RAMSEY COUNTY
History
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Communist Clarence Hathaway and His Powerful Impact on Minnesota Politics

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GROWING UP ON THE

Empire Builder

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Fall 2024

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By the Numbers . . .

A few years ago, one of our RCHS editorial board members wrote a delightful story for *Trains* magazine about a 1965 trek on the Great Northern Railway's famous *Empire Builder*. The short but poignant memoir is reprinted with permission in this issue of *Ramsey County History*. Below are a few facts to pique your interest in author John W. Diers' first-person adventure, which includes an unexpected twist at the end. See page 1.

The day the Great Northern Railway inaugurated its Chicago to Seattle/Portland train—named the *Empire Builder* for the St. Paul railroad executive James J. Hill, who died in 1916.

June 11, 1929

The year air conditioning was added to the *Empire Builder*.

1935

The year Great Northern introduced its redesigned mid-century *Empire Builder*, complete with Mountain-series observation cars and famous ranch-style lounge cars.

1951

The year Great Northern assigned the *Empire Builder* train numbers 31 and 32. Article author John Diers rode the 31 train.

1956

The day Burlington Northern took over operation of the *Empire Builder* upon merging with Great Northern, Northern Pacific, and Spokane, Portland & Seattle Railway.

March 2, 1970

The day the *Empire Builder*, now operated by Amtrak, will celebrate its centennial:

June 11, 2029

Source: Dr. John F. Strauss Jr., "*Empire Builder* Timeline," Great Northern Railway Historical Society (GNRHS) website, https://gnrhs.org/empire_builder.php. Special thanks to the GNRHS's Stuart Holmquist and Robert Kelly for their assistance with this article.

ON THE COVER

We are grateful to have acquired a beautiful digital image of the *Empire Builder* that was painted by artist R. E. Pierce. *Original image, "A Flurry of Orange and Green," © 1992, printed as a holiday card by Leanin' Tree, Inc., Boulder, Colorado. Used with permission by R. E. Pierce. Pierce is a US Marine veteran who served in Vietnam. His career as a painter of western art spans fifty years.*

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Message from the Editorial Board

A distant train whistle can make me nostalgic for a time I never knew: the golden age of train travel. This era might be long past for most of us but not for John W. Diers. As a young man of twenty-one, he rode the Great Northern Railway's *Empire Builder* from St. Paul to Seattle, knowing the heyday of exquisite passenger trains was fading into history. He writes about his adventure in our cover story, bringing his indelible experience to life with photos and vivid memories.

Diers was no doubt assisted in his train travels by a cadre of African American workers, including proud Pullman porters and dining car waiters. The North Central Voters League (NCVL), originally founded to register Black people to vote, quickly became a strong voice for that community, many of whom worked in the railroad industry. From those early beginnings, author Adam Bledsoe tells us how the NCVL grew into an organization that worked tirelessly to ease racial tensions and create more and better job opportunities for African American citizens.

Political parties offer different visions and solutions to addressing economic disparities. Ever wonder where the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party came from? Jim McCartney gives us a lively tutorial on the life and times of Minnesota Communist leader Clarence Hathaway and the people who—through turmoil and dealmaking—gave rise to what we know today as the DFL Party.

With so much history at our fingertips, sometimes it's difficult to pick just three stories to present to you. We hope you enjoy the variety of history snapshots we selected for this issue of *Ramsey County History*.

Anne Field
Chair, Editorial Board

Publication of Ramsey County History *is supported, in part, by a gift from Clara M. Claussen and Frieda H. Claussen in memory of Henry H. Cowie Jr., and by a contribution from the late Reuel D. Harmon.*

Growing Up on the *Empire Builder*

JOHN W. DIERS

John Diers' article is reprinted with permission from the publishers of TRAINS *magazine, with minimal style adaptations. The original first-person story titled, "A night on the Builder," ran in their August 2021 issue. Images have been added.*

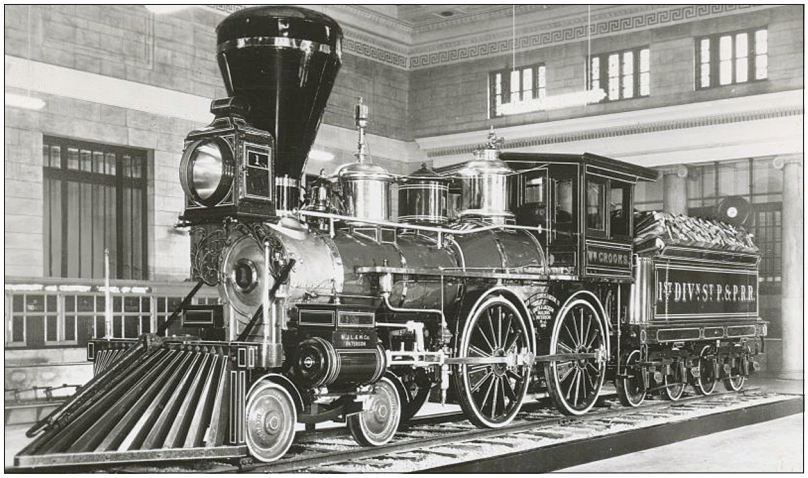
Snowflakes dusted the driveway in front of St. Paul Union Depot as my father's car rolled to a stop at the foot of the broad stairway leading to the entrance. He opened the trunk, and I grabbed a small suitcase and a camera bag. We exchanged farewells, and I turned to march up the stairs. Reaching the top, I tugged at a well-worn door handle and stepped through an overheated vestibule into the lobby. I took a deep breath. Like all railroad depots, it smelled busy. That, along with the faint echo of hundreds of heels on the terrazzo floors, the steady murmur of voices in the great hall, and the train announcements, confirmed the comings and goings of people and commerce. I walked past the Traveler's Aid Desk, glancing briefly at Minnesota's first locomotive, the 4-4-0 *William Crooks*, on display in the lobby, scanned the ticket counter where two clerks were coping with a line of Christmas travelers, then headed for the corridor to the concourse. My destination was track 17 and Great Northern train 31, the *Empire Builder*.[1]

I had just turned twenty-one years old. I was a senior at the University of Minnesota, and this was a birthday present to myself. For the past five years, I had made a point of riding as many trains as I could, knowing they would soon be gone and the experience lost forever. I had saved some money for this trip and, with a little help from my parents, purchased a first-class ticket and a bedroom on the *Builder* to Seattle with a return via Portland on the Northern Pacific's *North Coast Limited.*

The *Builder* had just arrived from Chicago, completing its 427-mile run in just under seven hours. Declining business had forced the Burlington to combine the *Builder* with the *North Coast Limited* between Chicago and St. Paul, resulting in a huge train that stretched the full distance of the longest platform at St. Paul Union Depot. It was left to terminal forces to make two trains out of this behemoth, adding additional coaches and sleepers to both trains to accommodate passengers boarding in the Twin Cities. The rumbling noises beneath the concourse served notice that this transformation was well underway.

This foldable, color brochure produced in St. Paul by the Great Northern Railway in the mid-1960s touts its formal dining car and less-expensive ranch car option, along with domed seating areas for breathtaking views of the passing countryside and a variety of sleeping compartments from which to choose—depending on budget. *In 1966* Empire Builder *brochure, courtesy of Ramsey County Historical Society.*

John Diers began his adventure aboard the *Empire Builder* in the parking lot of the St. Paul Union Depot, across from the Minnesota Knitting Mills on Fourth Street.



