his children and grandchildren have continued volunteering there.⁹

On Halloween, the nuns donned creative costumes and paraded down the hall. A standout: Sister Imelda, who once dressed as a receptionist in a wig and makeup that made her unrecognizable.

“She was a kid at heart,” said Kim Perez, who has worked at the facility for thirty years. The most obvious evidence of her youthful joy was her penchant for roller skating down the halls in her habit. The skates enabled her to go about her work more swiftly, but it also provided levity—a double benefit.^b

“In the old home, on the tile floors, she could move real quick,” recalled Geis, who named his firstborn—Faith Imelda—after the beloved nun. “She was showing that



The sisters at Our Lady of Good Counsel understood how important it was to step away from their nursing duties, when possible, to enjoy much-needed free time with each other, staff, and patients. *Courtesy of Our Lady of Peace Archives.*

you need to have a little fun, especially when you’re caring for those who are dying. How do you bring a smile to the patients’ faces?”^c

As a father of four and a grade school principal, Geis continues to be inspired by his memories of the sisters, including Sister Imelda. “She was a child at heart, and our Lord said you need to be like a child to get into heaven.”^d

Patients are further comforted by the knowledge that Our Lady will care for their loved ones through extensive grief-therapy programming. Services include one-on-one meetings, phone calls and Zoom sessions, grief support groups, seminars, workshops, and memorial services.⁴⁷

Ron Rudolph was reluctant to attend his first session of a spouse support group after his wife, Pat, died. He lingered in the parking lot, but when he finally joined the group, he was amazed by its impact. They spoke knowingly of struggles, such as removing a late spouse's clothes from the closet.⁴⁸

Rudolph formed a special connection with one widow in the group—Kathleen. On Christmas Eve in 2019, he proposed in Our Lady's chapel. "It had to happen in the place where both of our lives stopped and started again," Rudolph said. "If I had stayed in my truck and not walked into that support group, I would probably still be home by myself."⁴⁹

Though Our Lady of Peace staff will someday look back with pride at the Herculean effort to manage the pandemic, their memories remain raw as COVID continues. (L-R): Jessi Ruegamer, RN; Jennifer Jackson, RN; Sarah Morgan, TMA; Ribka Belayneh, CNA; and Sister Gracelet. Courtesy of Our Lady of Peace.



New Owner, New Name

A major transition came in 2009, when the Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne made the difficult decision to transfer sponsorship of Our Lady of Good Counsel to the St. Paul-based Franciscan Health Community. The few remaining beloved nuns returned to New York to minister there, and the staff and community grieved.⁵⁰

"Continuing the sisters' legacy is a priority," said Joe Stanislav, who has been CEO for the past twenty-nine years. "It's a testament to the people that we all just wanted it to succeed, to continue giving free care as long as possible. . . . Now that lay people like us have tried to imitate what they (the sisters) set up, hopefully they'd be happy with what we're doing."⁵¹

Despite the loss of the six sisters, today, four Franciscan Clarist nuns serve in their place, living at the hospice and assisting with caregiving while providing a gentle Catholic presence.

In 2011, Our Lady of Good Counsel was renamed Our Lady of Peace (OLP), and three years later, the charity's board decided to broaden its free end-of-life care to include people with other terminal illness, not just cancer.⁵²

A Pandemic Strikes

For all the organization endured, Our Lady of Peace faced yet another unimaginable test in 2020 when a public health crisis converged with an economic crisis, placing the hospice in the crosswinds.

As increasingly dire information about COVID-19 emerged, the staff rallied. Life as they knew it was about to be upended. From administrators to receptionists, everyone united to implement the best practices on infection control. Administrators closed the hospice to visitors. This was the hardest part of the pandemic. Nurse Frezgi Hiskias explained how healthcare workers facilitated virtual meetings, held up iPads for their patients to see families online, and with only their eyes showing above otherwise masked faces, they quietly kept vigil over dying patients around the clock, clasping their hands, listening to their stories, praying, and holding the space.⁵³

At the same time, Our Lady called for donations, and, soon, hundreds of handmade masks and gowns arrived. Donors stepped up in record number, enabling the hospice to meet new

COVID-related expenses. “It was like the miracle of the loaves and fishes multiplying,” said Director of Development Lisa Sweeney.⁵⁴ The facility reopened to the public with modified visitation policies in May 2020 after eight weeks.

