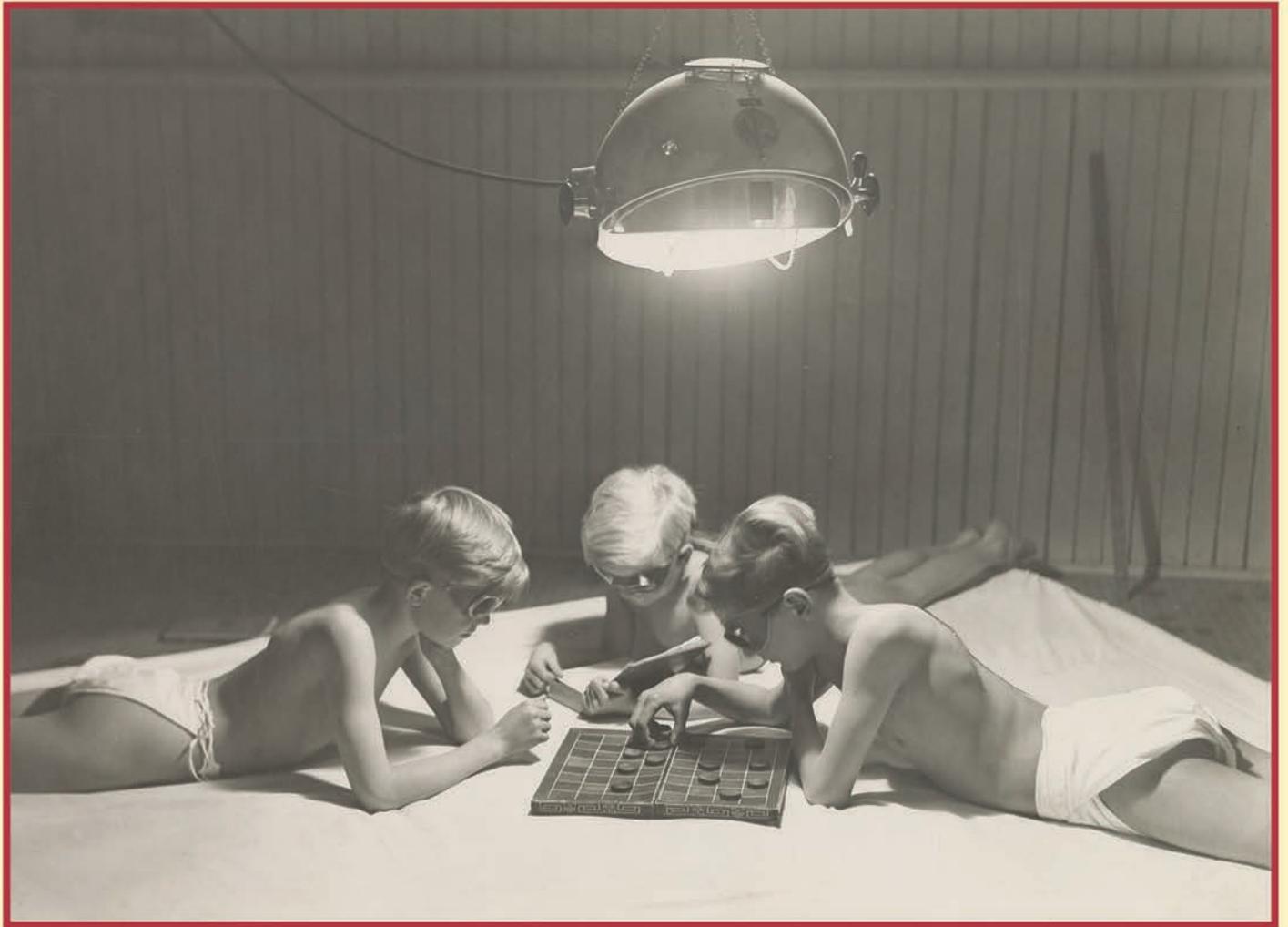


*Growing Up in Saint Paul*

**My Harley Grandma Mary  
Eileen Kehoe and the St. Paul  
Motorcycle Escort Club**

ELETA PIERCE, PAGE 14



## **The Children's Preventorium of Ramsey County**

PAUL NELSON, PAGE 1

## By the Numbers . . .

According to a 2018 Motorcycle Industry Council report, nearly 20 percent of motorcycle owners are women. Here are a few facts about some pioneering women riders:

The number on St. Paulite Clara Wagner's Federation of American Motorcyclists (FAM) membership card. In 1910, she competed in an endurance run from Chicago to Indianapolis. FAM did not recognize her successful finish:

**#1083**

The year Effie Hotchkiss (with her mother in a sidecar) drove a Harley-Davidson from Brooklyn to San Francisco. They packed but never used a revolver—just in case:

**1915**

Bessie Stringfield, the first African American woman to ride across the US alone, often dropped this coin on a map to determine her next trip location. She called it her Money Method:

**A one-cent penny**

The year Linda "Jo" Giovanni and Cris Sommer (Simmons) launched *Harley Women*—the first national magazine devoted to female motorcycle enthusiasts:

**1985**

SOURCES: "Club to Give Girl Motorbiker Medal," *Indianapolis Star*, October 10, 1910, 8; Aaron Frank, *The Harley-Davidson Story: Tales from the Archives* (Minneapolis: Quartz Publishing Group USA, Inc., 2018); Tricia Szulewski, *Women Riders Now*, <https://womenridersnow.com/motorcycle-ownership-among-women-climbs-to-19-percent/>.

To learn about one local woman's love of motorcycles, see "My Harley Grandma Mary Eileen Kehoe and the St. Paul Motorcycle Escort Club" by Eleta Pierce on page 14.

## ON THE COVER



It was once believed sunlight helped keep at-risk children TB free. But Minnesota winters could make it difficult to get outside. Here, three boys soak up "artificial sunlight" under a sunlamp while passing the required heliotherapy time playing checkers. See Paul Nelson's "The Children's Preventorium of Ramsey County" on page 1.

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DAVE RIEHLE

## Message from the Editorial Board

Many essential concerns from a century ago remain essential today. We share two examples in this issue of *Ramsey County History*.

In 1915, the Children's Preventorium of Ramsey County opened. Why? Tuberculosis was a capricious killer. The goal was to isolate healthy but TB-exposed children in hopes they would remain healthy. Historian Paul Nelson takes us through the brief history of "The Preve," including its intended and unintended outcomes. Present-day COVID outbreaks remind us of the scourge of tuberculosis and the need to take care of ourselves and others.

Dietrich Lange, a young teacher and outdoorsman in the late nineteenth century, understood nature was in peril if human activity did not change—another message from the past that remains relevant. Lange spread his love of birds and his prescient observations of the natural world to students at Central High. As author Dave Riehle points out, the Bird Observation of 1897 might not have been a blockbuster event, but Lange's efforts, and those of others who came after, remind us to take care of our world.

Finally—Harley Grandma. In the 1940s, a twenty-something Mary Eileen Kehoe discovered Harley-Davidson motorcycles and began riding, managing to keep her hobby a secret from her (mostly) unsuspecting parents—for a time, anyway. Eleta Pierce's profile of her grandmother and her Harley-riding ways is a delightful breath of fresh air and reminds us to go out and have a little fun!

*Anne Field*  
Chair, Editorial Board

# The Children's Preventorium of Ramsey County

PAUL NELSON

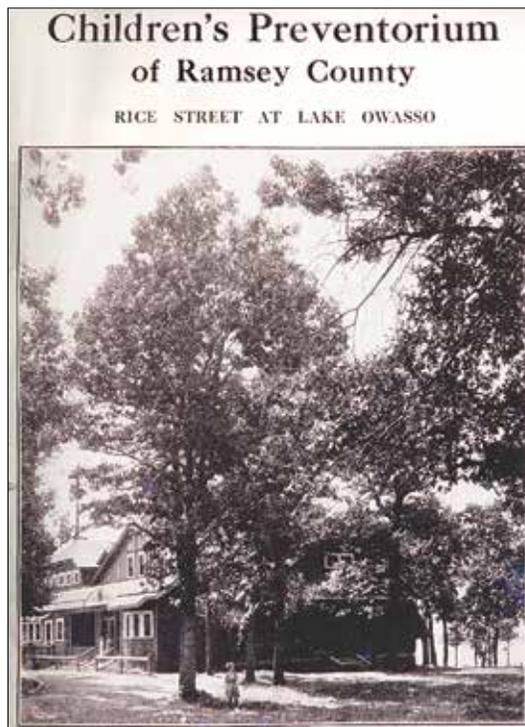
**H**istory can be useful in drawing lessons from the success and failure of human institutions. The Children's Preventorium of Ramsey County arose, prospered, and sputtered out in the course of roughly one generation—1915 to 1953. What happened?

In 1915, 2,597 people died in St. Paul, which then had a population of about 220,000. Tuberculosis (TB), with 306 victims, killed more than any other cause. Of these, forty-nine were under the age of twenty, and fifty-one were housewives. Together, they made up one-third of the losses. Killer tuberculosis was a disease of the home.<sup>1</sup>

TB had been the leading cause of death in Ramsey County, Minnesota, and the United States for decades—a cruel and confounding killer. Though German physician and microbiologist Robert Koch had proved in 1882 that its transmitting agent was a bacillus bacteria spread person-to-person, there was simply no predicting who, once exposed, would get sick and among the sick, who would die. There was no effective treatment.<sup>2</sup>

The only really feasible way to impede spread was to isolate the actively ill. This was good for the public but hard on patients and their families. For one thing, no one could say how long an active case would persist. It might last until death, as it did for about half of those infected. In the meantime, people still needed to work—if they could—and care for their families. The most effective form of isolation was in TB-specific institutions, which came to be known as sanatoriums.

St. Paul opened its first TB ward—The Pavilion—at Ancker Hospital in 1902. Patients were segregated there, but neither St. Paul nor Ramsey County ever had a stand-alone sanatorium. Minnesota opened its first state sanatorium—Ah-gwah-ching—at Walker, in 1907. Fourteen county sanatoriums followed in



The original building in which the Children's Preventorium of Ramsey County was housed. A news article proclaimed the first forty-five residents "are not sick children. They are perfectly well and getting plumped and hunkier every day. However, they were in serious danger when selected. . . ." *Courtesy of Jacci Krebsbach.*

## Dreaded Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis of the lungs—the most common variety—was frequently referred to as consumption in the nineteenth century. It could be all-consuming, causing the body to waste away and atrophy. Others referred to the often deadly disease as the white plague because it turned many of its victims pale. Those who had it wouldn't speak about it for fear of ostracization.<sup>a</sup> Writer Mark Caldwell describes its symptoms:

The patient coughs, first intermittently, then constantly. . . Eventually small blood vessels erode, rupture, and bleed. . . Full-fledged hemorrhages can now occur, the patient coughing up pure blood, bright, red, and foamy. . . The patient begins to lose weight, tires easily, and may experience heart palpitations. . . Eventually, if it remains untreated, the patient dies . . . drowning in his own bodily fluids as they flood his destroyed lungs.<sup>b</sup>

No wonder people feared it so.

the next nine years, with Glen Lake in Hennepin County by far the largest. These sanatoriums were single-disease institutions with two purposes: to isolate the actively infected and to offer them comfort and treatment.<sup>3</sup>

But sanatoriums were for the sick. Preventoriums were designed for the young and healthy with the intent of keeping them healthy. The first opened in Lakewood, New Jersey, in 1909. In Ramsey County, Dr. H. Longstreet Taylor, a public health pioneer, opened what he named the Cuenca Hospital for the Care of Tuberculosis on the east shore of Lake Owasso in January 1910 as an early experiment in prevention. It closed in 1912 for lack of funding, but the preventorium concept had legs. No one wanted to see children suffer a preventable and frequently deadly disease. Taylor and his many allies tried again—this time with more success.<sup>4</sup>

Staff and children at the Children's Preventorium of Ramsey County in 1923. Between 1915 and 1953, 956 youth passed parts of their lives there. *Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*

### Ramsey County's Preventorium

The Children's Preventorium of Ramsey County opened in the Cuenca sanatorium building in Mounds View Township (Shoreview) on July 1, 1915. The money came from private donations—\$8,000 through Tag Day (later Christmas Seals) and \$7,000 from benefactor James J. Hill. Citizens raised the money, acquired the land, and facilitated everything through a private corporation. Ramsey County served as landlord. The Preventorium or The Preve, as it was commonly called, operated at the same location until 1953.<sup>5</sup>

The founders stated their purposes with admirable clarity:

The Children's Preventorium of Ramsey County is a corporation managed by public-spirited men and women of St. Paul, for the benefit of children who are exposed to



tuberculosis in their homes, and protects them from this dreadful disease, by taking them out of their unhealthful surroundings, and by means of an outdoor life, good wholesome food and careful supervision, builds them up to a condition where they will no longer be easy victims for tuberculosis germs.<sup>6</sup>

That phrase “outdoor life” was important when associated with tuberculosis. The *Journal of the Outdoor Life* was a publication of the National Tuberculosis Association, the leading American anti-TB organization. “Outdoor life” referred not to hunting and fishing but to the fresh-air regime of sanatoriums. The Preve was not a sanatorium—the children were not sick—but it used sanatorium methods: isolation, food, rest, and, above all, sunlight and fresh air.<sup>7</sup>

On day one, twenty-four St. Paul children moved in—fourteen girls and ten boys. Twelve of them had at least one immigrant parent; at least ten had lost a parent to tuberculosis. Another thirty-five children arrived before Christmas.<sup>8</sup>

Though the Preventorium had staff, facilities, support, and a plan, it is evident that the first six months were rough. Nine children withdrew (Robert McNearney lasted one day), two died, two ran away, one was kicked out. Average stay: ten months.<sup>9</sup>

In 1916, thirty-six kids entered, but only five withdrew quickly. Average stays grew to fourteen months. The Preventorium had found its stride.<sup>10</sup>

### Caring for the Children

What did the children do there? In 1926, Dr. Everett Geer, The Preve’s medical director, published an article in *American Review of Tuberculosis*





There was little time to be bored at The Preve. The children were required to follow a regimented schedule to achieve the overall goal of remaining healthy while in residence. They enjoyed sports in moderation and classroom studies, with a focus on health. *Courtesy of Jacci Krebsbach and Minnesota Historical Society.*



titled, “The Care of the Tuberculosis Preventorium Child.” There is every reason to believe that these methods, with one alteration, were used the entire life of the Preventorium.<sup>11</sup> He takes us through the regime:

**Rest in fresh air.** Except in the coldest weather, the children all slept on open-air sleeping porches. In keeping with the sanatorium belief in abundant rest, sleep time was twelve hours, supplemented with midday downtime.

**Supervised activities.** The adults wanted the kids active but not TOO active. In good weather, they were outside most of the time, but they were not to exhaust themselves. It was “essential to curb somewhat their animal-like restlessness.”<sup>12</sup> They rode ponies, swam, fished, played baseball—all in supervised moderation.

**A well-balanced and adequate diet.** Dr. Geer wrote, “Practically all these children come to us below weight . . .” hence “. . . food of the right kind . . . is an imperative need and one which is fulfilled without stint.” The children probably did NOT enjoy the frequent doses of cod liver oil.<sup>13</sup>

**Prompt elimination of infectious foci.** Dr. Geer does not explain this, but it seems to mean that if kids were battling toothaches, tonsillitis, or other issues, they were taken to a dentist or Ancker Hospital to protect the others.