The *William Crooks* (built 1861), the first locomotive in Minnesota (St. Paul & Pacific Railroad), served as a passenger train from 1862 to 1897. James J. Hill with the Great Northern Railway had it restored in 1898 and used it for his personal train. It was featured at special events around the country over the next fifty years and eventually placed on exhibition in the St. Paul Union Depot in 1954. Today, it resides at the Lake Superior Railroad Museum in Duluth. *Both images courtesy of Ramsey County Historical Society.*

There were other arrivals and departures that night. One of them, the *Gopher*, Great Northern's afternoon connecting train from Duluth, had just slipped beneath the concourse, engine bell ringing and train brakes squealing as it came to a halt. There was a bang from a parting air line, as a carman cut the power from the head end, followed by a rumbling as its E7 pulled ahead and stopped, awaiting switchmen to line the route back to the roundhouse. Meanwhile, passengers began filing up the escalator, some of them destined for the *Empire Builder*.

Promptly at 8:15, an announcement echoed through the concourse:

> Your attention please. Great Northern train No. 31, the *Empire Builder* for Minneapolis, Willmar, Breckenridge, Moorhead, Fargo, New Rockford, Minot, Williston, Wolf Point, Glasgow, Havre, Chester, Shelby, Cut Bank, Whitefish, Troy, Spokane, Ephrata, Wenatchee, Everett, and Seattle now boarding on track 17.

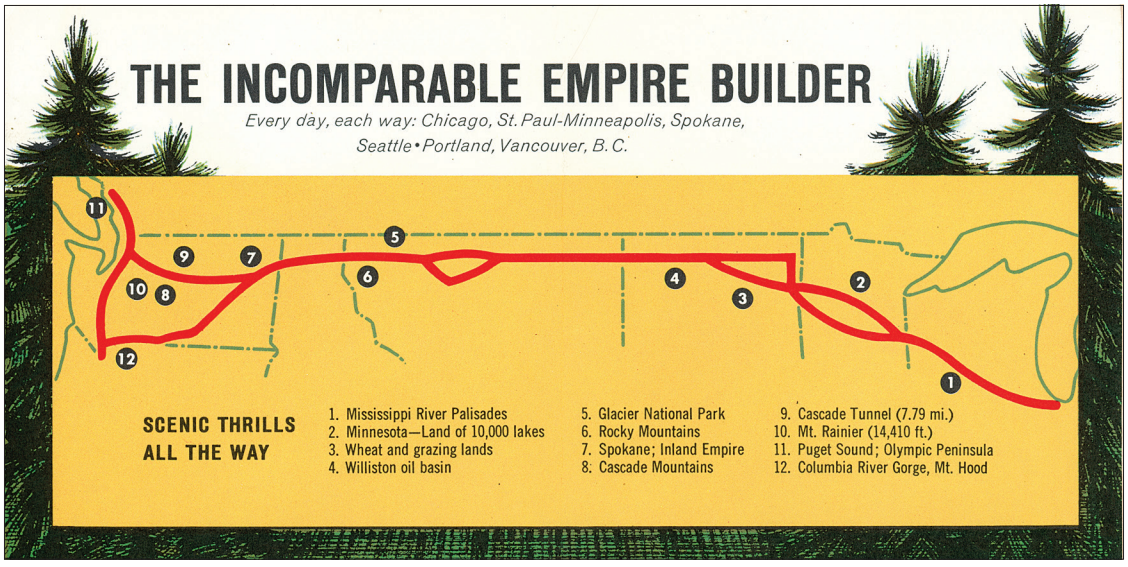
A bird's-eye view of the St. Paul Union Depot train platforms in the 1950s. Dayton's Bluff can be seen in the background. *Courtesy of Ramsey County Historical Society.*

I grabbed my suitcase and camera and filed through the door to the escalator and the tracks below into a world of cold drafts, swirling steam, and strange hissing sounds and groans, punctuated by the occasional shouting of a switchman or car knocker. The coach passengers headed toward the head end, where, in the distance, the Railway Post Office crew was busy transferring a pile of mail sacks from a baggage cart. My bedroom space was in car 316 near the rear of the train. A trainman directed me to the left as I alighted from the escalator. Looking up, I couldn't believe what I saw, for on the tail end was *Cathedral Mountain*, one of Great Northern's Mountain-series observation cars. These cars were bumped off the *Builder* in the mid-1950s and reassigned to the *Western Star* when the *Builder* acquired its full-length Great Domes. I asked the trainman about it, babbling something about this being the best car on the railroad and how I'd ridden a sister car, *Appekuny Mountain*, on the *Western Star* some years before. He replied that the regularly assigned dome was bad ordered[2] in Chicago, and the protection car was in Seattle, forcing the last-minute substitution. He was an old hand

and looked a little puzzled at my excitement. I'm sure he thought, "Railfans."

I walked about a hundred feet to the open vestibule of my car—numbered 1383—the six-roomette, five-double-bedroom, two-compartment sleeper *Inuya Pass*. A smiling white-jacketed Pullman porter greeted me and inquired about my space. He then took my suitcase, and I stepped aboard, turned left, and walked down the hushed corridor to bedroom D. I was a little nervous and double-checked the ticket, then hung up my coat and headed toward *Cathedral Mountain*, which was just behind my sleeper. Opening the door, I felt a rush of

Travelers in warm coats gather in the St. Paul Union Depot concourse while waiting for their train. *Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*



Rather than a map with stops listed along the way, this promotional visual highlights the magnificent views riders might witness while traveling on the *Empire Builder* between Chicago and Vancouver, British Columbia. *In 1966,* Empire Builder *brochure, courtesy of Ramsey County Historical Society.*

cold air as I stepped through the vestibule and pushed the handle on the door. Stepping inside, I walked along a short corridor past a roomette and a serving buffet. The corridor opened into a lounge with a writing desk and several tables and chairs. At the rear, separated from the lounge area by a pair of glass panels, was the observation room. It was my destination, and I quickly settled into the rearward-facing settee.

Five minutes later, I heard a series of slams, as the doors closed, followed by a slight tug. We were underway. It was difficult to see outside because of the glare from the interior lights, but I could still make out the platform lights and the red-and-green switch lamps as we snaked our way through the turnouts, past the Third Street interlocking and began the climb toward Westminster Tower, past the Mississippi Street coach yards, and the Jackson and Dale Street Shops. We must have been doing the 79-mph limit by the time we slipped beneath the Snelling Avenue overpass and began the long downgrade run past the Minnesota Transfer, Union Yard, and the University of Minnesota, slowing only as we swung slightly to the left onto the Stone Arch Bridge into Minneapolis. A minute later, we were stopped beneath Hennepin Avenue at the Great Northern station.