Continuing the Mission

Today, Our Lady of Peace employs 135 workers, including nurses, social workers, chaplains, and a full-time physician, which is rare for a hospice residence. Its affiliated home-care program and Highland Block Nurse Program are thriving, and it is bolstered by a legion of ninety loyal volunteers.⁵⁵

Since its founding eight decades ago, the groups under the Our Lady of Peace umbrella have served some 26,000 patients.⁵⁶ But their focus remains on the single patient before them.

To continue to provide patients the very best experience, the OLP Board of Directors recently launched a capital campaign for a \$5 million expansion and renovation. The chief goal is to

build an addition that allows for all rooms to be private. They’ll also add a covered entrance to shelter incoming patients and ease the transition, renovate the lobby, construct a family lounge, and expand the parking lot.

“I think we’re the best kept secret in St. Paul,” Perez said. “We’re a beacon of light and a source of hope for people who don’t know where to turn. People are aghast we can do this for free. ‘What?! In this day and age? How are you doing it?’ Well, there’s a community of support. There’s this big whole community of people who believe in what we do.”⁵⁷ Mother Alphonsa and Mother Rose would be pleased.

Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer and contributor to The Catholic Spirit newspaper in St. Paul. She earned a master’s degree from Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism. She and her husband, Ted, live in Inver Grove Heights with their four children.

To learn more about Our Lady of Peace Home or to contribute to their capital campaign, go to <https://ourlady-ofpeacemn.org/>.

NOTES

1. St. Anthony’s Guild, *The Anthonian* 46, no. 1 (1972): 3-4. Rose Hawthorne was born May 3, 1851; Robert McCrum, “The 100 best novels: No 16 – *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne (1850),” *The Guardian*, January 6, 2014. Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote mostly unsuccessfully for years until 1850, when the first print run (2,500 copies) of his novel *The Scarlet Letter* sold out in ten days. In the end, however, he sold just 7,800 copies prior to his death.

2. Sister Mary Joseph, *Out of Many Hearts* (Hawthorne, NY: The Servants of Relief For Incurable Cancer, 1965), 2, 11-14; Patricia Dunlavy Valenti, *To Myself a Stranger: A Biography of Rose Hawthorne Lathrop* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1999), 64, 147-148. Several biographies attribute the couple’s final separation to George Lathrop’s drinking and alleged abuse. Dunlavy Valenti, however, argues there is no solid evidence of this. Mr. Lathrop died in 1898; In the Catholic tradition, a novena is a spiritual devotion recited daily for nine days and asking for a divine favor for a special intention.

3. St. Anthony’s Guild, 13-14.

4. Hildegard Hawthorne, “The Most Unforgettable Character I’ve Met,” *Reader’s Digest*, reprint, n.d., 4, from February 1950, 21-25.

5. St. Anthony’s Guild, 14.

6. Father Gabriel B. O’Donnell, ed., “Rose Hawthorne Servant of God: A description of the beginning of her work,” newsletter, The Rose Hawthorne Guild v, no. 2, (n.d.): 2; Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, “History & Milestones,” accessed September 15, 2021, <https://www.mskcc.org/about/history-milestones>. The

New York Cancer Hospital opened in 1884 and is today known as Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.

7. “Mrs. Lathrop’s Sad Tasks,” *Catholic Union and Times*, January 7, 1897, 1; “Rose Hawthorne Lathrop’s Mission,” *The Wilkes-Barre News*, December 27, 1899, 6.

8. Sister Mary de Paul Mullen, interview with author, April 6, 2021.

9. Hildegard Hawthorne, 10; “Rose Hawthorne Lathrop’s Mission, 6.

10. O’Donnell, 2.

11. O’Donnell, 3.

12. Sister Mary Joseph, 27; Hawthorne, 5. Rose Hawthorne Lathrop’s appeals led to news stories in papers across the country in the late 1890s. *The New York Sun* was prolific in its positive coverage. Her name and her father’s fame may have helped garner the attention. It also set her up for criticism. In an opinion piece in *The Brooklyn News*, a critic chastised her separation, “It would seem quite the proper thing for Mrs. Lathrop, before going into an enterprise like this, to first remove the cancer from her domestic happiness.”