**Heliotherapy and airbaths.** Heliotherapy is sun treatment. Kids got two sessions a day—on the roof or in a wooden, outdoor sun box in

warm weather and under “alpine lamps” when cold. The belief in sunlight went back to the early days of TB sanatoriums in Europe and was held with great conviction in the US despite the absence of evidence for how it worked. But one can understand its attraction. People associate sunlight with health and vigor. The tuberculosis bacillus, by contrast, thrived only deep inside the darkness of the body and spread (most notoriously) in poorly lit, urban tenement districts. What is more, direct sunlight killed the exposed bacillus. In this time before a TB cure, the systematic application of light appeared clinical, and, what harm could there be?<sup>14</sup>

The phrase “air bath” apparently meant fresh air, or maybe cold fresh air: “When the cool weather in the fall precludes exposure to the sun, air-baths are given which continue throughout the winter,” Geer wrote.<sup>15</sup> The famous (or infamous) photos of Preventorium children outside in the snow, wearing only boots and a big diaper (called a drape), perhaps tell the story. (See page 5.)

**Tuberculin.** Dr. Koch, who proved that tuberculosis was a germ disease, is rightly hailed still today as a hero in the long fight against the illness. But he also stumbled. In 1890, he announced that he had found a TB cure—tuberculin. But this soon proved to be a cruel error. Tuberculin had great use as a diagnostic agent but no curative powers at all. People—including Dr. Geer, evidently—persisted in believing in it. Here, Dr. Geer was making an argument, not a description: “As yet, our routine

## A Preventorium Family Story: Lawrence and Allen Bodin

PAUL NELSON

A Christmas Seals advertisement from the late 1920s shows two shirtless, slender blond boys, arms around one another, with the caption, "Help Prevent Tragedies Like This One." The text explains: "Allen is seven years old and his brother Lawrence is five. The only home these two little boys have is the Children's Preventorium. . . ."<sup>a</sup> Who were they, and what became of them?

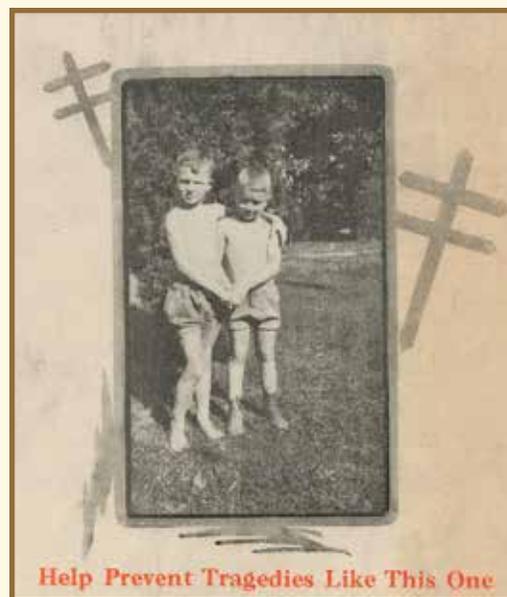
They were not identified by surname, but thanks to the surviving Preventorium records, their names were enough. They were Lawrence Alfred and Neal Allen Bodin, children of Nels Bodin and Augusta Anderson. The promotional piece got some facts wrong: Lawrence was older by eleven months. The parents were from Sweden, not Norway, and the boys were born in Minnesota, not Europe, but the word "tragedy" hit its mark. Their little brother, Roger, died of meningitis at seventeen months in 1926. Both parents soon contracted TB: Nels died February 27, 1928, and Augusta six weeks later on April 9. He was forty-three years old; she thirty-seven.<sup>b</sup>

The boys entered the Preventorium on November 6, 1927, referred there by Dr. Everett Geer. He had likely seen one or both parents at Ancker Hospital. This was the classic Preventorium placement—parents ill; children exposed and vulnerable. What made it unusual was how long the brothers stayed—seven years. Their cases expose the orphanage nature of The Preve. Those two healthy little boys did not require seven years to get fortified against TB. They stayed at The Preve because they had nowhere to go.<sup>c</sup>

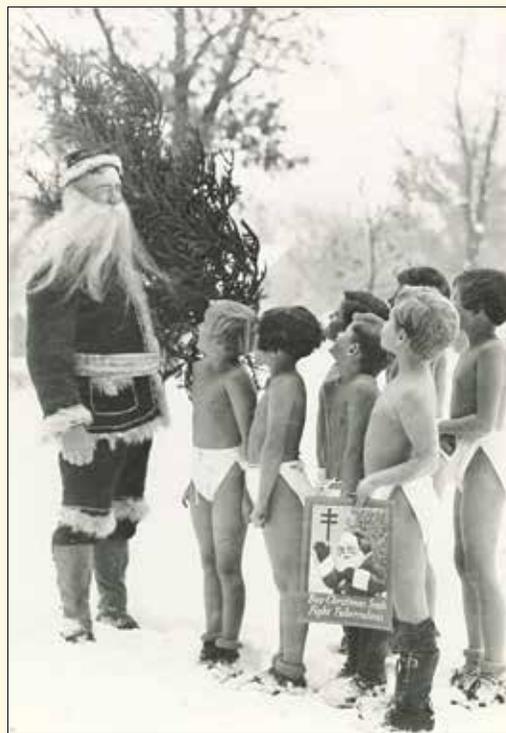
But something had to be done. The Preventorium wanted all children out by age fourteen. No one wanted pubescent youth running around in giant diapers. Eventually, we don't know how, a home was found for them with a maternal aunt, Christine Peterson, and her husband, Albert, a trucker, in Mound, Minnesota. Here, the story takes a happy turn.<sup>d</sup>

The brothers attended Mound High School. In 1940, Lawrence served as co-captain of the football team and senior class president. After a year at the University of Minnesota, he enlisted in the United States Army Air Corps then stayed in the aviation business the rest of his life as an aeronautical engineer in Seattle, presumably with Boeing. He died in 2000, age seventy-nine.<sup>e</sup>

Allen played football at Mound, wrote for the school newspaper, acted in plays, and followed up at the University of Minnesota. As a young adult, tuberculosis touched him again. He contracted the disease and was sent to the Glen Lake Sanatorium. There, he not only recovered but met the woman who became his wife. Allen worked as an electrical engineer and died in 2015, age ninety-two. His obituary noted, "Following the tragic deaths of his parents in the tuberculosis epidemic, Neal [Allen] and his surviving brother, Lawrence, lived some years in an orphanage for children whose parents had succumbed to TB."<sup>f</sup>



This ad featuring brothers Lawrence and Allen Bodin was meant to tug on the heartstrings of readers and encourage them to donate time, talent, and treasure to the Preventorium.



Another marketing effort included a volunteer dressed as Santa Claus standing outside with the children in their drapes. This image was used in advertising for Christmas Seals. *Both images courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*

does not include tuberculin, but we are strongly tempted to make it so.” They never did.<sup>16</sup>

**Open-air school rooms.** The children had to continue their schooling, and fresh air was part of their regimen. Put the two together, and you had open-air school rooms. This concept was experimented with all over the country, as a kind of half measure. Winter weather was not to get in the way—youngsters sometimes completed classwork while bundled in snowsuits.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the reliance on “folk medicine,” the Preventorium’s program made sense. The family home often endangered children. A tubercular parent, especially a mother in constant contact with children, could readily pass the disease to them—a horrifying prospect. Remove children from such homes, treat and feed them well, keep them active, and they are likely to prosper. And they did, although heliotherapy had nothing to do with it.

### **Fire! A Tragedy and a Setback**

By the spring of 1927, a dozen years after opening, the Preventorium had become an established institution. It was not only full with seventy-four children, but it had a waiting list of forty. It had an experienced resident director, Margaret Weikert, and a full-time social worker, Lena Yugend. The location was ideal: close to the city but sufficiently distant to maintain relative privacy. The buildings and systems were not up-to-date, however. Tragedy was about to change that.

On the afternoon of Sunday, April 10, as Miss Weikert napped (recovering from surgery), and Miss Yugend held a session for a handful of residents on the floor below, two staff members, Mr. and Mrs. O. G. Russell returned to campus in their car. The couple noticed a wisp of smoke rising from the main building’s roof. Mrs. Russell rushed inside to rouse Miss Weikert, while Mr. Russell climbed to the attic to investigate. He found a fire well engaged. Staff chased everyone out, and the St. Paul Fire Department—miles away—was called. The Preventorium had no hydrant, so the firefighters pumped water by hose from Lake Owasso, 500 feet from the structure. Firefighters Al Bossard and George Brown were working on the second floor when the ceiling above them collapsed. Bossard escaped, but a disoriented Brown failed to do so.

His clothing caught fire, and, in desperation, he jumped. Horrified onlookers saw a man in flames fall twenty feet to the ground. Brown succumbed hours later—the first St. Paul firefighter to die on duty since 1921 and the twenty-fifth in department history.<sup>18</sup>

Newspapers printed several tributes to Brown and, within twenty-four hours, the *St. Paul Daily News* called for Ramsey County to replace the building in a front-page editorial titled, “Don’t Delay This.” With dramatic exaggeration, the piece asserted that without the Preventorium, most of its residents “. . . would die in the prime of life.” The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners pledged \$50,000. Despite the tragedy and structural damage, staff kept the place running, helped enormously by the coming of spring. The Preve was, after all, a haven of the “outdoor life.” In less than a year, what The Preve had always lacked—a modern main building—opened in February 1928.<sup>19</sup>

### **A Fresh Start**

The 1930 census gives us a snapshot of the new facilities at its peak. It included a new main building and a staff of twenty-one: the resident director, two social workers, five nurses, eleven support staff, and one teacher. (One hardly seems enough.) On census day in April, there were fifty-two children in residence—twenty-seven boys and twenty-five girls. They ranged in age from six to fifteen, with the average and median age nine.<sup>20</sup>

On Sunday, August 31, 1930, the *St. Paul Daily News* published a front-page story featuring the women central to the institution’s program—Weikert and Yugend. Once you get past the hyperbole, “Four hundred youngsters owe their lives to these two women . . .,” the article paints a persuasive portrait of a pair of imaginative modernizers.<sup>21</sup>

Weikert, then forty years old and in charge of daily operations since 1916, had put in place a program that would be considered progressive today. The so-called “Winnetka Plan,” named for a public school program rolled out in Winnetka, Illinois, in 1919, emphasized individualized, progress-at-your-own-speed instruction. This may well have been an adaptation to necessity, as The Preve was a sort of giant one-room schoolhouse with a constantly changing cast of



The new and improved Children's Preventorium of Ramsey County was still under construction in late 1927. With the leadership of respected doctors, social worker Lena Yugend (*center*), resident director Margaret Weikert (*right*), and other staff members, the respected facility enjoyed a lot of support, especially following the tragic fire the previous spring. *Courtesy of Jacci Krebsbach and Minnesota Historical Society.*

students. The kids got just two hours of education a day in shifts, so, the conventional school model could hardly work.

Weikert told the reporter that she and her staff bore full responsibility for the children's educational progress. If there were failures, "something is wrong with us (the staff) or our system. It can't be the children. We are here to help them and if we can't, we are incompetent."<sup>22</sup>

Yugend, who had joined The Preve in 1924, was credited with creating a comprehensive program of recordkeeping, family contact, monitoring, and follow-up:

Before the child is admitted he goes through a regular routine and a complete survey and study of the case is made. . . . During the patient's stay at the preventorium contact with the family is kept up and carried on without interruption following the patient's discharge. Home calls are made to see that the doctor's recommendations are followed . . . A child is not sent home until she [Yugend] has visited that home and found out what conditions exist and whether the benefits of the institution will continue.<sup>23</sup>

Yugend had no assistants and with a population of over fifty in 1930, the duties appear exhausting. But she was young, born 1900 in New York. According to the reporter, who seems to have gotten most of his information from Yugend, no preventorium in the country kept such scrupulous track of its inmates, as the children were often called. These records, alas, are lost.<sup>24</sup>

### Eligibility

How did the fifty-two children in The Preve on census day 1930 get there? Dr. Geer's article plus another published by Yugend that same year give us some insight into the selection process. The baseline requirement was to be a child exposed to tuberculosis but not actively ill. Geer wrote:

Our conception of the preventorium child is one between the ages of five and twelve, who has been intimately exposed to tuberculosis . . . and whose general condition is below that which is supposedly normal. . . .

There was a social class element too: "All of our children come from poor families."<sup>25</sup>

In its first ten years, the screening of children for admission apparently did not go beyond that. But this, according to Dr. Geer, brought problems. The Wilder Child Guidance Center had studied recently admitted inmates and found that twenty-eight of seventy-five "could qualify for feeble-minded schools" and that these were the kids who made least progress. These findings persuaded the managers to screen the applicants.

At present we are picking our children, and admitting those whom we think will be community assets instead of liabilities. . . . It is recognized that this departure is liable to bring down on our heads a storm of criticism, especially from those whose



A young boy is tested for TB by a local doctor and photographed for a Christmas Seals campaign advertisement. Marketing shoots were common at The Preve. *Courtesy of Jacci Krebsbach.*

interest in public-health is governed by maudlin sentimentality rather than by cold reason. But we risk this abuse, feeling very strongly that medically and biologically we are right.<sup>26</sup>

There is more than a whiff of eugenics in this statement, but Dr. Geer was a man of his time.

In her piece, Miss Yugend also lamented that, in the earliest years, some children of “mental inability” were admitted but no longer, “Since 1925 preference has been given to the normal, stable child.” She later summarizes, “Viewing the group as a whole, we feel that generally the children in our institution come from homes where a medical problem is made a social problem.”<sup>27</sup>

Who were these children, these “social problems?” Each was unique, obviously, but there were also patterns. If we were to confect a typical or representative Preventorium child, some of the characteristics would be these: He or she would be about nine years old upon entry, often with a brother or sister in The Preve and other siblings still at home; Father would be employed as a laborer and mother as a housewife; At least one parent or grandparent was an immigrant; The family rented a dwelling in an older neighborhood—Frogtown, the West Side Flats, or near the Capitol Approach. The inmates would stay about two-and-a-half years then rejoin their intact nuclear families and go on to live long lives.<sup>28</sup>

Starting in the summer of 1926, admission to The Preve required a formal referral. Records show the institution firmly established in the Ramsey County public health system. Of the 634 children admitted after referrals began, 242 (38 percent) were referred by the St. Paul Health Department’s Tuberculosis Division. This looks like public health in action—outreach workers meeting families. According to the Ramsey County Health Association, during the 1930s (and maybe earlier), it held hundreds of outpatient clinics. These were “the alpha and omega of the preventorium routine,” and “the first contact an inmate ha[d] with the institution.” The public Ancker Hospital referred 122 others; Dr. Geer referred thirty-seven; the Amherst Wilder Foundation referred thirty-four; Ramsey County health and welfare workers referred thirty-three; both United Charities and Catholic Charities also participated. The Preventorium was wired in.<sup>29</sup>

From the point of view of a worried parent, the advice from a physician or public health worker—“The Preventorium might be right for your child”—must have been powerfully persuasive. It is tempting to imagine the families as inclined to bow to authority. This may be true, in general, but there is evidence of resistance. Of the 956 children admitted to The Preve, some 115 were withdrawn by their families, another nine were dismissed after disagreements between the families and the Preventorium, nine were dismissed for misconduct, and thirteen ran away—a total of 16 percent.<sup>30</sup>

The Preventorium prospered throughout the 1930s. Kids kept coming, though in slightly declining numbers. In the 1920s, an average of twenty-nine children (some of them repeaters) entered annually. In the ’30s, that figure fell to twenty-four. The rate of withdrawals and disagreements declined after more careful screening began.<sup>31</sup>