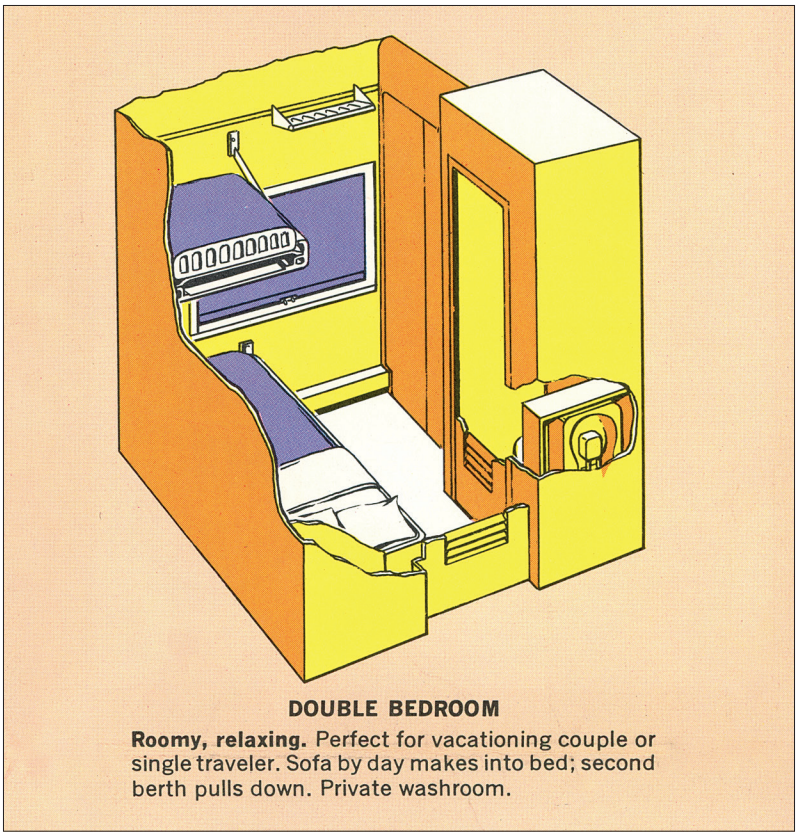
Minneapolis was a five-minute stop. I left my seat in *Cathedral Mountain* and walked to *Inuya Pass*. Reaching an open door, I stepped down to the platform to watch passengers stream aboard the coaches. The porter remarked that the sleepers were only half full, but the coaches were jammed—mainly with passengers bound for Fargo and Minot. He was a forty-year veteran and about to retire and expressed how sad he was to see the sleeping-car business go away. "Everyone's in a hurry," he said, shrugging his shoulders, just as the conductor called out "board!" and highballed the head end.

I decided to check out the diner. It was usually closed by this hour, but the porter said it was serving late because of a ski group [headed to] Whitefish, Montana, that had just boarded in Minneapolis. The ranch lounge car would remain open until well past midnight, but it catered to the coach crowd, and they tended to be a boozy bunch. As we left Minneapolis, I walked forward through the next two sleepers and stepped into the diner—a wonderful world of white tablecloths, china, heavy flatware, and waiters standing at attention. There [were] perhaps a half-dozen people scattered at separate tables. The steward stood at the opposite end of the car, near the entrance to the pantry and kitchen. Menu in hand, he motioned to me and walked down the aisle to an empty table. As I approached, he pulled back a chair next to the window.

"Good evening, sir. It's a cold night tonight, but we have some wonderful things on the menu. Let me know if there are any questions. Enjoy your dinner." With that, he placed a menu in my hand, withdrew a check and a pencil from his pocket, initialed it, and, in one sweeping motion born of long experience, placed both next to my right hand. Seconds later, a waiter arrived with a pitcher of ice water and deftly filled my glass without spilling a drop—despite the rocking and lurching of the car.

"Cocktail before dinner, sir?" he inquired. I paused a moment, realizing I'd just turned twenty-one, and that this should be something of an occasion. I remembered the great dining car scene in the movie *North by Northwest*. I pictured myself as Cary Grant across the table

John Diers slept in a double bedroom while traveling on the *Empire Builder*, though he spent most of his time watching the passing scenery from the *Cathedral Mountain* observation car. *In 1966,* Empire Builder *brochure, courtesy of Ramsey County Historical Society.*



DOUBLE BEDROOM

Roomy, relaxing. Perfect for vacationing couple or single traveler. Sofa by day makes into bed; second berth pulls down. Private washroom.

from Eva Marie Saint and replied, "Yes, a Gibson, please."

The waiter left my table and walked to the steward, who returned carrying a serving tray and two glasses, one with shaved ice. Opening the cocktail bottle, he first poured it over the ice, then, placing a strainer over the glass, he poured the drink into the cocktail glass, adding a pearl onion.

I drank a silent toast to myself, appreciative of my good fortune at being aboard this grand conveyance—then stared out the window as the lights of Wayzata flashed by. There was a bump as we swung through a turnout and a dinging of crossing bells as we approached the Ferndale grade crossing, where a [queue] of automobiles awaited. It took mere seconds, but we slammed through the crossing, leaving the waiting autos in a swirl of snow. We were accelerating 60, 70, and now 79 mph. We blasted through Long Lake, whistle blaring. More snow and the distant lights of a farmhouse flashed by as we raced [past] automobiles on parallel Highway 12.

The waiter returned and inquired if I wanted to order. I said yes and began looking over the menu. On the cover was an image of Glacier Park and the *Empire Builder* traversing Marias Pass. I opened the cover and came to the difficult matter of selection. Closing the menu, I picked up the check and wrote: prime rib, rare; baked potato; blue cheese dressing on my salad. Time passed. I was in no hurry and sipped my drink for a considerable time, perhaps expecting Eva Marie.

Then she appeared. The steward seated a blond young woman at my table. She was attractive and laughed when I remarked about Cary Grant and *North by Northwest*. We talked. Turned out she was getting off at Breckenridge and would be met by family from a nearby town. She was going to stay at her grandmother's place. We spent the next twenty minutes or so in pleasant conversation. I didn't want to admit that I was riding the train just for the experience. It seemed so nerdy.

After a time, the waiter returned and inquired if he should place my order. I agreed and asked for a cup of coffee. As I was taking a sip, the train slowed, and a cluster of streetlights passed by. I couldn't make out the station sign but presumed that it was Litchfield. The diner halted before the bay window of the agent's office. Inside, a man was busy conversing on the dispatcher's phone. It was quiet in the diner, except for the whirring of the ventilation fans and our conversation across the table.

In a scene similar to what John Diers may have experienced, guests gather in the *Empire Builder*'s elegant dining car in 1952. *Photography by Hedrick-Blessing PR, courtesy of Great Northern Railway Historical Society.*

I was just finishing my salad when the waiter emerged from the pantry balancing a tray on his shoulder. Arriving at the table, he whisked a plate with my dinner off the tray along with a platter of hot dinner rolls. As the train lurched forward and began to move, I asked him why we had stopped, since Litchfield wasn't a scheduled stop for the *Builder*. He admitted not knowing, and I turned to the window again, as we moved parallel to the town's main street—Christmas lights hung across it.

A few seconds later, we passed a line of boxcars next to the town's elevator, then came another stop, this one abrupt. Was it an emergency of some sort? A grim-faced conductor and a trainman walked through the car. I heard a vestibule open in the adjoining sleeper and looked

Marcia and John Diers at their home in Prior Lake, Minnesota. *Courtesy of John W. Diers.*

out my window to see them trudging forward through the snow toward the head end. Five minutes passed before I heard two blasts of the whistle, and we started to move. As the diner crept by, I spotted the conductor and the trainman standing in knee-deep snow ready to swing aboard. There was a bang as the trap closed and another as the vestibule door slammed shut. The conductor walked through the diner, his overcoat covered in heavy wet snow. "Broken rail," he muttered to the steward. I saw bright lights then the shadows of a section crew as we eased slowly over the broken rail they'd just repaired.

By this time, I had finished dinner. It was absolutely delicious. My waiter returned and looked at the check. Noting I had forgotten to specify a choice for dessert, he inquired, "We have French apple or pumpkin pie, ice cream or sherbet." "Pumpkin," I replied. It was wonderful, served with a generous dab of whipped cream. Pushing back the plate, I poured another cup of coffee. My waiter asked, "How was everything?" "Great," I replied. The steward appeared, totaled my check, and placed it on a silver tray. I paid, and he returned my change. I took care to leave a generous tip. By this time, my dining companion had finished, and, as she got up, I wished her a pleasant trip and a merry Christmas. As I departed the diner and headed back to *Cathedral Mountain*, I recoiled at how stupid I was for not finding out more about her. Later, I spotted her on the platform at Breckenridge and waved at her as we pulled away.