13. “Mrs. Lothrop’s [sic] Medical Charity,” *The Nebraska State Journal*, January 4, 1897, 3. For example: A reprint of an opinion piece from an unidentified New York City newspaper quoted Charles C. Savage, a vice president of Roosevelt Hospital: “A good deal of harm is done by people with more heart than brain.” He continued, “Mrs. Lathrop is inspired by a noble resolve to help the poor . . . In her independent, irregular, irresponsible efforts, she may do a vast amount of harm.” The article ends with the opinion that the work of do-gooders

places a premium on “mendicancy and pauperism is enhanced instead of lessened.” Mrs. Lathrop did not let the naysayers or negative press bother her, and supporters continued to donate to her growing charity.

14. “Free Cancer Home: Mrs. Rose Hawthorne Lathrop Has About Half The Money To Buy It,” *The New York Sun*, March 26, 1899, 32.

15. Sister Mary Joseph, 257. The six other homes include: St. Rose’s Home, New York City, NY, 1899; Rosary Hill Home, Hawthorne, NY, 1901; Sacred Heart Home, Philadelphia, PA, 1930; Rose Hawthorne Lathrop Home, Fall River, MA, 1932; Our Lady of Perpetual Help Home, Atlanta, GA, 1939; and Holy Family Home, Cleveland, OH, 1956. Today, only four facilities remain in operation in Hawthorne, Atlanta, St. Paul, and Cleveland, and only the Hawthorne and Atlanta homes are still operated by the Hawthorne Dominicans.

16. Hawthorne, 1; Valenti, 164.

17. Sister Mary Joseph, various email correspondence with author, August 2021.

18. Sister Mary Joseph, 258.

19. Mother Rose, diary entry, July 5, 1941, Dominican Sisters, Congregation of St. Rose of Lima Archives.

20. Sister Mary Joseph, 259.

21. Ibid.

22. Sister Mary Joseph, 262.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ray Wey, personal interview with author, June 1, 2021.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Sister Mary Joseph, 264.

29. Dr. Wayne Thalhuber, interview with author, May 18, 2021.

30. Ibid.

31. Wey.

32. Thalhuber.

33. Ibid.

34. Caroline Richmond, “Dame Cicely Saunders: Founder of the modern hospice movement,” originally published in *British Medical Journal*, July 23, 2005, accessed September 22, 2021, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1179787/>.

35. Thalhuber.

36. Congregation of St. Rose of Lima, “Golden Jubilee – 1900-1950,” booklet, *The Servants for Relief of Incurable Cancer*, December 8, 1950, 20-21. Clark Morphew, “Cancer home lives Christmas every day,” *St. Paul Pioneer Press and Dispatch*, December 21, 1985.

37. Greg Deacy, interview with author, May 5, 2021.

38. Mullen.

39. Mullen; Deacy.

40. Kim Perez, interview with author, April 28, 2021.

41. Perez.

42. Susan Klemond, “Cancer home has new name but same mission,” *The Catholic Spirit*, June 23, 2011.

43. Matthew Stafford, phone interview with author, April 19, 2021.

44. Stafford; Tom Cassidy, interview with author, April 5, 2021.

45. Jennifer Wilson, interview with author, August 14, 2012.

46. Wilson.

47. “Supporting Families Through Bereavement Services,” *The Journey* 7 (2016): 12.

48. *Men and Grief*, (blog), Our Lady of Peace, June 18, 2021, accessed September 22, 2021, <https://ourladyofpeacemn.org/men-and-grief/>.

49. Ron Rudolf, in *Men and Grief*.

50. Mother Mary Francis and Joe Stanislav, announcement letter, January 19, 2009; Archbishop John C. Nienstedt, “In gratitude for sisters’ faithful witness,” *The Catholic Spirit*, January 2, 2009, 2. In his article, Archbishop Nienstedt explained, “The sisters . . . were functioning in ‘administrative roles’ rather than ‘hands on’ nursing care with patients. A number of new vocations has not been forthcoming, and their ranks are aging.”

51. Joe Stanislav, interview with author, June 3, 2021.

52. Klemond; Joe Stanislav, interview with author, August 19, 2014. Heather Zenk, email correspondence with editor, September 28, 2021. Current parameters for admission: Adults are required to have a terminal diagnosis and approximately four to six weeks left to live. Pediatric patients must have a cancer diagnosis. Each case for admission is reviewed by the Our Lady of Peace medical team.