The Preventorium’s fewer admissions in the 1930s may have reflected the Depression’s effect on resources, but there was another factor at work too: TB was fading as a killer. On September 18, 1935, the *Pioneer Press* reported that the declining TB death rate had caused vacancies at The Preve. Deaths fell steadily throughout the 1920s and ’30s in Minnesota and around the country. No one is entirely sure why. The

persistent work of the National Tuberculosis Association in research and public education probably helped; sanatoriums too. But author Mark Caldwell points to something else: by 1930 worldwide death rates from TB had been declining for eighty years. He speculates that the epidemic had its own poorly understood dynamics, leading to an inevitable decline regardless of human measures. In Minnesota, TB deaths had fallen from about 110 per 100,000 people in 1911 to about fifty in 1930. Whereas 306 St. Paulites died from TB in 1915, by 1933, the number had fallen to 131 (a decrease of over 60 percent). In the meantime, city population had grown by 50,000 (about 25 percent). The disease was no less cruel to its victims than it had ever been, but there were many fewer of them.<sup>32</sup>

Minneapolis had never had anything like the Preventorium, but it had experimented with an open-air school—Lymanhurst. The minds behind Lymanhurst took a more scientific approach. They kept careful records, analyzed their numbers and, after twenty years, reached the conclusion that no evidence justified the effort. In 1934, they shut it down. Writing ten years later, Dr. Arthur J. Lyman dismissed open-air schools as “fresh air faddism.” Even earlier, in 1933, the National Tuberculosis Association had reached the same conclusion: “[I]t becomes increasingly clear that for the large majority of children institutional care is neither necessary nor desirable.” In 1937, another University of Minnesota physician, Chester Stewart, called preventoriums, “sentimentally praiseworthy but scientifically impractical” and urged their closure. These findings, closings, and urgings had no effect in Ramsey County.<sup>33</sup>

The Preventorium soldiered on. In its first five years, the average inmate stayed about fourteen months, arguably a reasonable time to build up a sickly child. During the 1920s, that average more than doubled to twenty-nine months. It steadily climbed in the next decade, reaching a peak about the time the Depression hit its nadir: kids who entered in 1936 stayed, on average, 1,360 days—almost four years! It’s difficult to imagine why so much time was felt necessary, although a couple of factors may have been in play. An institution with declining demand held onto its clients longer, and families battered by the Depression waited to

bring home another mouth to feed. But this is speculation. During the first six years of the 1940s, as TB continued its decline, average stays grew still longer—thirty-nine months—before finally falling to half that number at the end of the decade. By then, a cure for tuberculosis had been found.<sup>34</sup>

### On Race

Did race play any role in the operations of the Preventorium? When it opened in 1915, Ramsey County’s non-white population was tiny. St. Paul had a Black community of just a few thousand (in 1910, according to the census, 3,144 out of 211,515, under 1.5 percent), and there would have been a handful of American Indians and other non-Europeans. (The 1910 census found eighty-four.)<sup>35</sup> It stands to reason, then, that the vast majority of inmates at The Preve were white. But something else was going on, too. The St. Paul Department of Health kept track of TB cases and deaths in the Black community, and, from a public health standpoint, treating races differently made no sense. Yet, few African American kids came to The Preve.

One Black child who did reside there arrived the very first year on August 29, 1915—Velma Holland, age nine. Her father, Isaac, from Arkansas, worked as a waiter for Northern Pacific. They lived at 707 L’Orient. Death struck the family on June 2, 1915, when Theodosia, Velma’s mother, died of TB. With Isaac’s job taking him on the road and Theodosia gone, placement in the Preventorium made sense for Velma. But then death struck again: Velma died of TB at The Preve on June 26, 1917. She was eleven.<sup>36</sup>

For a Preventorium child to die from tuberculosis on site had to be traumatic for the children and staff, and Velma’s death may have played into a pervasive belief that African Americans rarely recovered from the disease. Public health workers, or Preventorium managers, or both, may have believed that admitting Black children was too risky. No Black children were admitted to the institution between 1916 and 1950.

In this, Ramsey County conformed to US practices. Whereas nationwide TB death rates for non-white children were seven times higher than for white kids, the available evidence, summarized by Cynthia Connolly in her book, *Saving Sickly Children*, is that all preventoriums,



In 1951, Hermina and Hilda Rodriguez and Carol Ann Meyers (L-R) may not have shared a common language, but, perhaps, sharing dolls helped the girls get to know one another better. All three lost their fathers to tuberculosis. *Courtesy Minnesota Historical Society.*

except one in Shreveport, Louisiana, resisted admitting Black children.<sup>37</sup>

The situation proved remarkably different for St. Paul's Mexican American children. The first, Clementi Hernandez, came as a toddler in 1926 and stayed five years. Raymond Garcia and Vicente de Leon followed in 1929 and 1931. Then, starting in 1935, the numbers boomed—fifty-four over the next nineteen years. This amounted to nearly 14 percent of admissions in that time, a number far greater than the Mexican American share of Ramsey County population. What was going on?<sup>38</sup>

On one hand, this was consistent with the original mission of the Preventorium. Almost all these kids arrived from the West Side Flats, where the housing was notoriously bad and rates of poverty high, so they faced a higher risk of TB than others. Kids had come in substantial numbers from the flats from 1915 onward (mostly Jewish, at first), so a public health pipeline to The Preve may have been well established. It's possible, too, that as the Preventorium's leaders saw demand fall, they recruited on the West Side.

Some numbers give shock value to the situation. A 1934 tuberculosis survey of the city concluded that, in the six-year period between 1928 and 1933, some 944 St. Paulites had died of TB. Sixty-six were Black and nineteen of Latino origin; Latino kids came to The Preve, but Black kids did not. St. Paulites of African heritage made up about 1.5 percent of the city's

population, but 7 percent of the TB deaths. Blacks were dying of TB at nearly five times the rate of whites. Health officials knew this. It was not until 1950, at the tail end of The Preve era, that three very young Black children, all from the same family, were admitted.<sup>39</sup>

### The Final Years

As the years passed and TB death rates fell, a few changes did come to the Preventorium. The most momentous began at Rutgers University, where, in 1943, a graduate student isolated streptomycin, which would soon prove itself the first drug to cure TB. In 1944, the Preventorium came under the direct control of Ancker Hospital, which is to say, Ramsey County, ending what remained of its autonomy.<sup>40</sup>

In 1948, Joan Rose Danielson, then five years old, daughter of Lawrence and Bernice Danielson of 504 Selby, became the first child in Minnesota to receive streptomycin treatment. She was a resident of the Preventorium, having transferred there from Ancker in 1947. Getting the "miracle cure" did not get her out. She and her sister Judith, also admitted that year, stayed nearly four years until January 1951.<sup>41</sup>

Even after streptomycin, the kids kept coming—fourteen in 1947, nineteen in 1948, twenty-six in 1949, and twenty-two in 1950—numbers only slightly below the thirty-eight-year average of twenty-five new entrants per year. In 1950, it was announced that the Preventorium had officially become a children's sanatorium—that is, a place for tuberculosis isolation and treatment, not prevention—with sixteen hospital beds. Of the last sixty-six children admitted, twenty-six were under age three, and sixteen were infants. The Preve wasn't a preventorium anymore—and it was 40 percent vacant.<sup>42</sup>

On March 15, 1953, it was announced that the Preventorium would close. Its patients would be transferred to Glen Lake. The Lake Owasso campus, where nearly a thousand Ramsey County children had studied, rested, endured sunlamp treatments, and played for thirty-eight years, went silent on July 21 when the last ten children departed. It had outlived its usefulness, and, by four months, Margaret Weikert.<sup>43</sup>

What are we to make of this history? Though often presented as a public health measure,

it was never that—for two reasons. First, the numbers were too small: about 950 kids in thirty-eight years averages twenty-five annually. In a county of over 300,000, these numbers are insignificant. Second, and more fundamentally, the kids, though exposed to TB, were healthy when they went in. No one could say how many of them might have gotten TB but for The Preve. Public health operates on a wholesale scale. The Preventorium wasn't even retail—it was boutique. J. Arthur Myers pegged it right in 1944 when he wrote that the money spent on preventoriums would have been better used to isolate and treat the actively ill, for they were the ones who threatened the public.<sup>44</sup>

How do we explain the persistence of an institution whose public health utility was subject to doubt and for so long? Some partial answers suggest themselves. First, placement was always voluntary, so if there was demand, who could object to meeting that demand, especially when the public contribution was small? Second, on its own terms, The Preve remained consistently successful: kids came out healthy and stayed TB-free. Third, health workers kept sending kids there. Fourth, any visitor to the Preventorium would have seen a well-run institution in a delightful location, full of apparently happy, healthy children. Why shut it down? In human events, just as in physics, inertia has great power.

We should think of the Preventorium not in public health terms but as a family preservation institution. For some Ramsey County families stressed by poverty and mortal fears for the health of their children, it provided long-term charitable relief. The Preve probably did nothing to stem tuberculosis, but it helped several hundred families in times of dire need.



## NOTES

1. Henry McColl and Justus Ohage, *Annual Report of the Bureau of Health, Department of Public Safety, of the City of St. Paul* (St. Paul: Review Publishing Company, 1916), 28. In the report for 1916, Dr. Carl Drake, the city's medical inspector, wrote, "We still believe that infection in the home from parent to child is the most serious mode of transmission of this scourge;" Herbert G. Lampson, "A Study on the Spread of Tuberculosis in Families," *Studies in Public Health*, no. 1 (December

**More to the Story:** The history of the Preventorium is rich thanks to the preservation of documents, photographs, and other materials, and we have several more stories to tell. We have curated a collection of oral history interviews, family histories, FAQs, and context pieces that we have posted online at <https://rchs.com/publishing/catalog/ramsey-county-history-winter-2023-childrens-preventorium/>. We hope you enjoy learning more about this important part of Ramsey County history.

**Acknowledgments:** Thanks to former Preventorium residents Clyde Habas and Margaret Krell and to Dr. Cynthia Connolly of the University of Pennsylvania, whose book, *Saving Sickly Children*, was essential to putting the story of The Preve into national context. Gratitude also extends to Jaci Krebsbach, president of Shoreview Historical Society, who salvaged admissions records; Del Meath, once a counselor at Lake Owasso Residence, who preserved photos and other materials; and Sara Markoe Hanson, executive director of White Bear Lake Area Historical Society and the daughter of a former Preve resident. Because of them, the Children's Preventorium of Ramsey County is not forgotten and probably has better surviving records than most of the nearly fifty preventoriums that once existed. The complete list of all the children who passed through the place is priceless.

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1913): 50. Lampson published a study of fifty-five Minneapolis families, forty with "tuberculous" and fifteen considered "non-tuberculous." The infection rate in families where one member had TB was exponentially higher than in other families.

2. "Robert Koch, one of the founders of microbiology," Robert Koch Institute, accessed December 13, 2022, [https://www.rki.de/EN/Content/Institute/History/rk\\_node\\_en.html](https://www.rki.de/EN/Content/Institute/History/rk_node_en.html).

3. Jim Sazevich, "Health," Saint Paul Historical, accessed January 9, 2023, <https://saintpaulhistorical.com/items/show/56#:~:text=In%201873%2C%20the%20City%20and,renamed%20Ancker%20Hospital%20in%201923>. St. Paul's City and County Hospital, built in 1872, became Ancker Hospital in 1923. It was named after Dr. Arthur Ancker and located at 495 Jefferson Avenue until 1965; Mary Krugerud, *Interrupted Lives: The History of Tuberculosis in Minnesota and the Glen Lake Sanatorium* (Clearwater, MN: North Star Press, 2017), 12-18. Jerry Vessels, "Building Our Sanatoriums," *Everybody's Health* (June-August 1956): 8-10; Leonard G. Wilson, "The Rise and Fall of Tuberculosis in Minnesota: The Role of Infection," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 66 (1992): 16-52; William Weinfeld and Isabel R. Cool, *Housing: The T-B Survey* (St. Paul: St. Paul Planning Board, 1934), 11.

4. Cynthia A. Connolly, *Saving Sickly Children: The Tuberculosis Preventorium in American Life, 1909-1970* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014), 53; *Children's Preventorium of Ramsey County* (promotional pamphlet), 1916, 4; "Ramsey County: Lake Owasso Children's Home (abstract), Minnesota Historical Society (hereafter MNHS), accessed December 13, 2022, [http://www2.mnhs.org/library/findaids/gro0009.xml?return=count%3D25%26q%3Dcuenca%26tab%3Dresearch\\_items](http://www2.mnhs.org/library/findaids/gro0009.xml?return=count%3D25%26q%3Dcuenca%26tab%3Dresearch_items); "Open New Sanatorium," *St. Paul Dispatch*, January 24, 1910, 2; "Lacks Funds to Manage Cuenca," April 16, 1912, 5; "Calls Board to Act on Cuenca," April 25, 1912, 4. Cuenca was operated by the St. Paul Anti-Tuberculosis Committee; Jacci Krebsbach, phone conversation with editor, January 9, 2023.

5. *Children's Preventorium*, 3; "Children's Preventorium Record of All Admissions and Discharges, 1915 to 1953" (hereafter Preventorium Record), Ramsey County, Minnesota, from the personal collection of Jacci Krebsbach. A spreadsheet compiled from the record is available at [rchs.com](http://rchs.com).

6. *Children's Preventorium*, 2.

7. *Children's Preventorium*, 2; Mark Caldwell, *The Last Crusade: The War on Consumption 1862-1954* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1988), 48, 54, 75. This is an excellent and readable survey.

8. Preventorium Record.

9. Preventorium Record.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Everett Geer, "Care of the Tuberculosis Preventorium Child," *American Review of Tuberculosis* 13 (June 1926): 524-528.

12. Geer, 525.

13. Geer, 525.

14. In this era, the medical journals were full of articles exploring the use of heliotherapy against tuberculosis. See, for example, I. D. Bronfin, "Heliotherapy in Advanced Pulmonary Tuberculosis," *American Review of Tuberculosis* 11, no. 2 (1925): 96, where the author finds himself "unable to separate the wheat from the chaff;" "Sunshine vs. Tuberculosis," *St. Paul Daily News*, September 22, 1931, 6. This article relays, "Scientists discovered the sunshine is the greatest enemy

of tuberculosis;" Lisa Gensel, "The Medical World of Benjamin Franklin," *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 98, no. 12 (1998): 534-538. Benjamin Franklin was an advocate of air baths.

15. Geer, 525.

16. Caldwell, 162-167, 250; Geer, 526.

17. Geer, 524-528; Margaret Krell, interview with author, July 14, 2022; Clyde Habas, interview with author, July 15, 2022.

18. "Fire Razes Preventorium; Fireman Killed," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 11, 1927, 1; "One Death in Fire at Preventorium," *St. Paul Daily News*, April 11, 1927, 1. George Brown was survived by a wife and one son.

19. "Plans Are Being Made to Build New Children's Preventorium: Don't Delay This," *St. Paul Daily News*, April 11, 1927, 1; "Drive Planned to Raise Extra Funds to Rebuild Preventorium," *St. Paul Dispatch*, April 12, 1927, 1; *St. Paul Dispatch*, April 17, 1927.

20. "Children's Preventorium of Ramsey County," *Fifteenth Census of the United States-1930*, Minnesota, Ramsey, Moundville Township, enumeration 62-172, sheet 36.

21. E. J. Stanley, "Two Women Pioneers Gain National Renown in Preventorium's Winning Fight on White Plague," *St. Paul Daily News*, August 31, 1930, 1.

22. Stanley, 2.

23. Stanley, 2.

24. Stanley, 1-2.

25. Geer, 1-2; Connolly, 54. The Preventorium adhered to the ideas of the first preventorium in New Jersey.

26. Geer, 26-27.

27. Lee L. Yugend, "Results Obtained in the Children's Preventorium of Ramsey County, Minnesota, Over a Period of Fifteen Years," 303, 305, in Ramsey County: Lake Owasso Children's Home, administrative files, MNHS.