Years went by, and the *Empire Builder* soldiered on—first under Burlington Northern and then Amtrak—but it was a completely different train. I had revisited a few times but was not impressed. Gone were the Mountain-series observation cars and the elegant diner. Amtrak was trying hard, but microwave food and plastic dinnerware didn't cut it. By then, I had largely given up on passenger trains, thinking it better to remember them as they were rather than accept what they had become. Except for commuter runs and business trips on the Northeast Corridor, I never returned.

One day, I stopped by a friend's house on an errand, and, as I walked into his living room, a woman got up from a chair. We were introduced. She was the latch-key coordinator at a neighboring school. My friend served with her on the parent committee. The introduction turned out to be a formality because we had already met over dinner on the *Builder* on a cold winter night some twelve years before. I think we both pretended not to know each other, but it was a brief reunion. [Marcia Roisum] and I married six months later and have been together for forty-seven years.

***John W. Diers** is a retired manager-administrator in the public transit industry. He is a member of the Ramsey County Historical Society Editorial Board and has written numerous articles for* Ramsey County History *magazine. He is the author of two books:* Twin Cities by Trolley *and* St. Paul Union Depot.

NOTES

1. "The William Crooks," Friends of BNSF, blog, June 19, 2014, https://www.friendsofbnsf.com/node. Ownership of the William Crooks transferred from Great Northern Railroad to the Minnesota Historical Society in 1962. The engine remained at the St. Paul Union Depot until 1975, when it was moved to the Lake Superior Railroad Museum in Duluth, where it remains today.

2. "Railroad Terms: Bad Order," Union Pacific website, https://www.up.com/aboutup/reference/glossary/railroad_terms/index.htm#:~:text=Bad%20order%20in%20a%20train,repairs%20by%20mechanical%20road%20truck.&text=Sufficient%20crews%20are%20available%2C%20but,may%20cause%20delays%20to%20calls. A train car that has been "bad ordered" has a mechanical defect and cannot leave the railyard until it has been repaired.

Communist Clarence Hathaway and His Powerful Impact on Minnesota Politics

JIM McCARTNEY

Communist Clarence Hathaway liked what he saw as he looked over the crowd that packed the St. Paul Auditorium at the 1937 Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party Convention. Among the 300+ delegates, he estimated that eighty to eighty-five were Communists. Hathaway and Minnesota Communists enjoyed what few radical ideologies ever before attained: an intimate relationship with a major political party and the executive branch that controlled it. The key was the connections Hathaway had forged with the administrations of Gov. Floyd B. Olson (1931-1936) and Gov. Elmer Benson (1937-1939), including personal relationships with those two leaders.[1]

The communist influence also came from its participation in the Farmer-Labor Association clubs that made up the party's grassroots. And Communists were present in Minnesota's unions, as well. In fact, the Communists played a substantial role in the party until they were ultimately expelled from the new four-year-old Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party in 1948 as hysteria about perceived communist threats against the United States began to intensify.[2]

Few Communists played a bigger part in influencing Minnesota politics and government than Hathaway, who at the height of the US Communist Party's power and popularity in the 1930s, was considered one of its "Big Three" leaders, alongside Earl Browder and William Z. Foster.[3]

A Life of Personal and Professional Turmoil

Clarence A. Hathaway was born January 9, 1894, in Oakdale Township, just east of St. Paul and attended high school in Hastings. He became a tool and die maker and joined the International

The Communist Party played an influential role in Farmer-Labor Party politics in the 1930s and early '40s, thanks, in part, to relationships that Minnesota-born Clarence Hathaway (*left*), developed with Gov. Floyd B. Olson (*middle*) and Gov. Elmer Benson (*right*). *Hathaway image in Minneapolis Newspaper Photograph Collection, courtesy of Hennepin County Library; Olson/Benson images courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society and the Minnesota State Capitol Collection.*

William Z. Foster (1881-1961) (*left*) was an American labor organizer and Communist politician who made his fame leading the steel strike of 1919. He was the US Communist Party candidate for president in 1924, 1928, and 1932. He received a state funeral in the Soviet Union when he died in 1961. American Earl Browder (1891-1973) (*right*) was a Socialist turned Communist and a one-time leader of the US Communist Party who ran twice for the presidency. *Foster image courtesy of Library of Congress; Browder image in* New York Daily News, *October 26, 1939.*

Association of Machinists (IAM) in 1913 at the age of nineteen. Lean, blonde, and athletic, Hathaway looked like an "All-American boy"—some say he even played semiprofessional baseball.[4]

Despite his lack of postsecondary education, Hathaway would become a powerful speaker, writer and editor, and an influential political activist and labor organizer. This was at a time when Minnesota workers and farmers assembled and organized to confront the power of railroads, banks, and corporations, challenging them directly but also wielding significant power over local and state governments. As a worker who grew up in a rural area, Hathaway understood the concerns of farmers and workers, and he became a powerful advocate and speaker for them.[5]

Orville Olson, a Socialist who worked in Gov. Benson's state highway department, said Hathaway was one of the greatest speakers he had ever heard, noting a time he saw the leader address a crowd in New York City:

> . . . I'll never forget it. . . . the place was packed, he'd talk in a whisper and people could hear him all over. . . . He had that capacity for bringing points home.[6]

Hathaway also had a personality that one historian described as "gay, warm, and slightly unstable."[7] His penchant for liquor, women, and errant behavior would lead to both personal and professional turmoil throughout his life.

Three Fingers: "The Sign of His Trade"

Despite his accomplishments in other areas, Hathaway was especially proud to be a machinist. Testifying in court years after he left the factories, Hathaway held up his right hand, showing the stumps of his index and middle fingers. "That is the sign of my trade," he said.[8]

While a machinist, Hathaway quickly rose in the ranks of the Minnesota labor and political movement. In 1922, he was elected IAM's business agent for the Minnesota district and parts of Wisconsin, representing member interests and speaking on their behalf to management and the public while also handling negotiations and grievances. The following year, he became a vice president of the Minnesota State Federation of Labor, an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), which represented skilled workers.[9]

He got involved in local politics, too. In the early 1920s, he became secretary of the Working People's Nonpartisan Political League (WPNPL), which had been established, in part, by William Mahoney, a St. Paul union organizer who would one day become the city's mayor. The WPNPL was the urban equivalent of the Nonpartisan League, which had been formed earlier in the 1910s by Minnesota farmers frustrated by price-gouging middlemen at grain elevators, railroads, stockyards, and banks. Hathaway worked with Mahoney to merge the two groups into the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Federation, personally introducing the merger proposal at a joint convention in St. Cloud.[10]

The quick rise and stunning success of the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party—representing both farmer and worker organizations—prompted Hathaway to help Mahoney try to establish a *national* Farmer-Labor Party with Progressive lion Robert La Follette at the head of its ticket. The two Minnesotans organized a national convention in St. Paul in 1924.[11]

At the time, it was not well-known that Hathaway was a Communist. In 1915, in the midst of World War I, he moved to Scotland, working in a shipyard in Glasgow, then in Dundee, and, finally, at a metal factory in Manchester, England. All

were hotbeds of labor unrest. In 1916, Hathaway returned to Minnesota a Socialist.[12]

On August 30, 1919, he traveled to Chicago as a delegate to the Socialists Emergency National Convention. But a rift between the "Regulars" and the "Left Wingers," who were energized by the Communist Revolution in Russia, led to left wingers (including Hathaway) to be refused seats at the convention. As a result, the left broke away that same weekend to organize the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA).[13]

In the early 1920s, Hathaway was head of Minnesota's Communist Party and established a communist presence in the IAM. In 1923, he joined CPUSA's National Committee.[14]

His efforts to build a national Farmer-Labor Party were made with the support and encouragement of the Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky in 1924. Hathaway served as secretary for the

Clarence Hathaway and the 1934 Riot at Madison Square Garden

JIM McCARTNEY

How did Minnesota native Clarence Hathaway find himself bruised, beaten, and dangling from a railing in front of a packed house at Madison Square Garden in New York City?