53. Frezgi Hiskias, interview with author, April 2, 2021.

54. Lisa Sweeney, interview with author, April 2, 2021.

55. Frederick Melo, “A legacy of hope amid loss,” *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, June 28, 2021, 1, 10A.

56. Heather Zenk, email correspondence with author, April 7, 2021.

57. Perez.

Notes to Sidebar on p. 6

a. JoAnn and Art Mandell, interview with author, May 10, 2021.

b. Eventually, the Mandell family made the difficult decision to move to Montana for a job opportunity. Mark Mandell briefly became a ward of the state.

c. Gareth Hiebert, “The Love of Lucy and Mark,” in *The Oliver Town Column*, *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, n.d.

d. JoAnn and Art Mandell.

e. “Mark C. Mandell,” Minnesota US Death Index 1908, ancestry.com.

Notes to Sidebar on p. 7

a. Steven Geis, interview with author, April 26, 2021.

b. Kim Perez, interview with author, April 28, 2021; Geis.

c. Geis.

d. Geis.

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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 Ramsey County Historical Society (RCHS) strives to innovate, lead, and partner in preserving the knowledge of our community, deliver inspiring history programming, and incorporate local history in education.

The Society was established in 1949 to preserve the Jane and Heman Gibbs Farm in Falcon Heights, which the family acquired in 1849. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974, the original programs told the story of the Gibbs family. In 2000, with the assistance of a Dakota Advisory Council, RCHS also began interpreting Dakota culture and lifeways, now telling the stories of the remarkable relationship between Jane Gibbs and the Dakota people of Heyáta Othúŋwe (Cloud Man's Village).

In 1964, the Society began publishing its award-winning magazine *Ramsey County History*. In 1978, the organization moved to St. Paul's Landmark Center, a restored Federal Courts building on the National Register of Historic Places. An expansion of the Research Center was completed in 2010 and rededicated in 2016 as the Mary Livingston Griggs & Mary Griggs Burke Research Center.

RCHS offers public programming for youth and adults. Visit www.rchs.com for details of upcoming History Revealed programs, summer camps, courthouse and depot tours, and more. The Society serves more than 15,000 students annually on field trips or through school outreach. Programs are made possible by donors, members, corporations, and foundations, all of whom we appreciate deeply. If you are not 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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RCHS is committed to ensuring it preserves and presents our county's history. As we continue our work to incorporate more culturally diverse histories, we have made a commitment to diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion that is based on this core idea: RCHS exists to serve ALL who call Ramsey County home. To learn more, please see www.rchs.com/about.

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Mnisóta Makhóčhe, the land where the waters are so clear they reflect the clouds, extends beyond the modern borders of Minnesota and is the ancestral and contemporary homeland of the Dakhóta (Dakota) people. It is also home to the Anishinaabe and other Indigenous peoples, all who make up a vibrant community in Mnisóta Makhóčhe. RCHS acknowledges that its sites are located on and benefit from these sacred Dakota lands.

RCHS is committed to preserving our past, informing our present, and inspiring our future. Part of doing so is acknowledging the painful history and current challenges facing the Dakota people just as we celebrate the contributions of Dakota and other Indigenous peoples.

Find our full Land Acknowledgment Statement on our website, www.rchs.com. This includes actionable ways in which RCHS pledges to honor the Dakota and other Indigenous peoples of Mnisóta Makhóčhe.

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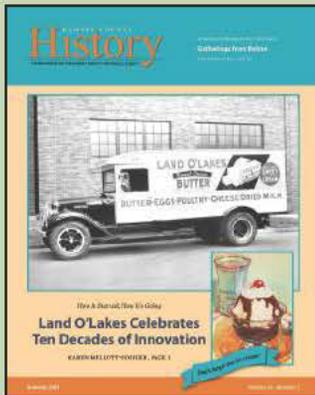