28. This is the author's assessment of the evidence, based on the Preventorium Record and tracing hundreds of inmate stories through ancestry.com.

29. "Annual Report," Ramsey County Public Health Association, 1933, 11.

30. Author's compilation from Preventorium Record.

31. Preventorium Record.

32. Caldwell, 246-248; "Let's Look at the Record—Progress in Controlling TB," *Everybody's Health* (June, July, August, 1956); Weinfeld and Cool, 3; "Tuberculosis Here on Wane, Club Told," *Pioneer Press*, September 18, 1935, 10.

33. J. Arthur Lyman, "The Evolution of Tuberculosis as Observed During Twenty Years at Lymanhurst," *Journal-Lancet* (1944): 10. Researchers observed three groups of children: those treated out-patient; those treated in-patient at Lymanhurst; those sent to sanatoriums. "After a number of years of study . . . the results were essentially the same . . . the children who had been treated in the sanatorium were in no better condition than those who had been treated in the Lymanhurst School; moreover, those who had been in the school were in no better health than those

who remained in their homes.” In 1933, it was recommended the day school be discontinued. One has to assume that Ramsey County physicians and public health workers knew what happened in Minneapolis. “Lymanhurst to Be Discontinued as School for the Tuberculous,” *The Minneapolis Star*, April 17, 1934, 1; Lymanhurst School to be Discontinued, *Star Tribune*, April 18, 1934, 12; “TB Cases Held Unaffected by School Closing,” *The Minneapolis Star*, April 18, 1934, 6; *Saving Sickly Children*, 108-110.

34. All figures are the author’s calculations, taken from the Preventorium Record.

35. “Color Or Race, Nativity, And Parentage,” Abstract of the *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in 1910, Statistics for Minnesota* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office (1923): 95.

36. “Mrs. Theodosia Holland,” *The Appeal*, June 12, 1915, 3; “Miss Velma Holland,” *The Appeal*, July 7, 1917, 3; Minnesota Death Certificates 1915-MN-021927 (Theodosia Holland) and 1917-MN-022990 (Velma Holland) in the Minnesota, US, Death Index, 1908-2017. It’s not clear when, if ever, Velma Holland was discharged from The Preve.

37. *Saving Sickly Children*, 79, 91-92, 99.

38. Preventorium Record; Lowry Nelson and Hazel Clampitt, *Population Trends in Minnesota, 1940*, University of Minnesota Agricultural Station Bulletin (Minneapolis, 1945): June. This study of the Minnesota population did not register Hispanics as a population group, nor Spanish as a language spoken in the state; Dionicio Valdes, *Mexicans in Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2005), 18. Valdes estimates the community’s size at 3,000 or about 1 percent.

39. Weinfelt and Cool, 3.

40. Ethel McClure, *Inspection Report, Children’s Preventorium of Ramsey County, June 6, 1944*, Minnesota Department of Health, health facilities files, MNHS, 114.K.16.5 (B).

41. Preventorium Record.

42. *St. Paul Dispatch*, October 7, 1948; Preventorium Record.

43. Don Freeman, memorandum, April 17, 1950, Minnesota Department of Health, health facilities files; Falsum Russell, “Preventorium Will Expand TB Battle,” *St. Paul Dispatch*, July 17, 1950, 13; Bob Eddy, “Preventorium Problem,” *Pioneer Press*, October 16, 1952, 16; “Owasso Patients Shift Seen,” *St. Paul Dispatch*, March 27, 1953, 1; “Preventorium Due For Closing Aug. 15,” *Pioneer Press*, July 15, 1953, 15; “Preventorium Patients in New Surroundings,” *St. Paul Dispatch*, July 28, 1953, 17. The last child admitted, Robert Hall, stayed ten days; Minnesota Death Certificate 1953-MN-026836 (Margaret Weikert) in Minnesota, US, Death Index, 1908-2017. Weikert died March 12, 1953, at sixty-five of “hypertensive cardiovascular disease.”

44. J. Arthur Myers, “The Evolution of Tuberculosis as Observed During Twenty Years at Lymanhurst, 1921 to 1941,” *Journal-Lancet* (1944): 34. Myers wrote: “The money spent on special schools, preventoriums

and summer camps could accomplish much if it were used to isolate and treat adults who had contagious tuberculosis.”

#### Notes to Sidebar on page 1

a. “Names for Tuberculosis,” TB Facts, accessed January 9, 2023, <https://tbfacts.org/tb-names/>; Jacci Krebsbach, phone conversation with editor, January 5, 2023. Krebsbach interviewed several adults who resided at The Preve as children. Many confirmed that families kept quiet if someone contracted the disease. Besides fear of the disease itself, people worried they’d be stigmatized in their communities similar to the way some patients with AIDS or COVID-19 felt before scientific studies advanced understanding of these diseases.

b. Mark Caldwell, *The Last Crusade, The War on Consumption 1862-1954* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1988), 8-9.

#### Notes to Sidebar on page 5

a. “Help Prevent Tragedies Like This One,” Christmas Seals advertisement, Lake Owasso Children’s Home, records, Minnesota Historical Society (hereafter MNHS), 11D.2.2F-2, 1928; “Christmas Seals History,” American Lung Association, accessed December 7, 2022, <https://www.lung.org/get-involved/ways-to-give/christmas-seals/history>. In 1907, a small sanatorium in Delaware full of TB patients and short on money faced the reality of closing its doors. So, volunteer and veteran fundraiser Emily Bissell created and sold Christmas Seals at the post office for one cent each. Her idea worked; money poured in; President Theodore Roosevelt endorsed the idea; and the Christmas Seals program successfully launched. Today, funds raised benefit Americans suffering from a variety of lung issues and diseases.

b. “Children’s Preventorium Record of All Admissions and Discharges, 1915 to 1953” (hereafter, Preventorium Record), Ramsey County, Minnesota, from the personal collection of Jacci Krebsbach; “Lawrence Alfred Bodin Family Tree,” ancestry.com; “Bodin, Neal Allen,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 4, 2015, B7; Minnesota death certificates 1926-MN-024877 (Roger Bodin), 1928-023551 (Nels Bodin), and 1928-023966 (Augusta Bodin) in the Minnesota, US, Death Index, 1908-2017; “Nels Bodin,” *Thirteenth Census of the United States-1910*, St. Paul, Ramsey, Minnesota, enumeration district 94, sheet 12A.

c. Preventorium Record.

d. “Lawrence Bodin,” *Sixteenth Census of the United States-1940*, Mound, Hennepin, Minnesota, enumeration district 27-39, sheet 4B; “Lawrence A. Bodin,” *1950 Federal Census*, Washington, King, Seattle, enumeration district 40-79, sheet 11.

e. “Lawrence Bodin,” *Mohian Yearbook*, Mound High School, 1940, multiple entries.

f. “Allen Bodin,” *Mohian Yearbook*, Mound High School, 1940, multiple entries; “Boden, Neal Allen.”

## My Harley Grandma Mary Eileen Kehoe and the St. Paul Motorcycle Escort Club

ELETA PIERCE

**S**ome called her Mary; some called her Eileen; others called her Shadow; but to her twenty-two grandchildren, she was our Harley Grandma.

Mary Eileen Kehoe was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on November 17, 1926, to Irene

(Mangan) and Raymond D. Kehoe. She had one sibling—her older sister, Bernadine, whom the family called Bunny. Mary's nickname was Shadow because she *always* followed her older sister everywhere.<sup>1</sup>

The family moved a lot in the early years, but shortly after Mary was born, Irene put her foot down and insisted that Raymond go to work for the United States Postal Service. He did, and, in 1927, they settled in St. Paul, Minnesota, to be closer to relatives. They eventually moved into the Tazewell Apartments at 135 N. Western, where they raised their two girls. Their home was on the second floor of the red-brick building with a view of the Cathedral of Saint Paul. The Kehoes were Irish Catholics, so they attended mass regularly at the grand cathedral. The sisters went to Cathedral Grade School and St. Joseph's Academy. Mary graduated high school in 1944.<sup>2</sup>



In her early twenties, Mary Eileen Kehoe was a stunning member of the St. Paul Motorcycle Escort Club. She adored her Harley-Davidson and rode it everywhere, including along the banks of the Mississippi River. *Courtesy of Eleta Pierce. Photograph colorized by Jon Kowalski.*



St. Paul Motorcycle Escort members and Mary Kehoe (in riding helmet). *Courtesy of Eleta Pierce.*

## Motorcycle Maven

Mary first took interest in motorcycles “at the urging of some friends,” who invited her for a ride shortly after graduation. Her own motorcycling adventures started when she bought her very own Harley-Davidson from Howard W. Belmont, whom she always referred to as Howie. To make monthly payments for the cycle, she worked at the telephone company *and* took an additional job at the register at Howie’s shop. *That* was a good gig—besides the extra money, Howie taught Mary how to fix her own bike.<sup>3</sup>

In 1945, Mary became an official member of the St. Paul Motorcycle Escort Club, a group of local motorcycle enthusiasts led by Howie, who would arrange races and hill climbs in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Riders often competed for cash prizes by participating in a variety of events, including time trials, stunt contests, “ride the plank,” balloon spearing, and gunny sack races, which one must assume was done off bike. They planned “runs” (long motorcycle rides) with bikers from other clubs, including popular Gypsy Runs, whereby a leader or group of leaders planned a long ride

### St. Paul Harley-Davidson and the Man Who Started It All: Howard W. Belmont

ELETA PIERCE

Howard W. (Howie) Belmont was an icon in the St. Paul motorcycle scene from 1939 to 1981 and the original owner of St. Paul Harley-Davidson. It made sense. Belmont was an avid motorcyclist and enthusiastic about the sport. In fact, in his twenties and thirties, he “raced motorcycles on half-mile dirt tracks and participated in hill-climbing events.”<sup>a</sup>

With help from his mother, Martha, who took out a mortgage on her home at 602 E. Maryland, the young entrepreneur opened Howard W. Belmont Motorcycles at 277 West Seventh Street in the Rochat-Block building in 1939. There, he sold motorcycles, parts, and riding gear, and he offered mechanic services. He officially incorporated his business as St. Paul Harley-Davidson in 1945. According to a family member, “He was known to motorcycle dealers throughout the Midwest and ran one of the nation’s largest mail-order businesses of Harley-Davidson parts.” If he wasn’t busy enough, early on, he had founded the St. Paul Motorcycle Escort Club, and his popularity among bikers and around the city grew.<sup>b</sup>

In the late ‘70s, Belmont moved his shop to 1209 West Seventh Street, and then, in 1981, after more than four decades, he retired, selling the business to Bob and Judy Crawford. Not wanting to walk away from his life’s passion completely, Belmont remained on staff for about two years as a salesman. He passed away on June 14, 1989, at the age of seventy-seven following a battle with cancer.<sup>c</sup>

The Crawfords relocated St. Paul Harley-Davidson—first to 949 Geneva Avenue around 1987 and then to its current location, 2899 Hudson Boulevard, east of the city, around 1998. They eventually sold the store to Tom and Melanie Giannetti. Dale Rhoads and Justin Johnson have served as the current owners since 2018.<sup>d</sup>



Howard W. Belmont stands behind the sales counter in the early days. In business for forty-two years, the well-known and respected owner signed this photograph in 1988. It is currently on display at St. Paul Harley-Davidson on Hudson Road. *Courtesy of St. Paul Harley-Davidson.*



Howard W. Belmont’s shop at 277 West Seventh around 1975, near the end of the “Belmont era,” prior to the business’s move a mile up the road. *Courtesy of Ramsey County Historical Society.*



Mary Kehoe Bowser left behind a small photo album from the late 1940s with at least a dozen snapshots of her wearing Harley-Davidson gear and posing on her bike in front of her apartment building—a telltale sign that, yes, her mother most assuredly learned about her adventurous daughter's hobby. *Courtesy of Eleta Pierce.*

with multiple stops. Other members followed on their bikes without knowing exactly where they would end up. Club members also served as motorcycle escorts in parades and for dignitaries, politicians, and religious leaders who visited the city.<sup>4</sup>

Motorcycle clubs and cyclists in general were beginning to earn a bad reputation as small groups of riders around the country caused disorder and occasional violence, but the St. Paul Motorcycle Escort members worked to change

that perception of bikers locally. They accepted women into their club, and they volunteered their services to the community.<sup>5</sup>

### Sshh! It's a Secret

Mary was a petite woman and a girly-girl in looks. She might have been one of the prettiest bikers in the state, with her bright red lipstick, custom kidney belt, and knee-high riding boots. Mary was also a headstrong feminist and was proud that she could hold her big bike up without any help, even after laying it down once in 1949. The accident made the news: Twenty-two-year-old Mary was “momentarily knocked unconscious and bruised when her motorcycle collided with a car at Marion and University.”<sup>6</sup>

Mary kept her motorcycle a secret from her parents. She told us grandchildren that, in those days, most women didn't even regularly wear pants let alone drive a motorcycle. But Mary was never one to let gender roles set a limit to what a woman could do—a point she made sure to teach her daughters and granddaughters.

So how does one hide a 500+-pound secret like that?<sup>7</sup> Howie used to let her keep her motorcycle at his shop. He even parked it on display in the front window. After a day riding with friends, Mary would return the bike to the store then walk up the hill to her family's apartment, where her parents were none-the-wiser of their daughter's adventures—even though she was



coming home with wind-whipped hair and wearing dusty sunglasses and leather clothing. Were they *really* that naive?

It appears at least one parent was on to her shenanigans. One day, Mary's father approached her, having heard rumors that his daughter had a motorcycle. Not one to lie, the sheepish young woman confessed that she, indeed, owned and rode a bike. To her pleasant surprise, Raymond asked her if she would take him for a ride, "and we won't tell your ma."

And so, with Mary driving and her father sitting behind her on the cycle, off they went on a trip to Wisconsin, where they stopped at a local bar for a drink and to "cut a rug"—a popular term for dancing, as Grandma explained to us. In those days, Minnesota mandated that bars close on Sundays. That was not the case across the state border to the east. Therefore, it was common to find Minnesotans in western Wisconsin bars on that particular day of the week.<sup>8</sup>

After dancing, Mary excused herself to the lady's room, while her father stepped to the bar to get them a "Coke." A gentleman approached Raymond and reprimanded him, saying, "Aren't you a little too old, fella, for that girl?" Raymond laughed and replied, "Mister, that's my daughter!" Apparently, the man didn't believe him, so when Mary returned, she confirmed that this "much older" gentleman was, indeed, her daddy. The guy sheepishly walked away.



### Friends through Thick and Thin

Mary's best friend, Catherine (Kitty) Shenkelberg, who lived at 246 Farrington Street, was her sidekick. Kitty also had a motorcycle and was a St. Paul Motorcycle Escort member. The two experienced many runs and excursions together. They even participated in the 1950 St. Paul Winter Carnival as candidates for Fire Queen. Neither of them won. Donna Bainbridge of North St. Paul took the honor. Still, that opportunity led to a lifetime of fondness for the annual carnival.<sup>9</sup>

Kitty Shenkelberg and Mary Kehoe (right) were fast friends. *Courtesy of Eleta Pierce.*



Multiple clubs, including the St. Paul Motorcycle Escort Club, gathered at a Gypsy Run destination the summer of 1948. Many years later, Mary Kehoe Bowser added a few names to this photo in blue ink. She identifies herself (Mommy, me) and Kitty S. *Courtesy of Eleta Pierce.*

Most of the trips were full of fun, laughter, and camaraderie. The group loved traveling and exploring. Theirs was a tight bond. But members were also aware of the dangers on the road. Accidents happened. One such accident claimed the life of Mary's friend and fellow Escort. Pauline (Penny) Olson died in a collision with a car at an intersection after a motorcycle event in White Bear Lake on July 21, 1947. Penny had been the club's secretary. She was twenty years old.<sup>10</sup>

When Mary retold the story of her friend's passing to family, she stressed the importance of wearing a helmet. Penny was not wearing a helmet. My mother, Terry Pierce, pointed out to us that the "helmets" back then were simply leather aviator caps that did nothing to protect one's brain from injury. "It would just keep the contents together for when the medics arrived."