The year was 1934. The poverty and social unrest from the Great Depression had warmed many citizens in America to more leftist ideologies, including socialism and communism. But that didn't mean there was much love between Socialists and Communists. In fact, taking a cue from Moscow, American Communists declared that anyone who wasn't communist was fascist. As a result, Communists called Franklin Roosevelt a "crypto-fascist" and Gov. Floyd Olson a "socialist-fascist" and an "unscrupulous demagogue." Communists even urged Farmer-Labor Party members to "overthrow their leadership, adopt a militant, revolutionary program," and join their side, according to an interview given by Communist Earl Browder with Theodore Draper in June 1955.[a]

But the Communists' greatest ire during that time, was reserved for the Socialist Party, and that led to a dramatic confrontation with Comrade Hathaway at the center.

To help build a coalition to fight the spread of fascism, on February 15, 1934, Hathaway shared the platform with party leader Browder to speak to 8,000 people at the Bronx Coliseum. The following day, the Socialist Party hosted a rally at Madison Square Garden to speak out against the recent slaughter of 1,000 protesting Austrian workers by Austrian right-wing nationalists. Featured speakers were to include labor leader Matthew Woll and New York City Mayor Fiorello La Guardia.[b]

That morning, the *Daily Worker,* where Hathaway served as editor, put out an extra edition denouncing Woll and La Guardia as "open fascist[s]" and urged their Socialist brothers not to let them speak.[c]

Later that afternoon, Hathaway led 5,000 Communists carrying musical instruments, banners, and leaflets in a march to Madison Square Garden. The marchers booed and jeered the speakers, called Socialists "fascists," and then a fight broke out with ushers who tried to stifle and remove them.[d]

During the fracas, Hathaway snuck to the podium and announced himself. He later explained that he had hoped to quiet his fellow Communists. But, immediately, several Socialists jumped him, hit him with fists and chairs, and threw him over the platform railing. As Hathaway was carried out of the venue, Communists chanted, "We want Hathaway!" The meeting dissolved even further into chaos, with fights breaking out and chairs sailing over the balcony. The New York Police Department, asked by the Socialists to hold back, was allowed to enter the Garden to try to restore order.[e] The rally, which was broadcast on national radio, was a fiasco.

Hathaway told the media that his "scalp was lacerated" by "Social-Fascist ferocity." Many Communists believed the bruised and beaten Hathaway was a "martyr" to the cause. Hathaway gave as good as he got, according to some observers.[f]

Most blamed the melee on Communists for disrupting the meeting. Public opinion quickly turned against them. A few prominent liberals resigned in protest from communist-aligned organizations. In a postmortem of the event by the American Communist Party (CPUSA), one leader felt it was a mistake for Hathaway to go to Madison Square Garden because he was editor of the *Daily Worker,* which published articles that regularly attacked Socialists. Hathaway told the investigating committee that he had entered the arena to "oversee Communist activity" and that his "instructions were to ensure order." Ultimately, the CPUSA expressed no regret for the riot and blamed it on Socialist provocation.[g]

Years later, Browder admitted that the riot was "distinctly avoidable" and blamed Hathaway. This struck one historian as disingenuous, given that Hathaway, at the time, was one of Browder's closest colleagues and likely operating with his approval.[h]

William Mahoney (1869-1952) (*left*) launched his political career as a Socialist in the 1910s. Twenty years later, he became mayor of St. Paul as a member of the Farmer-Labor Party. Robert "Fighting Bob" La Follette (1855-1925) (*right*) was a Republican governor, US representative, and US senator from Wisconsin who championed progressive politics. In ill health when he unsuccessfully ran for the presidency in 1924, he died on June 18, 1925. *William Mahoney image courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society. Robert La Follette image courtesy of Library of Congress.*

Farmer-Labor Party's first national convention in St. Paul, which convened June 17 of that year, as mentioned above.[15]

The disclosure of communist involvement in the convention led La Follette to denounce the gathering and withdraw less than a month before it opened. Meanwhile, a power struggle following Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin's death in early '24 led to a shift in Moscow's thinking: rather than merely support a new third party, they wanted more control. While many Progressive delegates stayed home after La Follette's withdrawal, the Communists attended the Farmer-Labor convention in force. They would take it over, adopt a revolutionary platform, and substitute their own slate of candidates at the top of the ticket. Mahoney did not see this coming.[16]

And Hathaway was likely surprised by Moscow's pivot in approach to the convention, as well. He was ordered to assign Communist delegates to influence other delegates. When the treachery became too much. Hathaway fled the convention, allegedly ending up in a "speakeasy where he had drowned his troubles and eased his conscience with bootleg liquor."[17]

Later, in the *Daily Worker*, the widely-circulated newspaper of the CPUSA, Hathaway wrote that by taking over the convention, the Communists ended up with "a house of cards that crashed on our heads." The fiasco soon led to the expulsion of Communists from the Farmer-Labor group and from the local labor movement.[18] They wouldn't return to the Farmer-Labor Party for a decade—a return led by Hathaway.

Hathaway's Rise in the Communist Party

Hathaway survived the heated factional battles in the CPUSA during the mid-1920s through his deft ability to shift allegiances. The ouster from the Farmer-Labor Party didn't discourage Hathaway from speaking to audiences about CPUSA. For example, in March 1925, as Minnesota's district organizer, he gave four talks in Duluth on "The Growth of a Communist Party in the United States," "The Decline of Capitalism," "The American Labor Movement Today," and "Farmer-Laborism in Minnesota."[19]

In 1926, on the recommendation of his American Communist mentor, James Cannon,

Hathaway was sent to Moscow to join the first class of the new, prestigious International Lenin School (ILS) for party activists. School instructors, whose goal was to develop a core of disciplined Communist cadres worldwide, taught academic courses and practical political techniques.[20]

However, in Russia, Hathaway showed signs of personal turmoil that would later upend his life. After a drunken fight with a Moscow policeman, he received a strict reprimand from the party. He split from his wife, Florence, who had stayed behind in the US with their children. He would eventually remarry a fellow Communist from Lithuania (then part of the Soviet Union). A biographer of Hathaway concluded: "Heavy drinking during his stint in Moscow and desertion of his wife and three children did his reputation little good."[21]

While in Moscow, Hathaway saw Cannon swayed by the ideas of Trotsky, who had become disenchanted with the post-Lenin leadership and was expelled from the party in 1928. Back in America, Hathaway broke with Cannon and spearheaded a drive against Trotskyism, which ultimately led to Cannon's expulsion from the party that same year.[22]

Hathaway soon allied himself with Earl Browder, who was taking over the CPUSA. Under Browder, Hathaway assumed a rapid succession of important party jobs, first as a district organizer in New York, and then as editor of the monthly magazine of the Trade Union Unity League (TUUL), *Labor Unity*.[23]

In the early 1930s, mostly from New York, Hathaway managed William Z. Foster's campaign for US president and ran his own campaigns in 1930, 1932, and 1934 to represent New York in Congress.[24]