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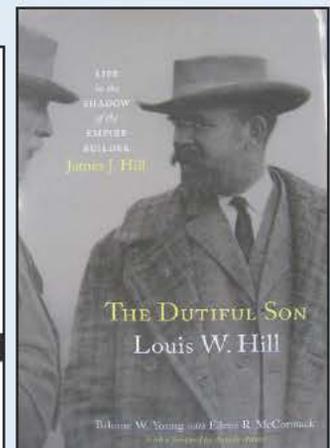
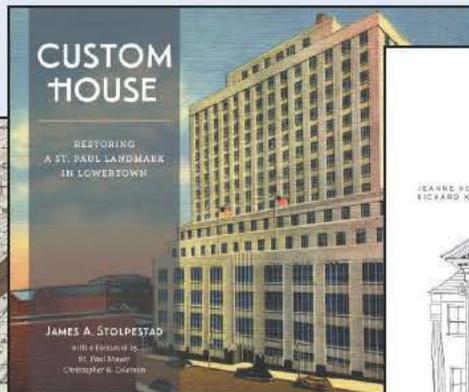
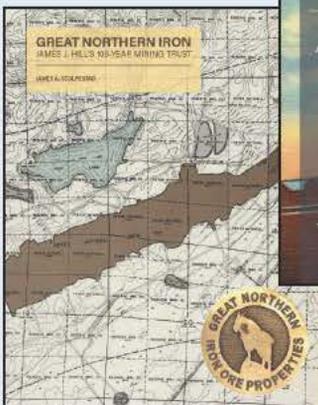
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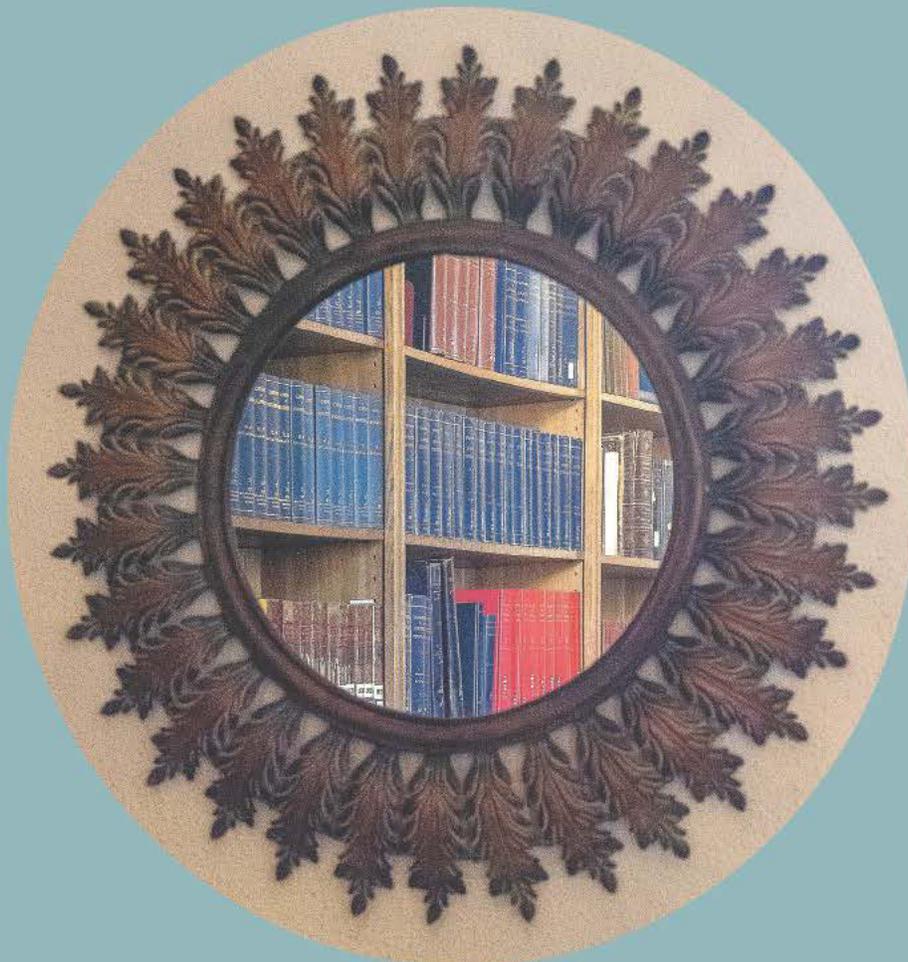
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EILEEN MCCORMACK, PAGE 22



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