It's clear from Mary's memories of the loss of her friend, that she was shaken by the tragedy. Still, she kept riding the next few years—sometimes with the Escorts or other friends and sometimes solo. She even took long road trips

to Missouri to visit family after her parents and sister moved there.<sup>11</sup>

### From out of the Shadows: A New Life

In 1950, Mary "shadowed" Bunny, who had joined the Navy as a WAVE, and drove her motorcycle to Washington, DC, to live near her sister. There, the younger Kehoe landed a job in Navy administration as a secretary. While in the city, Mary and Bunny and their dates attended a Valentine's Day dance for service members. The year was 1951. That is where Mary met a staff sergeant in the Air Force from Johnstown, Pennsylvania, named Milford (Mel) Bowser. Mary and Mel enjoyed each other's company rather than that of the dates they came with. They planned their own date for an upcoming evening.

Their relationship took off, and it didn't take long before Mel proposed. Two months later, they married. Ten months later, the couple welcomed their first child. They spent time in Missouri before settling in Minnesota. Mel landed a job with Cargill and, in 1954, they bought a small, newly constructed two-bedroom house



Harley Grandma, as her grandchildren called her, wouldn't say no to sitting on the back of someone's motorcycle. Here she is on a 1982 Harley-Davidson FX (Sturgis) Low Rider in the summer of 1991 when she was sixty-four. At times, she would even consent to riding around the block with family members or friends—if there was a helmet she could wear.



Mary Kehoe Bowser's daughter, Terry Pierce, has preserved her mother's St. Paul Motorcycle Escort blouse, which includes Mary's name (Eileen Kehoe) in script and the Harley-Davidson logo on the front, patches from 1945 to 1949 on the side, and the club name on the back. The family also cherishes another riding blouse on the back of which is embroidered Mary's nickname—Shadow. *Both images courtesy of Eleta Pierce.*

just blocks away from the plant in Savage. They became proud parents of six daughters—Patty, Kitty, Terry, Debby, Peggy, and Mary Ann (who died at the hospital two days after she was born), and one son, Mike.<sup>12</sup>

### Motorcycle Memories

Unfortunately, Mel wasn't as progressive as Mary when it came to her Harley. When they married, he made a simple mandate, "No wife of mine is going to be driving a motorcycle!" Mary must have really loved him because she chose him and sold her precious bike. Despite that, she never gave up her love for Harley-Davidson motorcycles. She filled their home with Harley-Davidson memorabilia, and anyone who knew her would gift her with even more. She proudly shared her stories of her riding days with her children, grandchildren, and anyone else who cared to listen.<sup>13</sup>

My Harley Grandma rode through the pearly gates on January 1, 2018, at the age of ninety-one. Mary lived with Alzheimer's for the last several years of her life—the same disease that claimed the lives of her father and sister. Those final years, she resided with my parents, Terry and Montell Pierce, on St. Paul's West Side, with a view of the city skyline from the window. Although her short-term memory was gone and, eventually, she didn't even recognize her own face in the mirror, she never forgot her riding days. She would talk on and on about her Harley, the St. Paul Motorcycle Escort Club, her fellow bikers—especially the women—and all of her cycling adventures, right up to the end. I am grateful she shared her stories and passion for motorcycles with all of us grandkids.<sup>14</sup>

### Afterword

A few of Mary's Kehoe Bowser's grandchildren and great-grandchildren have followed in their grandmother's footsteps. Eldest granddaughter Eleta Pierce loved listening to Mary's Harley-Davidson stories. It also helped that Eleta's best friend's family rode motorcycles. Following Eleta's high school graduation in 1991, she spent the summer riding on the back of a boyfriend's Harley. Together, they attended the 51st Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in South



Dakota and explored the Black Hills and Badlands with family and friends. Eleta's riding adventures lasted a few more years, with thousands of miles spent on the open road. Her sister, Tammy Pierce, took the hobby a step further, earning her motorcycle endorsement and purchasing her own bike in 2009—a 2003 Honda Sabre with the name "Shadow" painted across the gas tank. Mary was overjoyed that the tank had *her* nickname on it. Tammy rode for several years and served as secretary of a local motorcycle club. Great-grandsons Coleton and Preston Pierce have also taken up riding. Harley Grandma would be proud.

**Acknowledgments:** Special thanks to family members of Mary Kehoe Bowser, Luke Johnson at St. Paul Harley-Davidson, and Tim McCormick at the Harley-Davidson Museum in Milwaukee for assistance with this story.

*Eleta Pierce is a lifelong resident of St. Paul's West Side and resides there with her three children. She graduated from Humboldt High School. Pierce has been an administrator for Presbyterian churches since 2006 and currently serves First Presbyterian Church in South St. Paul.*

Granddaughter Eleta Pierce at the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in 1991. Courtesy of Eleta Pierce.

## NOTES

1. “Mary E Kehoe,” *Fifteenth Census of the United States—1930*, Minnesota, Ramsey, St. Paul, enumeration district 62-124, sheet 12B; “Bernadine ‘Bunny’ C. McClernon,” *The Springfield News-Leader*, December 8, 2015, A5.

2. “Raymond D. Kehoe,” *Sixteenth Census of the United States—1940*, Minnesota, Ramsey, St. Paul, enumeration district illegible, sheet 1B; “Irine Mangan,” Indiana Archives and Records Administration; Indianapolis, Indiana; *Birth Records, 1924*, roll 016; Aine C. McCormack and Eileen R. McCormack, “The Tazewell: 100 Years in the Life of a St. Paul Apartment,” *Ramsey County History* 53, no. 4 (Winter 2019): 22-31. The Tazewell Apartments were constructed in 1918 and nearly demolished in the 1970s, Today, the renovated property houses condominiums; Mary Jo Richardson, “St. Joseph’s Academy, St. Paul,” *MNopedia*, accessed October 25, 2022, <https://www.mnopedia.org/place/st-joseph-s-academy-st-paul>.

3. “Motorcycling Hobby of Shops’ Employees,” *The Telephone News* 5, Western Electric Company, December 1948, 9; Terry Pierce, interview with author, Summer 2022; “About St. Paul Harley-Davidson,” Buell American Motorcycles, accessed October 25, 2022, <https://st-paul-harley-davidson-buell.myshopify.com/pages/about-us>; “Martha Belmont,” *Sixteenth Census of the United States—1940*, Minnesota, Ramsey, St. Paul, enumeration district 92-10, sheet 11; “Belmont,” *Star Tribune*, June 17, 1989, 5.

4. “Belmont,” 5. “St. Paul Motorcycle Escort Club,” Businesses and Liens, Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State, accessed December 20, 2022, <https://mblsportal.sos.state.mn.us/Business/SearchDetails?filingGuid=672a666e-9ed4-e011-a886-001ec94ffe7f>. The club registered as a nonprofit in 1938. The organization was involuntarily dissolved in 1997; “Motorcycle Meet to Be Held at Menominee,” *Chippewa Herald Telegram*, June 14, 1939; Harley-Davidson Museum, Milwaukee, December 30, 2022.

5. “Motorcycling Hobby of Shops’ Employees,” 9; “Fifty Injured in Motorcycle Riot in California Town,” *Winona Daily News*, July 7, 1947, 1; “Town Bans Motorcycle Race After Riot, Death,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, July 6, 1948, 7; Gwinn Guilford, “Harley-Davidson’s 100-year history is a case study in the marketing of the American maverick,” *Quartz*, accessed December 20, 2022, <https://sports.yahoo.com/harley-davidson-100-history-case-142903621.html>; “Open Letter,” *Beatrice (NE) Daily Sun*, December 18, 1958. An anonymous member of the St. Paul Motorcycle Escort Club wrote a scathing review against motorcycle groups that cause trouble. The writer favored those, like their own club, that try to make a positive difference in the community.

6. “Cycle Accidents Sent 2 Girls to Hospital,” *Pioneer Press*, no date/page number, but Mary Kehoe added the date of the accident (July 21, 1949) and time (9:40 p.m.) to the clipping she saved.

7. Tim McCormick with Harley-Davidson Museum, email exchange with editor, January 4, 2023; “1949 Harley-Davidson WL’45,” National Motorcycle Museum, accessed January 18, 2023, <https://nationalmcmuseum.org/2021/02/05/1949-harley-davidson-wl-45/>.

8. “Police Regulations: Intoxicating Liquors, 340:14,” *Minnesota Office of the Revisor of Statutes 1949*, General Laws, chapter 340, 2653, accessed December 20, 2022, <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/1949/cite/340/pdf#search=%22sunday%20alcohol%20sales%22>. “No sale of intoxicating liquor shall be made after 1 a.m. on Sunday.”

9. Gordon Richmond, “Fire Queen to be ‘Hot Sales-girl,’” *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 10, 1950, 9; “North St. Paul Model Chosen Vulcan Queen,” *Star Tribune*, February 3, 1950, 1.

10. “Woman, 20, Killed in Motorcycle Mishap,” *The Minneapolis Star*, July 21, 1947, 19; “Girl Cyclist Dies in Highway Spill,” *St. Cloud Times*, July 21, 1947, 2; “Pauline Deloris (Penny) Olson,” Find A Grave, accessed December 20, 2022, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/241053509/pauline-deloris-olson>.

11. “Motorcycling Hobby of Shops’ Employees,” 9.

12. “Bowser, Mary Eileen,” *Star Tribune*, January 4, 2018, B4; “Bowser,” *Star Tribune*, January 24, 1999, 32.

13. At her passing, Mary Bowser was grandmother to twenty-two grandchildren and twenty-four great-grandchildren. At this writing, two additional great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild have joined the family.

14. “Bowser, Mary Eileen,” B4.

### Notes to Sidebar on page 15

a. “Howard Belmont owned motorcycle dealership,” *Star Tribune*, June 18, 1989, 32.

b. “About St. Paul Harley-Davidson,” Buell American Motorcycles, accessed October 25, 2022, <https://st-paul-harley-davidson-buell.myshopify.com/pages/about-us>; “Martha Belmont,” *Sixteenth Census of the United States—1940*, Minnesota, Ramsey, St. Paul, enumeration district 92-10, sheet 11; “Howard Belmont owned motorcycle dealership.”

c. “St. Paul Harley-Davidson,” *St. Paul City Directory* (St. Paul: R. L. Polk & Co., 1940, 1970, 1977, 1978, 1981, 1982), 100, 397, 376, 371, 298; “Belmont,” *Star Tribune*, June 17, 1989, 5; “Howard Belmont owned motorcycle dealership.”

d. “Beginning of a Lifetime Career—Bob and Judy Crawford,” historical information at St. Paul Harley-Davidson Museum; “About St. Paul Harley-Davidson;” “Belmont Harley-Davidson/St. Paul Harley-Davidson,” *Northwestern Bell* and *US West DEX Telephone Directory* (St. Paul: Northwestern Bell/US West, 1982, 1988-1989, 1994-1995, 1996-1997), 4, 198, 868, 906; Luke Johnson with St. Paul Harley-Davidson, personal tour with author, December 2022, and email correspondence with editor, January 13, 2023.

## The (Almost) Incredible 1897 Central High School Bird Observation

DAVE RIEHLE

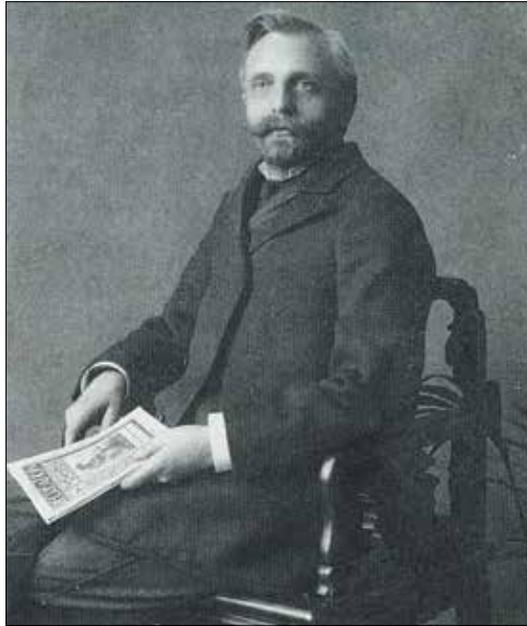
Let the birds be welcome!  
They are welcome in our homes,  
Welcome they are in our schoolroom,  
They are welcome everywhere!<sup>1</sup>

From late February through early June, hundreds of species of migratory birds—many with declining populations—fly northward across the United States.<sup>2</sup> Returning to their breeding grounds, or, perhaps, just passing through, the birds of spring and summer will soon appear in Minnesota once again. Such was the case 126 years ago, as well.

This story goes back to a three-month bird observation or census no doubt inspired by naturalist and educator Dietrich Lange, a teacher at St. Paul Central High School and founder of the school's Ornithological Society. Student birders identified a variety of feathered friends from March through May 1897. Their results were duly registered in that year's issue of the *High School World*. Despite the fact that Lange started the club in 1892, the published account of '97 appears to be the only detailed record of any such activity conducted in those early years, along with a notebook in Lange's files at the Minnesota Historical Society.<sup>3</sup> (See back cover.)

This experience with his small group of students—along with his brief time as an elementary educator—may have prompted Lange to write two nature books. The first, published in 1898, was *Handbook of Nature Study, for Teachers and Pupils in Elementary Schools*. *Our Native Birds: How to Protect Them and Attract Them to Our Homes* followed a year later.<sup>4</sup>

Lange understood that nature was at peril if human activity did not change. He addressed these concerns in his books. He also suggested solutions to the problems—the most important of which, he believed was education—focusing



St. Paul educator Dietrich Lange spent his youth exploring nature in the Lüneburger Heide region of Northern Germany. He loved the outdoors and observing the plants, insects, animals, and birds that lived there. Upon immigrating to Minnesota, he spent the rest of his years exploring and working to preserve the state's nature areas and wildlife. *Courtesy of John W. Mittelstadt and Ramsey County Historical Society.*

particularly on young people as potential change agents.

This education must begin in our public schools. Every boy is a born bird student, but his natural methods are too destructive for the birds. In the nature study work children must learn the habits of our common birds and must learn of the benefits the birds render us. Give them glimpses of the work of birds, how they build their little homes, care for their young and defend them at the risk of their own lives . . .

Let teachers and schools do all they can to spread good bird literature. . . . bird study clubs can do much good, if they strictly refrain from collecting birds and eggs and if the teachers see to it that nests are not too frequently visited.<sup>5</sup>

## Dietrich Lange—A Local Henry David Thoreau, of Sorts

Lange came to the United States from Germany with his family in 1881. They settled in Nicollet County, Minnesota, near Mankato. Lange learned English quickly and attended Mankato Normal School for three years. In 1887, he moved to St. Paul and began teaching at an elementary school. Two years later, in 1889, he joined staff at Central High School. While there, he “established himself as a nationally known author and lecturer on nature studies.”<sup>6</sup>

Lange was happiest when in nature. Some might say he was a local version of Massachusetts’ famed naturalist Henry David Thoreau. We know the young academic followed Thoreau’s work, as Lange once wrote that Spring Lake, northwest of Hastings, Minnesota, reminded him of Thoreau’s beloved Walden Pond. This statement infers that Lange visited Walden at some point, although he does not mention such a trip in his papers. It is unclear if he was aware that Thoreau sojourned to Lange’s adopted home of Minnesota in 1861—long before the young German arrived. In fact, it was Thoreau’s final excursion. He’d traveled here seeking relief from the tuberculosis that claimed his life a year later.<sup>7</sup>

### Bird Is the Word

When Lange created the ornithological society for students, it made sense. He cut a wide swath in his avian pursuits, taking his place early on as a passionate naturalist, and he was ready to share his knowledge with young people.