If that wasn't enough, in July 1933, he became editor of the New York-based *Daily Worker*. That year, there were hundreds of articles about Minnesota in the national paper, primarily focusing on the state relief march to the Minnesota legislature by members of a dozen local unions, along with continuous meetings about joblessness. The Hormel Meatpackers' Strike in Austin, Minnesota, which began early in the year, sparked strikes or threats to strike at other packing plants, including the Armour and Swift & Co. facilities in South St. Paul (Dakota County). The *Daily Worker* kept readers informed of the fights for rights by local members of the Packinghouse Workers Industrial Union. And the Minneapolis Teamsters Strike, in which deputized private police and strikers died in separate incidents, headlined the front pages of the Communist paper over the summer of 1934.[25]

Depression/Fascism Reunite Communists/Farmer-Labor

During the Great Depression, the Soviet Union began to be viewed by many Americans in a new, more positive light. The "workers' state" with its planned economy seemed to offer frustrated farmers and workers a desirable alternative to the failed capitalist system, with its mass unemployment and widespread social misery. In addition, as the Nazis seized power in Germany in 1933, Soviet leaders shifted their international strategy from promoting world revolution to seeking antifascist alliances with Western democratic powers, endorsing the idea of a coalition or popular front of communist and noncommunist forces.[26]

Moscow's suggestion that the American Communists form a nonrevolutionary left-wing party led them to Minnesota's Farmer-Labor Party, which they envisioned as a cornerstone for a nationwide Farmer-Labor movement. To guide the local Communists' reentry into the Farmer-Labor Association, CPUSA sent two national officers to Minnesota: Browder and Hathaway.[27]

Hathaway "returned to his old haunts, conferred with [Minnesota's governor, Floyd] Olson, and guided the Party caucus." The local *Union Advocate* noted that Hathaway visited Minnesota repeatedly in 1936 to convince fellow Communists to show some "brotherly love" to the Farmer-Laborites.[28]

The Communists' bitter attacks on Olson and his programs ceased. They conceded that "serious mistakes were made in the past" in relation to the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party and now hailed the party as an answer to the failures of the New Deal. Hathaway went on the radio in 1936. "My friends," he said, "let us build a peoples' front, a Farmer-Labor Party."[29]

Meanwhile, Olson and the left wing of the Farmer-Labor Association quietly welcomed the Communists back into Minnesota politics.

To learn about Communist work promoting civil rights, see "Clarence Hathaway: Civil Rights Pioneer" online.

This 1936 Minnesota Farmer-Labor election poster promotes Farmer-Labor candidates, including Elmer Benson, while paying tribute to the late Gov. Floyd B. Olson. *Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*

As noted previously, Communists had been banned from membership in the Farmer-Labor Party since 1925—the result of the 1924 national Farmer-Labor Party convention debacle.

Olson made it easier for Communists to join the party, and at the party's 1936 state convention, about forty of 667 delegates, or 6 percent, were Communists, according to estimates from Minnesota Communist Nat Ross. That would grow exponentially over the year so that, at the 1937 convention, the percentage of Communist delegates exceeded 25 percent (eighty to eighty-five Communists out of 300 delegates), according to Hathaway's estimates.[30]

In February 1936, Hathaway bragged to Browder of the "many very favorable developments" in Minnesota. "We have ready access to the leading circles of the Farmer-Labor Party and, to a considerable degree, of the trade unions." Meeting secretly with Olson and Benson, the two had "the specific task of organizing the left-wing." At the 1936 Farmer-Labor convention, Communists participated in all activities of the convention, including the leading committees, Hathaway reported.[31]

Although 1936 was a strong election year for the Farmer-Labor Party, it also was the year it unexpectedly lost its leader and most popular figure, Floyd Olson.

While often mentioned as a candidate for US President, Olson had announced in November 1935 that he would run for the US Senate. A month later, two events rocked that Senate race: Olson's opponent, longtime incumbent, Republican Thomas Schall, died in a car accident; and Olson discovered he had stomach cancer.

Olson appointed Elmer Benson, his state banking commissioner, to succeed Schall. Benson, for his part, announced that he would run for governor. When Olson died in August 1936, several weeks before the election, he was succeeded by his lieutenant governor, Hjalmar Peterson, who led the state for all of four months.[32]

Ultimately, Benson won the governor's race. Olson's replacement on the Farmer-Labor ticket—Ernest Lundeen—won the US Senate race, and Farmer-Laborites secured five of Minnesota's nine congressional seats. It was an impressive showing by the Farmer-Labor Party, despite Olson's untimely death.[33]

To Browder, Minnesota was a model for how to successfully execute the popular front strategy.[34]

A Fraught Relationship

Of course, there were wrinkles in the new partnership. Early on, Hathaway fretted that Gov. Olson had become too chummy with the Democratic Party in agreeing to become part of the New Deal coalition. He also groused that Minnesota Communists were too friendly with the Farmer-Laborites, not only because of Gov. Olson's alliance with the Democratic Party, but

also because of his uncritical support of the New Deal, and his antiunion role in the Minneapolis Teamsters Strike.[35] Browder eventually asked Hathaway to temper his criticism.

Although Communists were allowed into the Farmer-Labor Party, this relationship was kept quiet because many voters found Communism objectionable, stemming from the initial Russian revolution (1917-1923) and the creation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). But this secrecy bothered Samuel Darcy, another national Communist figure, who complained about the "furtive goings and comings through side doors."[36] He noted that some Farmer-Laborites felt that the secretive communist forces manipulated or menaced them.

Darcy argued that a more open relationship would help Benson and the Farmer-Labor Party counter a growing swell of anti-communist criticism both from outside and inside the party. Browder disagreed, viewed Darcy's criticism as an attack on his popular front policy, and had him demoted.[37]

Seeds of Self-Destruction

Eventually, this quiet alliance and the growing opposition to it led to troubles for both Farmer-Laborites and the Communists. When Gov. Benson's legislative platform flagged after the 1936 elections, Hathaway suggested that a "people's lobby" push reform legislation. With the blessing of Benson and his party, 2,500 people gathered in St. Paul on April 4, 1937. The next day, they marched to the state capitol and pushed their way into the building. Some 200 demonstrators—many Communists—settled in the senate chamber overnight. Early the next morning, Benson stopped by to tell them they had "done a good job" and then requested they leave.[38]

The unease and anger over the "people's lobby" fed the growing hostility within the Farmer-Labor Association toward both Communists and Benson.[39]

Meanwhile, a newly elected Farmer-Labor congressman in Minnesota brought unwanted attention to his communist ties. In 1936, Hathaway, with the aid of the Communist Finnish Workers Clubs in northern Minnesota, had helped John Bernard win a congressional race to represent Minnesota's eighth district. Bernard was the only member of Congress to vote against imposing an arms embargo on Spain after the Spanish Civil War broke out between the left-leaning popular front and the right-leaning nationalists. He also read stories from the *Daily Worker* into the Congressional Record on a daily basis. Bernard's communist sympathies made some members of congress uneasy.[40]

The stories about communist influence in the Farmer-Labor Party brought Minnesota to the attention of the Dies Committee (House Committee on Un-American Activities), which would later work with a similar US Senate committee headed by Sen. Joseph McCarthy. The growth of anti-communist sentiment in America, reflected in these two committees, would peak during the Cold War, during which anyone suspected to be associated with the Communist Party was treated, often unfairly, as a pariah.[41]

Farmer-Labor Party Stress

By this time, the Minnesota popular front model showed weakness. Gov. Benson was in trouble with both the legislature and the state's unions, and he faced an ugly primary challenge from Hjalmar Petersen, who wanted to win back the governorship. At the same time, Hathaway warned the Communist Political Bureau that the Republican Party—particularly its gubernatorial candidate, Harold Stassen—was becoming a threat to the Farmer-Labor Party.[42]

Although anti-communist sentiment was strong at the 1938 convention, the left wing still had enough sway within the Farmer-Labor Party that Hathaway blocked a concerted anti-communist movement within the party.[43] Still, in a speech at the University of Minnesota in October that year, Hathaway felt compelled to minimize the communist influence:

> All this talk about the sympathy Governor Olson, Governor Benson and others Farmer-Labor leaders have had for communism is just so much hooey. . . . As for the claim Moscow is singling out Minnesota for special attention and dictating our work here—that is sheer fantasy.[44]

Ultimately, Benson won the nomination but, as Hathaway predicted, was easily beaten

Clarence Hathaway spoke to students at the University of Minnesota in the fall of 1938, insisting that Communists backed *many* progressive movements, not just Farmer-Labor. *In* Minneapolis Star, *October 19, 1938.*

by Republican Stassen in the general governor's race. Most Farmer-Labor congressmen, including Bernard, lost that year. In 1939, the Farmer-Labor convention stiffened the prohibition against Communist membership and expelled fourteen known Communist delegates (out of sixty-three). Because anti-communist sentiments were strong enough in the US that few people publicly acknowledged they were Communists, it was difficult to prove a delegate was Communist.[45] Darker days for Hathaway would soon follow. A series of personal and professional missteps, combined with the growing pressure to defend the shifting positions of Bolshevik leader Joseph Stalin during World War II, would end up nearly destroying him.

Sued for Libel

In 1936, Hathaway, as editor of the *Daily Worker*, had come to the defense of Olson and the Farmer-Labor Party following the sensational murder of Walter Liggett, a muckraking editor from Minnesota. As a result, Hathaway quickly became embroiled in libel suits.

Three years earlier, Liggett had returned to Minnesota to help build the Farmer-Labor Party as editor of a new newspaper, the *Midwest American*. However, Liggett soon became disenchanted with Olson and wrote articles about corruption in Olson's party, especially its alleged ties with organized crime leaders, such as Isadore Blumenfeld, aka Kid Cann. Liggett called for the FBI to investigate the situation as they had recently done with Al Capone in Chicago.[46]

Despite bribes, threats, and even a beating from Kid Cann and his gang, Liggett refused to back off. On December 9, 1935, he was gunned down in the alley behind his Minneapolis apartment as his wife Edith and daughter Marda looked on. Kid Cann was charged with murder but acquitted. No one else was ever charged.[47]

After Liggett's death, his widow and others, including the Republican Party, continued investigating Olson and organized crime, implying that Olson was complicit in Liggett's murder. After reading about the situation and conferring with union and Farmer-Labor Party officials, including Olson, Hathaway assigned, approved, and likely helped write a series of articles for the *Daily Worker* that attacked Liggett, his widow, Republicans, and other Olson critics.[48]

A front-page *Daily Worker* story, "Liggett Was Murdered by the Underworld for His Scavenging," called Ligget a "traitor to the Farmer-Labor Party, a blackmailer who demanded loans from underworld characters, and a cheap tool of the Republicans." The coverage accused Edith of "trying to capitalize, politically and financially" on her husband's death, adding that "it is especially disgusting to see the widow of the slain publisher selling the corpse limb by limb to the highest bidder of the Minnesota Republication party."[49]

In 1938, Edith sued the *Daily Worker* and Hathaway for libel in New York. The prosecuting attorney for the related criminal libel case was Thomas E. Dewey, the aspiring Republican district attorney of New York.[50]

Hathaway testified that the stories were intended to look at how the Republican Party used Liggett's murder to hurt the Farmer-Labor Party. Outside court, the *Daily Worker* claimed that the libel case was "spawned by the Trotskyists and utilized by [prosecutor Thomas] Dewey to further his Presidential ambitions." [51]

Hathaway lost in court; the judge said he was guilty of "outrageous, vile and cowardly libel. . . ." [52] Out on bail on appeal, Hathaway was restricted from leaving Brooklyn for six months but continued his duties as editor of the *Daily Worker* and public representative of the CPUSA. In 1940, Hathaway served a brief jail term.

Explaining Stalin's Shifting Stands

During the course of the trials, the Communist Party position in world affairs rapidly moved from espousing antifascism to pacifism after the Hitler-Stalin non-aggression pact (Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact) was signed on August 23, 1939, and then to interventionism when Hitler invaded Russia on June 22, 1941.[53]

That was a lot to explain to the American public for high-profile Communists like Hathaway. He was caught off guard when the pact was revealed, given that he recently denied rumors of the agreement by retorting that "there is as much chance of that as of Stassen and I getting together."[54]

Barely a week after the pact was signed, Germany invaded Poland. Great Britain, then France, declared war on Germany. Now, the Communists saw the war as a conflict between two "imperialist camps" and insisted that America should stay out of it. In a lecture on April 27, 1940, Hathaway said that America wants to keep the "war going" to profit from it by selling "planes, raw materials [and] cotton" to England and France.[55]

The Hitler-Stalin Pact damaged the Communists' alliance with New Deal liberals. Many popular front organizations collapsed when the Communists insisted that the groups support US neutrality in the war.[56]

In 1939, *The New Yorker's* "The Talk of the Town" column skewered Hathaway's increasingly frenetic situation as a busy editor and apologizer for Stalin:

> Certainly the most harried of Communists these days is the editor of the *Daily Worker*, Clarence Hathaway. Not only does he have to explain, over and over again just what he thinks Stalin is up to but he is legally confined within the boundaries of Kings County, and he has to do both editing and explaining by remote control.[57]

The New Yorker sarcastically noted that Hathaway's saving grace was that the Brooklyn Dodgers were doing well, and, during his confinement, Hathaway could attend baseball games at Ebbets Field.[58] Hathaway's troubles soon got worse.


HATHAWAY IS
'READ OUT' BY
COMMUNISTS

On January 13, 1941, headlines in papers across the country noted Clarence Hathaway's ouster from the Communist Party. *In* New York Daily News, *January 13, 1941.*

Expelled

In October 1941, Hathaway was expelled from the Communist Party. The party blamed Hathaway's "failure to meet personal and political responsibilities," "desertion," and refusal to "rehabilitate himself."[59]

The New York Times suspected the departure of Hathaway, one of the "Big Three" in the American Communist Party, was "the most spectacular defection in the series of expulsions and resignations that began with the signing of the Hitler-Stalin Pact." He was regarded as one of the party's "ablest speakers and writers," the *Times* said.[60]

Hathaway publicly accepted the punishment with little comment other than it was "justifiable" because he couldn't live up to his leadership's "exacting personal standards."[61]

Hathaway's problem drinking was blamed for the expulsion—a habit perhaps exacerbated by the pressures of defending Stalin's pact with Hitler and a bombing attempt on the *Daily Worker* offices. Some historians say the libel trial, including jail time, was also a factor in his expulsion; others point to his personal strife, such as leaving his wife and children and his reputation for "carousing with women."[62]

The Soviet archives reveal that Moscow knew of some other troubling incidents involving Hathaway. One was from 1912, when Hathaway joined the National Guard of Minnesota, which suppressed workers' riots and protected strike breakers. Another was a claim by his former wife that he had been a police informer.[63]

Reemerging in St. Paul

After his dismissal, Hathaway disappeared from view. *The New York Times* reported that he had vacated his Brooklyn apartment without leaving

a forwarding address. *Commonweal* magazine suspected that Russian military espionage may have caused his disappearance.[64]

Not until 1946 did the media "discover" Hathaway. He had returned to St. Paul around 1945, working as a machinist and shop steward. He quietly and successfully reapplied to the Communist Party and then emerged as a union leader at the Industrial Tool & Die Co. He lived at 106 N. Smith Avenue, St. Paul.[65]

With his drinking under control, Hathaway began to reassert his influence on union affairs and local politics as a Communist Party ally. He became a successful organizer for the United Electrical and Machine Workers Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), helping them negotiate their initial contract, after which he was elected shop steward and a delegate to the Hennepin County CIO Council. In April 1946, he was appointed a business agent for the CIO United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers union, Local No. 1139, where he assisted in negotiating a 16 sixteen-cent pay hike for 125 striking workers of Telex, Inc. That same year, Hathaway was named member of Minnesota CIO, part of a group that demanded fifty-two weeks of pay a year, slamming salary practices at George A. Hormel & Co. (Austin) and Superior Packing Co. (St. Paul). Later in the year, after a temporary injunction, Hathaway led picketers against Osseo's Bishman Manufacturing plant, demanding a fifteen-cent-per-hour wage increase, paid holidays, and the reestablishment of a union shop.[66]

Soon, he would play a significant role *again* in Minnesota politics.