It is unclear where or when club members met. Nor do we have any syllabus or goals for the first four years, although it’s likely bird identification was key. Binoculars and bird guides weren’t commonly used by amateur birders until the early twentieth century.<sup>8</sup> So, how did students know what they were looking at once they spotted a bird? Sure, that’s a robin, that’s a grackle. But what about less well-known birds? Certainly, the pupils received guidance from their instructor.

We learn the most about this endeavor in 1897. That’s when seven students—five boys and two girls—signed up for the club *and* published their work in the yearbook. It’s also the year that an early book on birds was written by Frank M. Chapman—*Bird-Life: A Guide to the Study of Our Common Birds*.<sup>9</sup>

In the guide, Chapman instructs his readers, “Having found your bird, there is one thing absolutely necessary to its identification: *you must see it definitely*.”<sup>10</sup> It is possible Lange shared Chapman’s book with the club members. And we know Lange made sure the young birders really saw the abundant specimens—red-winged blackbird; purple finch; creeping warbler, and more. We also know Lange frequently led his students on nature-imbibing hikes—sometimes very long hikes—to help them identify species by sight, sound, and preferred nesting locations.

Prof. Lange’s ‘Central High School Hikers’ Club will walk to Shakopee Friday. . . . The boys will take the 8:30 Fort Snelling (street) car from Seventh and Wabasha to the fort and will then go down into the Minnesota river valley and walk to Shakopee, taking the train home in the evening.<sup>11</sup>

### Getting There is Half the Fun

Besides setting out on walks in the countryside or through nature reserves, how did the birders get to their birdwatching locations? One likely option was by bicycle, as 1897 was the peak of the bicycling craze.

About 1890 the modern “safety” bicycle was introduced, pneumatic tires were added and the streets improved. . . . On July 5th, 1896, the Plymouth Congregational Church at Summit and Wabasha started a bicycle check room for parishioners who rode to church. . . . The (bicycle) clubs organized a drive for funds by public subscription to build a network of cycle paths all around the city.<sup>12</sup>

In fact, that year, the city laid over nineteen miles of new bike paths, following eighteen miles of construction the year before. Two especially popular paths—one connecting riders from Como Lake to White Bear Lake and another from West Seventh Street to the Fort Snelling bridge, made it easier for folks to enjoy nature.<sup>13</sup>

The students could have been afforded transportation by an adult via horse and buggy but probably not by the gasoline-powered motor vehicle, which was at its earliest, most primitive stage. While advertisements in the daily

newspapers offered them for sale, these vehicles, at the time, were literally the familiar carriage body with a propelling motor instead of a horse. Very few people owned one. Lange never owned a car.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, the Twin Cities' streetcar lines were pretty well developed in 1897 although still far from finished. The West Seventh streetcar only ran as far as the east bank of the Mississippi; it did not extend across to Fort Snelling until 1904. But there was a bridge there, so getting to the fort was no obstacle for bicyclists, pedestrians, horse and buggy, or the incipient horseless carriage. This mattered because to reach the ever-changing Minnesota Bottoms, a favorite nature area of Lange and his students along the Minnesota River floodplain, it was necessary to descend from the fort.<sup>15</sup>

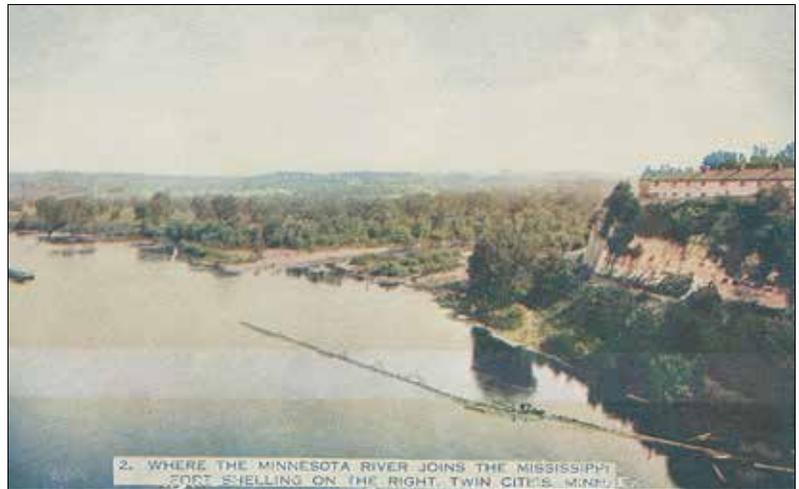
### I Spy with My Eye<sup>16</sup>

One favored birdwatching site in 1897 was Merriam Park in today's Midway neighborhood. Several birds, including the cedar waxwing, meadowlark (eastern meadowlark), and fox sparrow were observed in late March. Also, the Bohemian waxwing and bluebird (eastern bluebird) made appearances at the Minnesota River Bottoms.<sup>17</sup>

White Bear Lake, the second largest body of water in the metro area, and nearby Bald Eagle Lake were at the time of the bird observation, favored summer vacation locations and well-appreciated nature spots. Pickerel Lake, on the Mississippi River floodplain, even today, is a remarkably unspoiled nature setting west of downtown St. Paul that is still frequented by birdwatchers.

The students noted sixty-nine different birds over the course of their exercise. The majority were songbirds, although, it appears two students managed to sneak in a couple of aquatic birds. Because no duplicate birds were noted, it is likely that documenting "first observed species" was the goal of the exercise. Only the first-observed bird matters. Its name was added to a list with the date, observer, and location. Such a list is still produced today.<sup>18</sup>

Rather than simply admiring birds for their beauty and their ability to fly far above us and travel thousands of miles twice a year, birds have sometimes been sorted into "good," "bad," "obnoxious," and other traits only possessed by humans by pseudo-academics, hunters,



politicians, farmers, and others who may have been interested in preserving or eliminating certain species. Their songs and chirps have been judged according to musical criteria, and moral verdicts have been pronounced on their family relations and nest building. This rampant anthropomorphism, of course, does not divert the avian kingdom from fulfilling all the behaviors and customs assigned them by nature. Lange likely tried to objectively share what he'd learned with his young pupils.

These 1897 birders were identified in the yearbook only by surname, but research has disclosed probable full names and some interesting background:

**Joseph H. Barrett (1879-1940, Class of 1897)** boarded at 148 Nina Street, a building that stands today. His early history is unclear. We do know the young man was a talented musician who often performed at Wildwood Amusement Park on the shores of White Bear Lake. There, he managed the dancing pavilion for six years, after which he went to Wonderland Amusement Park in the Longfellow neighborhood of Minneapolis. In 1906, he married Stella Straka (1880-1829). Later, Joseph was elected president of the St. Paul Musicians Union Local 30, a post he held for fifteen years. In the 1920s, Barrett, was appointed a Ramsey County Deputy Sheriff.<sup>19</sup>

Back to birding, between March 30 and May 13, Joseph visited seven locations—West St. Paul, Minneapolis, Groveland Park, Irvine Street five times, South Park, the Fish Hatchery, and Mendota.<sup>20</sup> He observed and recorded fourteen

The Minnesota River Bottoms area was and still is a choice birding location near the Twin Cities. *Courtesy of Ramsey County Historical Society.*

Seven students from Central High School's Ornithological Society published observations in the 1897 *High School World*. While we don't have evidence as to how they collected this information that particular year, a 1905 ledger in Dietrich Lange's papers gives us an idea of how they may have recorded their data. (See back cover.) In *High School World*, 1897, 15.

ARRIVAL OF THE BIRDS.

AS OBSERVED BY THE ST. PAUL HIGH SCHOOL ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

Common Name.	Scientific Name.	Date.	Observed by	Observed at
American Robin.....	<i>Turdus migratorius</i> .....	March 18	Mathews.....	Dayton Ave.
Cedar Wax wing.....	<i>Ampelis cedrorum</i> .....	" 27	Peck.....	Merriam Park
Blue-bird.....	<i>Sialia Sialis</i> .....	" 28	Manship.....	Ft. Snelling
Meadow Lark.....	<i>Sturnella magna</i> .....	" 28	Peck.....	Merriam Park
Purple Grackle.....	<i>Quiscalus purpureus</i> .....	" 28	".....	" "
Kildeer Plover.....	".....	" 28	".....	" "
Bohemian Wax wing.....	<i>Ampelis Garrulus</i> .....	" 28	Manship.....	Ft. Snelling
Chipping Sparrow.....	<i>Spizella domestica</i> .....	" 28	Case.....	Waterville
Red-winged Black bird.....	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i> .....	" 30	Manship.....	Ft. Snelling
Kingfisher.....	<i>Ceryle alcyon</i> .....	" 30	".....	" "
Flicker.....	<i>Colaptes auratus</i> .....	" 30	".....	" "
Downy Woodpecker.....	<i>Picus pubescens</i> .....	" 30	Barrett.....	West St. Paul
Hairy Woodpecker.....	<i>Picus villosus</i> .....	" 30	Greenleaf.....	Pickrel Lake
Song Sparrow.....	<i>Melospiza fasciata</i> .....	" 30	".....	" "
Fox Sparrow.....	<i>Passercula illaca</i> .....	" 31	Peck.....	Merriam Park
Northern Shrike.....	<i>Lanius borealis</i> .....	" 31	Barrett.....	Minneapolis
Hermit Thrush.....	<i>Turdus unalascae</i> .....	April 1	".....	Groveland Park
Phoebe.....	<i>Sylvania fusca</i> .....	" 3	Peck.....	Merriam Park
Field Sparrow.....	<i>Spizella agrestis</i> .....	" 3	".....	" "
Swamp Sparrow.....	<i>Melospiza palustris</i> .....	" 3	".....	" "
White-rumped Shrike.....	<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i> .....	" 3	".....	" "
Golden-crowned Kinglet.....	<i>Regulus satrapa</i> .....	" 6	".....	" "
Mourning Dove.....	<i>Zenaidura macroura</i> .....	" 7	Greenleaf.....	Ft. Snelling
Rusty Blackbird.....	<i>Scolecophagus ferrugineus</i> .....	" 10	Peck.....	Merriam Park
Purple Finch.....	<i>Carpodacus cassinii</i> .....	" 10	Barrett.....	Irvine St.
Water Thrush.....	<i>Sialia noticella</i> .....	" 11	Peck.....	Merriam Park
Yellow-billed sapsucker.....	<i>Sphyrapicus varius</i> .....	" 14	".....	" "
Ruby-crowned Kinglet.....	<i>Regulus calendula</i> .....	" 17	".....	" "
Chimney Swift.....	<i>Chaetura pelagica</i> .....	" 17	".....	Capitol
White-crowned Sparrow.....	<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i> .....	" 21	".....	Merriam Park
American Goldfish.....	<i>Astragalinus tristis</i> .....	" 23	Greenleaf.....	Groveland Park
Bank Swallow.....	<i>Cotile riparia</i> .....	" 25	Schrader.....	Ft. Snelling
White-th'r'd sparrow.....	<i>Zonotrichia albicollis</i> .....	" 28	Barrett.....	Irvine St.
Wood Thrush.....	<i>Turdus mustelinus</i> .....	" 30	Schrader.....	Marshall Ave.
Golden-crowned Thrush.....	<i>Sialia auricapillus</i> .....	" 30	Peck.....	Merriam Park
Myrtle Warbler.....	<i>Dendroeca coronata</i> .....	" 30	Barrett.....	Irvine St.
Creeping Warbler.....	<i>Minioltia varia</i> .....	May 1	".....	South Park
Red-eyed Vireo.....	<i>Vireo olivaceus</i> .....	" 1	".....	" "
American Coot.....	<i>Fulica americana</i> .....	" 1	Mathews.....	Minnesota Bottoms
Yellowheaded Blackbird.....	<i>Xanthocephalus icterocephalus</i> .....	" 1	".....	" "
Bittern.....	<i>Botaurus mugilatus</i> .....	" 1	".....	" "
Cow Blackbird.....	<i>Molothrus ater</i> .....	" 2	Greenleaf.....	White Bear
Indago Bunting.....	<i>Passerina cyanea</i> .....	" 2	".....	" "
Brown Thrush.....	<i>Harporhynchus rufus</i> .....	" 2	Barrett.....	Fish Hatchery
Towhee.....	<i>Pipilo erythrophthalmus</i> .....	" 2	".....	" "
Red-headed Woodpecker.....	<i>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</i> .....	" 3	Manship.....	Nelson Ave.
Wilson's Snipe.....	<i>Gallinago wilsoni</i> .....	" 4	".....	St. Anthony Park
Least Flycatcher.....	<i>Empidonax minimus</i> .....	" 4	".....	" "
Baltimore Oriole.....	<i>Icterus galbula</i> .....	" 6	Peck.....	Merriam Park
Rose-breasted Grosbeak.....	<i>Zamelodia ludoviciana</i> .....	" 6	".....	" "
Black-throat Blue War'r.....	<i>Dendroeca coerulescens</i> .....	" 6	".....	" "
" " Green.....	<i>Dendroeca virens</i> .....	" 6	".....	" "
White-eyed Vireo.....	<i>Vireo noveboracensis</i> .....	" 7	".....	" "
Wood Pewee.....	<i>Contopus vireus</i> .....	" 7	".....	" "
Yellow-throated Vireo.....	<i>Vireo flavifrons</i> .....	" 7	".....	" "
Maryland Yellow throat.....	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i> .....	" 8	Mathews.....	Minnesota Bottoms
Catbird.....	<i>Mimus carolinensis</i> .....	" 8	Barrett.....	Irvine St.
Warbling Vireo.....	<i>Vireo gilvus</i> .....	" 8	".....	" "
Yellow Warbler.....	<i>Dendroeca aestiva</i> .....	" 8	".....	" "
White-breasted Swallow.....	<i>Iridoprocne bicolor</i> .....	" 8	Peck.....	Merriam Park
Kingbird.....	<i>Tyrannus carolinensis</i> .....	" 8	".....	" "
Scarlet Tanager.....	<i>Pyranga rubra</i> .....	" 9	Manship.....	Bald Eagle Lake
Black-billed Cuckoo.....	<i>Coccyzus erythrophthalmus</i> .....	" 9	Peck.....	Merriam Park
Blackburnian Warbler.....	<i>Dendroeca blackburnae</i> .....	" 9	".....	" "
House Wren.....	<i>Troglodytes domesticus</i> .....	" 11	".....	" "
Orchard Oriole.....	<i>Icterus spurius</i> .....	" 11	".....	" "
Redstart.....	<i>Setophaga ruticilla</i> .....	" 12	Barrett.....	Irvine St.
Wilson's Thrush.....	<i>Turdus fuscescens</i> .....	" 12	Peck.....	Merriam Park
Bobolink.....	<i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i> .....	" 13	Barrett.....	Mendota
Least Bittern.....	<i>Ardetta exilis</i> .....	" 16	Schrader.....	White Bear

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distinct birds, including the purple finch at Irvine Park on April 10. (See back cover.)

The naturalist Roger Tory Peterson once described the male purple finch as a “sparrow dipped in raspberry juice.” Joseph may have learned from one source or another that this bird commonly arrives in flocks in the north in early April. Older males are about 6.2 inches in length, with dull-red plumage. They feed on pinecones in coniferous trees and construct nests of roots, grass, and small twigs. The male’s “song is a sweet, flowing warble; music as natural as the rippling of a mountain brook.”<sup>21</sup>

It appears young Joseph may have made a mistake with his observation. He attaches the scientific name *Carpodacus cassini* to the purple finch. This name belonged to Cassin’s finch. The purple finch is *Haemorhous purpureus*. Perhaps, Joseph could be excused for his mistake, as the birds look similar. The purple finch, however, has a stronger facial pattern, and the red coloring extends from the head partway down the hindneck.<sup>22</sup>

**Mason Nutting Case (1880-1948, Class of 1898)** was affectionately known as “Nutty.” He appears to have been the most successful of his peers in this sinful world, a certifiable “Big Man On Campus.” He was born in Waterville, Minnesota, to Dr. E. P. Case and Emily Nutting Case. In high school, he boarded at the home of his uncle, a dentist, William A. Powers, 1704 Dayton Avenue.<sup>23</sup>

He was treasurer of his senior class, and the 1898 Senior Annual noted that “Mason Case never made a bad pun in his life.” He acted in numerous school plays. Mason attended the University of Minnesota, graduating in 1902. He enrolled at Stanford University, where he was awarded a degree in psychology. Mason became a prominent businessman in Los Angeles and president of the Los Angeles Realty Board. He was twice married.<sup>24</sup>

It seems, however, Mason, the high school actor, may not have been that into birding. In late March 1897, he identified ONE first sighting, the presumably native chipping sparrow, in his hometown of Waterville—a favorite vacation spot located between Lakes Tetonka and Sakatah. Known for its “chippy, chippy, chippy” call, this bird, with its chestnut cap outlined in white



For Joseph Barrett, music, rather than birding, was clearly a big part of his life: he composed numerous songs, including, “My Minnesota Girl,” written in 1902. In addition, he cofounded the apparently popular Wolff and Barrett Orchestra. *In St. Paul Globe, July 14, 1901, 24.*

with a black beak, is common in woods, fields, and towns. The eggs are bright blue, “spotted chiefly at the larger end with cinnamon-brown or blackish markings.” Case identified the bird as *Spizella domestica*. Today, it is known as *Spizella passerina*.<sup>25</sup>

**Roy Greenleaf (1877-1952, Class of 1897)** left a scant high school record. He followed his older brother, Ray, to the St. Paul School of Fine Arts, and then, again to New York. In 1902, Roy worked in the office of Minnesota architect Cass Gilbert in New York City. He and Ray pursued highly successful careers as commercial artists. Ray died in 1950; Roy passed in 1952 in Freeport, Long Island.<sup>26</sup>

As a member of the 1897 Ornithological Society, Roy trekked around Pickerel Lake, Fort Snelling, Groveland Park, and White Bear Lake and observed six species that spring, including the brown-headed cowbird (*Molothrus ater*), which he listed as a cow blackbird, the species’ English name at the time.<sup>27</sup>

It’s believed these birds may have followed bison herds, searching for insects and seeds. Today, they are commonly spotted around cattle, and, unfortunately, are known to invite themselves into the nests of other species to lay their eggs. They often remove host eggs, lay their own, and then host birds end up raising the imposter hatchlings. Such behavior has put some species



It is unclear if Mary Manship graduated from Central. In her diary, she mentions returning to St. Paul in June '98 to attend a high school play and watch graduation ceremonies, however, she does not note her own schooling or graduation. Courtesy of Margaret Manship and Ramsey County Historical Society.

in peril. This has led to the development of programs to control (cull) their populations. Author Chapman had nothing nice to say about the cowbird either: “A thoroughly contemptible creature, lacking in every moral and maternal instinct,” (a good example of anthropomorphism mentioned above).<sup>28</sup>

### **Mary E. Manship (1881-1961)**

lived at 304 Nelson Avenue in a multiple-unit residence her father, Charles, had built in 1884. Mary left a diary from 1898-1899 that details her love for piano playing and sailing at their summer cottage on Bald Eagle Lake. She married Charles Edward Gottrel Brown in 1904 in Oregon and spent the rest of her

life living on the West Coast, including in Seattle and, later, near Los Angeles. Mary’s younger brother, Paul, became a renowned sculptor. One of his celebrated works, *Indian Hunter and His Dog* (1926) is presently in Cochran Park in St. Paul.<sup>29</sup>

Mary conducted her birdwatching mostly at Fort Snelling, as well as near her house on Nelson Street, around St. Anthony Park, and at the Manship lake cottage. In fact, it was there, on May 9, that she spotted a scarlet tanager, which she identified as *Pyrranga rubra*. Today, its scientific name is *Piranga olivacea*. According to Chapman, this bird winters in Central and South America and makes its way north to Minnesota between May 1 and 12, remaining until fall. The male’s bright red coloring with black wings stands out, especially before trees leaf out in the spring. When not mating, however, the coloring changes to a drab olive green, similar to the female coloring.<sup>30</sup>

**Frederick Matthews (1878-unknown)** resided at 501 Holly (extant). He took an interest in newspapers and advertising in high school and, by 1901, had established his own advertising company. That same year, he married Louise T. Jerrems, also of St. Paul. The couple moved to Detroit in 1906, where Frederick continued his work in advertising, focusing on food and nutrition. He was a member the Detroit Chamber of Commerce.<sup>31</sup>

Frederick identified the American robin on Dayton Avenue and four birds, on two separate trips to the Minnesota River Bottoms, including two waterbirds—an American bittern and an American coot (*Fulica americana*). The coot, also known as a mudhen, is more closely related to a sandhill crane than a duck. It does not have webbed feet but uses lobed toes to swim through water. The small head features red eyes and a distinctive white beak that extends to the top of the face.<sup>32</sup>

**Ella Peck (1879-1955, Class of 1899)** was born in Owatonna. She lived at 1097 Edmund Avenue with her parents and two siblings. Her father operated a dairy business. It appears she was a well-rounded student, running hurdles in track, presenting essays at class assemblies, and graduating from CHS in January 1899 in the inaugural winter class with eleven others. Ella recited George Eliot’s poem “Stradivarius” at the ceremony. At some point, she married Hubbard K. Bishop, a railroad draftsman from Kentucky. He died in 1933. She married accountant Guy G. Hastings in 1934.<sup>33</sup>

When it came to birding, Ella outshined her classmates, identifying thirty birds (many early in the season) and almost all of them near Merriam Park. Near the end of the assignment, Ella spotted an orchard oriole or *Icterus spurius* (today, *Icterus spurius*). Chapman noted this bird’s appearance is not as brilliant as its stunning male cousin, the Baltimore oriole. Still, he believed the orchard oriole, which could often be found—you guessed it—in orchards, has a song that is “far richer in tone and more finished in character.”<sup>34</sup>

**Herman Shrader (1880-1945, Class of 1898)** was born in Germany. His family came to the US in the 1880s, and, by at least 1891, they were living in St. Paul. His father, Ernest, was a lawyer and a partner in the firm Brown and Shrader. After graduation, Herman attended the University of Minnesota. While there, he published the results of a study conducted at the Minnesota Seaside Station on Vancouver Island titled, “Observations of *Alaria Nana*, sp. nov.” He worked briefly as an optician at the Emporium in St. Paul in 1904, possibly to help pay for medical school. He is listed as a physician still living at



Chipping Sparrow—Cephas, Wikimedia Commons.



Brown-headed Cowbird—Bear Golden Retriever, Wikimedia Commons.



Scarlet Tanager—Andrew Weitzel, Wikimedia Commons.



American Coot—sussexbirder, Wikimedia Commons.



Orchard Oriole—Dan Pancamo, Wikimedia Commons.



Least Bittern—ZankaM, Wikimedia Commons.

the family home at 694 Marshall between 1909 and 1914. In 1915, the directory indicates Herman moved to Hobson, Montana. He continued to practice medicine and married Garnet Goodle in 1916. He died in 1945.<sup>35</sup>

As a student, the future physician identified a wood thrush on Marshall Avenue and a white-throated sparrow at Fort Snelling. Like his clubmate, Frederick, Herman added a waterbird to the list of mostly songbirds. He identified this specimen at White Bear Lake—a least bittern or *Ardetta exilis* (today, *Ixobrychus exilis*). The lake had and still has an abundance of dense marshes and reeds—perfect habitat for these birds. Least, but not last, this bittern is one of the smallest herons in the world.<sup>36</sup>

### Dietrich Lange’s Legacy

Lange taught at Central High School until 1906, when he was hired as principal of Humboldt High for the following eight years. He served as superintendent of St. Paul Public Schools between 1914 and 1916 and then returned to a principal’s role at Mechanic Arts High School, where he led students for more than twenty years. Lange subsequently published at least fifteen additional books, mostly adventure stories for boys, including *On the Trail of the Sioux*,

*Lost in the Fur Country*, and *Lure of the Black Hills*. He also gladly took on the responsibility of the city public schools nature study supervisor. Lange died in 1940 at seventy-seven.<sup>37</sup>

In a tribute, a student described Lange’s last appearance at the school:

He walked up the steps [to the stage] last year, a straight, white-haired man. A hush of surprise filled the great assembly hall—and then a huge, suddenly excited roar burst from a thousand throats—a roar that rolled on and on re-echoing the welcome through the hall. He raised his hand. Like magic the crowd was silenced. He stood there, tall and stately, his strong voice disdaining the microphone and in direct, simple terms, told them of his happiness to be back.<sup>38</sup>

What would Lange’s students from 1897 have remembered of their long-ago club sponsor? He was just twenty-four when he instructed them. Now, in 1940, these former pupils were, themselves, sixty years old. Although there is scattered information on the lives of the seven CHS birders, there is no evidence that any were exceptionally influenced by their time spent as



Lange in his later years, in the wilderness, where he was most happy. Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.

members of Lange's Ornithological Society to continue to pursue birding or the study of birds. Herman Shrader, however, did study botany and became a doctor.

So, was the club just something to keep the students occupied and out of trouble? Did it serve a purpose? It did. Together, these young people identified nearly seventy birds—well before the creation of focused birding clubs or organizations.<sup>39</sup> What's more, they created a specific, informed, firsthand record of what they saw, almost like a time capsule. Their kind teacher took them under his wing, so to speak, and taught them to be good stewards of the land and the birds that lived there. Hopefully, they, in turn, shared what they learned with family, friends, and their own children through the years. And then, perhaps the cycle continued. *That* is something that deserves to be remembered and celebrated.

### Afterword: "The birds, God's poor, who cannot wait"<sup>40</sup>

When I came across the *Central High School World* bird observation, I was astounded. So many birds! If I were lucky, I might have named a dozen. My second thought—I wonder how many of these birds are around today? I don't see cedar waxwings, scarlet tanagers, or rose-breasted grosbeaks as often as I did when a child.

One spring, I did see hundreds of bluebirds resting on trees and shrubs around Como Lake. After a few days, they were gone, presumably continuing their northern migration. I can report that while working on the railroad, we encountered multitudes of red-winged blackbirds as we passed through swamps and wetlands. Red-tailed hawks also were abundant. They flew just ahead of the engine, stopping to perch on each successive pole looking for small animals disturbed by the train's vibration.

Today, 313 bird species are seen somewhere in the state each year. The total number of common species is 268; then there are another forty-five that are "rare regulars." And while the despicable fashion trend of hats decorated with exotic bird feathers caused great consternation for Lange (and many other naturalists and conservationists) at the turn of the twentieth century, thankfully, such a fad has gone mostly by the wayside, as has rampant egg collecting, and rascally boys shooting songbirds with slingshots.<sup>41</sup>

Still, there are threats: migrating birds unwittingly sucked into plane engines or crashing into the mirrored windows of high-rise buildings. And, there's always the threat of bird flu or other diseases. The biggest challenge is loss of habitat due to development, climate change, and other factors. According to the Audubon Society Great Lakes, "Two-thirds of America's birds are threatened with extinction from climate change."<sup>42</sup> In Ramsey County, some birds are uncommon or rare because their habitat no longer exists here. Of the sixty-nine birds listed in the 1897 observation, only the Louisiana waterthrush is labeled of "special concern" in Minnesota, and the loggerhead shrike is listed as "endangered."

Today, more and more schools and organizations are paying attention to climate change and teaching the importance of conservation.

To see a comparison of 1897 bird observations to those today, and for more information on birding organizations and birdwatching sites, go to <https://rchs.com/publishing/catalog/ramsey-county-history-winter-2023-arrival-of-the-birds/>.

Glancing at Central High School history, ornithological societies or simple bird clubs have come, gone, and come again based on changing student interests, as have other environmental-based or science-based groups. Beginning in 2012, students, staff, and community members joined with the Capitol Region Watershed District to begin a yearslong project, “Transforming Central.” This effort was meant to “reshape the urban landscape of St. Paul Central High School in order to improve the students’ daily experience, address the environmental impacts of campus, and connect with the vibrant community that embraces the school.” In 2023, one of the current thirty-six clubs at the school is a local chapter of conservationist Jane Goodall’s philanthropic program Roots & Shoots.<sup>43</sup> This is good news, indeed.

And now a call to action to you, our readers. Many of you enjoy nature or are already avid birders. You take advantage of the scores of city, county, and regional parks and nature centers and take great pleasure in watching the beautiful birds and animals. If you aren’t one of those people yet but are interested, there are many ways to begin, including joining the Minnesota Ornithologists’ Union, a statewide organization devoted exclusively to birds and their conservation. Other groups include St. Paul Audubon Society, the Minnesota Audubon Society, and other environmental organizations.

As spring approaches, now is a great time to grab your binoculars and a trusty bird identification book, research bird calls online, and enjoy learning from these magnificent creatures. If that doesn’t inspire you, here’s one last thought from Dietrich Lange:

TWICE every year a wave of living birds, almost inconceivably grand in the number of birds involved, surges over North America. . . . And almost as ceaseless as the ever-rising, ever-falling swell of the ocean tides is this miraculous tide of beating wings and pulsating little hearts. . . . The number of birds that make up this mighty wave almost passes comprehension. . . .

Science will soon lift the veil from many of the mysteries of the great bird-tides, but as one mystery disappears, another and a greater one will appear; and as our knowledge grows, our wonder will grow still more.<sup>44</sup>

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## NOTES

1. D. Lange, *Our Native Birds: How to Protect Them and Attract Them to Our Homes* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1899), 107-108. In Section VI, the author presents a play—*The Birds Before Uncle Sam*—which helps elementary students learn about bird conservation. Lange suggests costume design and includes dialogue for the children, who take on the roles of mockingbird, snowy heron, and rose-breasted grosbeak, among others.

2. Minnesota Ornithologists’ Union, correspondence with editor, January 13, 2023. In Minnesota, horned larks return in mid-February. The last of the shorebirds arrive in June.

3. Jene T. Sigvertsen, “From the Past to the Present: An Inventory of Saint Paul Public School Facilities,” report, accessed December 21, 2022, <http://www.spps.org/sites/dd7441e-b117-423c-90a1-6fcbdcc68b6f/uploads/SPPSF.pdf>. Saint Paul High School was founded in 1866 in two rooms at the Franklin School at Tenth and Broadway. Then, the school moved to the Lindeke Building at

Seventh and Jackson. By 1883, a stand-alone high school was built at Tenth and Minnesota Streets and, five years later, renamed Central High School. It is at this school that this history takes place; “Biographical Notes,” Dietrich Lange papers, Minnesota Historical Society (hereafter, MNHS); “Arrival of the Birds as Observed by the Saint Paul High School Ornithological Society,” *High School World* (St. Paul: Central High School, 1897), 15.

4. Interestingly, both books are still in print.

5. Lange, 96-97.

6. Dietrich Lange, “Mankato Normal School, 1883-1886,” Dietrich Lange papers, MNHS, 1; John W. Larson, “He Was Mechanic Arts: Mechanic Arts High School—The Dietrich Lange Years (1916-1939),” *Ramsey County History* 41, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 4; “New Principal for West Side,” *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, August 11, 1906.

7. Larson, 12; “Thoreau’s Journey along the Minnesota River,” *Notes from Scott County History* (blog), Scott County History at the Stans Museum, May 22,

2019. While in Minnesota, Thoreau, botanist Horace Mann Jr., and geologist Charles Anderson observed “catbird, goldfinch, oriole, tanager, horned lark, flicker and killdeer.” Thoreau wrote of his disdain of St. Paul but admired the nature around Lake Harriet.
8. Minnesota Ornithologists’ Union; Tim Birkhead, “How Bird Collecting Evolved into Bird Watching,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, August 8, 2022.
9. Frank M. Chapman, *Bird-Life, A Guide to the Study of Our Common Birds—Teacher’s Edition* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1899).
10. Chapman, 71.
11. “Hikers’ Club Will Walk to Shakopee: Boys Expected to Make the Trip in Eight to Nine Hours,” *St. Paul Globe*, February 11, 1904, 2. Lange also formed a hiking club. It could be assumed that nature studies, including birding, were conducted along the way.
12. Max G. Winkel, “A history of St. Paul, its streets, buildings, parks, etc.,” prepared for the Junior Pioneer Association, St. Paul, in MNHS Collection, F613.S3 W77.
13. “Bicycle Path Repairs,” *St. Paul Globe*, March 13, 1898, 9; “The Bicycle Ordinance Is in Force Today,” *St. Paul Dispatch*, May 12, 1897, 1.
14. Larson, 12; Roger Bergerson, “A Sketch Pad Brought Them Together,” *St. Anthony Park Bugle*, June 22, 2015, 3; Pamela E. Mack, “The Automobile before 1915,” Clemson University, accessed December 22, 2022, <http://pammack.sites.clemson.edu/lec122/auto.htm>.
15. Larson, 12.
16. Uncle Oldman, “Gossip with the Children,” *Manchester Weekly Times and Examiner*, January 5, 1889, 6.
17. “Arrival of the Birds,” 15; Robin Pfeiffer, “Explore the Minnesota River Bottoms,” The Outbound Collective, accessed December 22, 2022, <https://www.theoutbound.com/minnesota/hiking/explore-the-minnesota-river-bottoms>.
18. Various birding organizations; “Arrival of the Birds,” 15.
19. Central High School Senior Annual (St. Paul: Central High School, 1897) in St. Paul Public Library’s St. Paul Collection; “Joseph Barrett,” *St. Paul City Directory* (St. Paul: R. L. Polk & Co., 1897), 281. *Thirteenth Census of the United States—1910*, Minnesota, Ramsey, St. Paul, enumeration district 56, sheet 8B; “Programmes for the Graduating Exercises of St. Paul Schools—Central High School,” *St. Paul Globe*, June 31, 1897, 17; “Music at Como and Wildwood by Minnesota State Band and Wolff and Barrett’s Orchestra,” *St. Paul Globe*, July 14, 1901, 24; James Taylor Dunn, “A Century of Song: Popular Music in Minnesota,” *Minnesota History* 44, no. 4 (Winter, 1974): 133-134; “Marriage Licenses,” *The Inter Ocean*, April 26, 1906, 10; “Barrett,” *Minneapolis Star*, June 17, 1940, 9.
20. Steve Trimble, “Something Fishy Below Dayton’s Bluff,” *Saint Paul Historical*, accessed December 26, 2022, <https://saintpaulhistorical.com/items/show/5>; “State Fish Hatchery—Willow Brook Hatchery,” *St. Paul City Directory* (St. Paul: R. L. Polk & Co., 1897), 79. The fish hatchery Joseph Barrett visited could have been Willow Run Hatchery near Dayton’s Bluff.
21. Chapman, 47, 79, 148. “Cassin’s Finch, House Finch, and Purple Finch,” The Cornell Lab, accessed December 22, 2022, <https://feederwatch.org/learn/tricky-bird-ids/purple-finch-house-finch-and-cassins-finch/#:~:text=Overall%2C%20Cassin’s%20Finches%20lack%20the,fade%20into%20a%20pinkish%20rump>.
22. “Purple Finch,” The Cornell Lab, accessed December 22, 2022, [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Purple\\_Finch/overview#:~:text=The%20Purple%20Finch%20is%20the,America%20and%20the%20West%20Coast](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Purple_Finch/overview#:~:text=The%20Purple%20Finch%20is%20the,America%20and%20the%20West%20Coast). Today, the scientific name for Cassin’s finch is *Haemorhous cassinii*.
23. William A. Powers, and “Mason Case,” *Twelfth Census of the United States—1900*, Minnesota, Ramsey, St. Paul, enumeration district 131, sheet A5; Rev. Edward D. Neill, “EP Case,” *History of the Minnesota Valley: Explorers and Pioneers of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: North Star Publishing, 1882), 515; “Emma Nutting,” and “Dr. Elias Case,” Rice County, Minnesota Marriages, 1860-1895, ancestry.com; “Mason N. Case,” *St. Paul City Directory* (St. Paul: R. L. Polk & Co., 1901), 393.
24. “High School Actors,” *St. Paul Globe*, October 9, 1897, 2; “Cast of the Lady of Lyons,” *St. Paul Globe*, March 11, 1898, 8; Central High School Senior Annual (St. Paul: Central High School, 1898) in St. Paul Public Library’s St. Paul Collection; “Noted at the University,” *St. Paul Globe*, December 23, 1900, 6; “Lengthy List of Those Who Have Finished University Courses,” *The San Francisco Call*, May 27, 1902; “Marriage License,” *The Marysville Appeal*, August 5, 1913, 5; “California Bidding for 1932 Realtors Convention,” *San Pedro Daily News*, May 12, 1926; “Mason Case Funeral Today,” *San Francisco Examiner*, July 15, 1948, 11.
25. “Arrival of the Birds,” 15; Chapman, 142-143. “Chipping Sparrow,” The Cornell Lab, accessed December 22, 2022, [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Chipping\\_Sparrow/overview](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Chipping_Sparrow/overview).
26. “Central High School Graduates,” *St. Paul Globe*, June 3, 1897, 2; “Carlton, Roy C., and Ray Greenleaf,” *St. Paul City Directory* (St. Paul: R. L. Polk & Co., 1899), 617. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 16, 1950; “Death Notices,” *Newsday* (Suffolk Edition), February 1952.
27. “Arrival of the Birds,” 15.
28. “Brown-headed Cowbird,” Audubon Guide to North American Birds, accessed December 22, 2022, <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/brown-headed-cowbird>; “Brown-headed Cowbird,” The Cornell Lab, accessed December 22, 2022, [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Brown-headed\\_Cowbird/overview](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Brown-headed_Cowbird/overview); Chapman, 137.
29. “Mary Etta Manship,” numerous documents associated with McGehee/Manship Family Tree, accessed December 26, 2022, [https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/47191547/person/6992495271/facts?\\_phsrc=gkC721&\\_phstart=successSource](https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/47191547/person/6992495271/facts?_phsrc=gkC721&_phstart=successSource); *Sixteenth Census of the United States—1940*, California, Los Angeles, Manhattan Beach, enumeration district

19-300, sheet 17B. The 1940 census says Mary Manship Brown completed her fourth year of high school. The family lived on Nelson Avenue, today, considered a ghost street. Nelson ran between Marshall and Dayton Avenues up to Western Avenue. There, it ended and was renamed Marshall in the 1930s—304 Nelson Ave still exists as 304 Marshall, but there is now no street between Marshall and Dayton west of Western. These irregularities occurred because the city was sometimes platted by private owners, and they didn't always take care to see that the street in their plat lined up with the streets in the next one. Margaret Manship, "Growing Up in St. Paul: Porches and Parties Around the Piano—A Year in the Life of Mary Etta Manship," *Ramsey County History* 33, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 24-27; "Paul Manship," St. Paul Minnesota—Public Art, accessed December 26, 2022, <https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/parks-and-recreation/recreation-centers/parks-recreation-programs/public-art/indian>; John W. Larson, "The Best School in the City—1896-1916: Mechanic Arts High School—Its First Twenty Years," *Ramsey County History* 37, no. 1 (Spring 2022): 6.

30. *Paranga rubra* is the scientific classification for summer tanager. Once identified as part of the tanager family, today, it is classified with the cardinal family. The scientific name for scarlet tanager is *Paranga olivacea*; "Scarlet Tanager," Audubon Guide to North American Birds, accessed December 26, 2022, <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/scarlet-tanager>; Chapman, 37, 51, 126.

31. RCHS did not confirm a graduation date. The 1897 *City Directory* lists Frederick Mathews as a student, presumably at Central. The 1900 US Census lists him at the family home as a twenty-one-year old; "Frederick C. Matthews," The City of Detroit Michigan 1916. No other information is available. This appears to come from a city directory or who's who list.

32. "Arrival of the Birds," 15. "American Coot," The Cornell Lab, accessed December 27, 2022, <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/americancoot>.

33. "Ella Peck," Occidental Ancestors Family Tree, accessed December 27, 2022, [https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/117089133/person/112335903872/facts?\\_phsrc=gkC733&\\_phstart=successSource](https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/117089133/person/112335903872/facts?_phsrc=gkC733&_phstart=successSource); "These Are Enrolled," *St. Paul Globe*, September 11, 1898, 18; "Medals and Poetry," *St. Paul Globe*, June 2, 1898, 5; "Graduate in Midwinter," *St. Paul Globe*, January 22, 1899, 8.

34. "Arrival of the Birds," 15; Chapman, 132.

35. "Central's Class of '98," *St. Paul Globe*, May 25, 1898, 4; "Herman Shrader," Central High School Senior Annual (St. Paul: Central High School, 1889), 107; "Herman F. Schrader," University of Minnesota Yearbook (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1902), 35; Herman F. Schrader, "Observations on *Alaria Nana* sp. nov.," *Minnesota Botanical Studies* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 1901, reprinted July 3, 1903); Eric Moore, "Minnesota Seaside Station," accessed January 10, 2023, <https://www.continuum>

[umn.edu/2016/02/minnesota-seaside-station/](http://umn.edu/2016/02/minnesota-seaside-station/). This station served as a research and collecting library from 1901-1907. "Herman Friedrich Schrader," multiple documents via Durbin/Shrader Family Tree, ancestry.com.

36. "Arrival of the Birds," 15; Grrlscientist, "Mystery bird: least bittern, *Ixobrychus exilis*," *The Guardian*, accessed December 27, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/science/grrlscientist/2012/apr/20/9>; "Least Bittern," Audubon Guide to North American Birds, accessed December 27, 2022, <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/least-bittern>.

37. "Dietrich Lange," Minnesota author biographies, MNHS, accessed December 27, 2022, <https://mnhs.gitlab.io/archive/minnesota-author-biographies-collections/collections.mnhs.org/mnauthors/10001318.html>; Larson, 16-17.

38. Larson, 17.

39. "To Protect Song Birds," *St. Paul Globe*, June 3, 1897, 4. In 1897, a group of women, including, Mrs. C. P. Noyes, Mrs. J. J. Hill, and Mrs. Ordway, formed a local Audubon Society, "whose object is to protect our song birds, especially to discourage the use of plumage on hats." It is unclear how long this organization lasted or how successful its local mission. Dorothy W. Broecker, "History of the St. Paul Audubon Society," 1979. In 1945, a group of interested birders formed the St. Paul Bird Club, updating the name to St. Paul Audubon Society in 1948; "About Us," Audubon Minnesota, accessed December 28, 2022, <https://mn.audubon.org/about-us>. Audubon Minnesota formed in 1979.

40. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The Sermon of St. Francis," A Maine Historical Society website, accessed December 27, 2022, [https://www.hwlongfellow.org/poems\\_poem.php?pid=232](https://www.hwlongfellow.org/poems_poem.php?pid=232).

41. Minnesota Ornithologists' Union; Lange, *Our Native Birds*, 12, 81-89.

42. "New Audubon Science: Two-Thirds of North American Birds at Risk of Extinction Due to Climate Change," Audubon Great Lakes accessed December 28, 2022, <https://gl.audubon.org/news/new-audubon-science-two-thirds-north-american-birds-risk-extinction-due-climate-change>; "Minnesota's List of Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern Species," Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, effective August 19, 2013, accessed January 25, 2023, [https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/natural\\_resources/ets/endlist.pdf](https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/natural_resources/ets/endlist.pdf).

43. For more information, go to <https://freshwater.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Central-High-School-Water-Summit-2019.pdf>; "Roots & Shoots," Central Senior High School Clubs and Organizations 2022-2023, accessed December 27, 2022, <https://www.spps.org/domain/1731>; "For Youth," Roots & Shoots United States, accessed December 27, 2022, <https://rootsandshoots.org/for-youth/>.

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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 Ĥeyáta Othújwe (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](http://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.

### **Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, & Inclusion**

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](http://www.rchs.com/about).

### **Acknowledging This Sacred Dakota Land**

Mnisóta Makhóche, 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 Makhóche. 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](http://www.rchs.com). This includes actionable ways in which RCHS pledges to honor the Dakota and other Indigenous peoples of Mnisóta Makhóche.



[www.rchs.com](http://www.rchs.com)

[info@rchs.com](mailto:info@rchs.com)



(651) 222-0701



## Gibbs Farm 2023 Summer Camps

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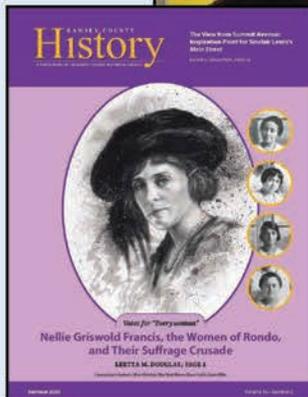
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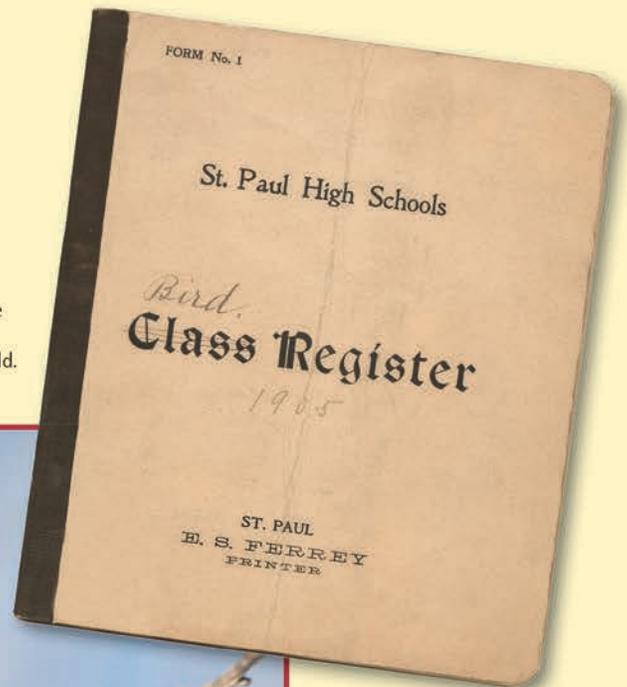
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*Arrival of the Birds*

**The (Almost) Incredible  
1897 Central High School  
Bird Observation**

DAVE RIEHLE, PAGE 21

Members of the 1897 Central High School Ornithological Society may have converted class registers to document the birds they observed while in the field.  
*Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*



Ornithological Society member Joseph Barrett identified a purple finch similar to this one on April 10, 1897, on Irvine Street in St. Paul. Over 126 years later, this bird is fairly uncommon in Minnesota, preferring to spend summers straddling and north of the US/Canada border.  
*Courtesy of Andrew Cannizarro, Wikimedia Commons.*