"Rescuing" Hubert Humphrey's Early Career

Weakened by its association with Communism, in 1944, the Farmer-Labor Party merged with the Democratic Party to form the Democratic Farmer-Labor (DFL) Party. Farmer-Labor founder William Mahoney, who had left the party over its association with Communists, warned the Democrats that they were being "badly duped" by agreeing to the merger due to his former party's continued connection with Communists.[67]

In a 1967 speech in Oklahoma, Minnesota's Hubert Humphrey, who at the time was vice president under President Lyndon B. Johnson, explained that, in 1946, the DFL was "dominated" by a "group of 50 to 100 Communists," naming Hathaway foremost among that group.[68]

Ironically, Hathaway may have helped save Humphrey's fledgling political career. During the 1946 convention, the Communists could have nearly destroyed Humphrey—then the young mayor of Minneapolis. Some labor officials were frustrated with Humphrey's intervention in labor disputes, including with Bell Telephone, as well as not allowing labor leaders to help choose a new police chief. They were ready to vote with the Communists to minimize Humphrey's role in the DFL Party.[69]

During the subsequent discussion among convention leaders about whom to endorse, the sentiment was to back left wingers only. But Hathaway intervened and convinced the left, including Benson, that, for unity and "the good of the party," they should back a mixed slate. As a result, Orville Freeman, one of Humphrey's closest colleagues, became party secretary.[70]

Benson later said that this move gave the moderate wing of the party—which he called the "termites"—the opportunity to take it over. And so they did. In 1948, Humphrey won a US Senate seat, and his career took off. A Humphrey campaign leaflet asked: "Will the D-F-L party of Minnesota be a clean, honest, decent, progressive party? Or will it be a Communist-front organization?"[71] Soon, the Communists were permanently sidelined by the DFL.

Whether or not he knew about Hathaway's quiet, inadvertent effort in salvaging his nascent political career, Humphrey was proud and public about his role in ousting Hathaway and his fellow Communists from the DFL. For example, during his speech in Oklahoma, Humphrey reflected, "I'm in national politics today because . . . Orville Freeman and myself and a few others out there had the courage to come to grips with Communist domination."[72]

Back Up the Communist Ladder

By 1948, the anti-left-wing had set in among labor circles, too. Paranoia about Communism within and outside of unions escalated. Slowly, the period known as the second "Red Scare" (McCarthyism) took hold of the nation. In 1948, Hathaway was one of several state leaders supporting presidential candidate Henry Wallace, who ran on the new Progressive Party ticket and

served as the thirty-third vice president under Franklin D. Roosevelt. The CIO moved to oust the leaders for violating union rules related to the campaign. In December 1949, Hathaway was dismissed from his role as business agent of the local union.[73]

Despite everything, Hathaway continued working in St. Paul, living at 1455 Fulham with his second wife, Vera. In 1953, Vera, was arrested by immigration for possible deportation back to the Soviet Union. The case languished in the courts for several years. Eventually, the couple moved to New York, where Hathaway made another remarkable comeback, rising to lead the Communists' all-important New York district in the late 1950s. Then, he was considered for a powerful position on the party's National Committee.[74]

During the vetting process in February 1960, however, Moscow again raised objections to Hathaway. Besides the earlier concerns (drinking and womanizing), Moscow had new ones—including the bombshell that, after his expulsion, Hathaway had been in contact with FBI agents in 1941 in Pittsburgh and 1947 in San Francisco. In addition, Moscow revealed that Hathaway had been an FBI informant since 1920, initially spying on a national meeting of Communist leaders at the Overlook Mountain Hotel in Woodstock, New York, in May 1921.[75]

American Communist leaders Eugene Dennis and Gus Hall were shocked. Further ugly details emerged about Hathaway, who had allegedly "absconded with some money and ran off to Arizona with some woman" in 1943.[76]

Hall confronted Hathaway and his wife at their anniversary party in 1960, announcing to them and guests that he had heard Hathaway was an FBI agent. Apparently, the couple did not react. However, later that evening, it's been said, Hathaway consumed his first alcoholic drink in sixteen years.[77]

Dennis explained this information put the party in a "hell of a fix." If they fired Hathaway, they might lose the New York district. Instead, Hathaway was quietly shunted out of power, ostensibly for reasons of health.[78]

Hathaway Joins "Radical Row"

Clarence Hathaway, who had suffered from emphysema, died in Los Angeles on January 23, 1963, at age sixty-nine. He was buried in "Dissenters' Graves," also known as "Radical Row," near the Haymarket Martyrs' Monument in Forest Home Cemetery in Forest Park, Illinois. Others buried there include William Z. Foster, Eugene Dennis, and Emma Goldman.[79]

In labor historian Hyman Berman's July 7, 1987-interview with one-time Communist leader and Minnesota radicalism historian Carl Ross,

Additional Reading

From the late nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century, Minnesota workers and farmers organized in many ways to make their lives more stable and secure. They sought strategies which would enable them to confront the railroads, banks, and corporations that not only challenged them directly but also wielded significant power over local and state governments. At times, workers and farmers looked to syndicalism, socialism, and communism for ideas, leadership, and inspiration in their struggles and movements. For readers who want to explore these aspects of our history in more depth, labor historian and RCHS editorial board member Peter Rachleff makes some suggestions:

Carl H. Chrislock, *Watchdog of Loyalty: The Minnesota Commission of Public Safety During World War I* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1991).

Gary Kaunonen, *Flames of Discontent: The 1916 Minnesota Iron Ore Strike* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

Jack Kelly, *The Edge of Anarchy: The Railroad Barons, the Gilded Age, and the Greatest Labor Uprising in America* (Ashland, OR: Blackstone Publishing, 2019).

William Millikan, with Peter Rachleff (introduction), *Union Against Unions: The Minneapolis Citizens Alliance and Its Fight Against Organized Labor, 1903–1947* (Ontario: Borealis Books, 2003).

David L. Nass, ed., *Holiday: Minnesotans Remember the Farmers' Holiday Association* (Marshall, MN: Plains Press, January 1984).

Bryan D. Palmer, *Revolutionary Teamsters: The Minneapolis Truckers' Strikes of 1934* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014).

William C. Pratt, *After Populism: The Agrarian Left on the Northern Plains, 1900-1960* (Pierre, SD: South Dakota Historical Society Press, 2022).

Shelton Stromquist and Marvin Berman, eds., *Unionizing the Jungles: Labor and Community in the Twentieth-Century Meat-packing Industry* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997).

Thomas A. Woods, *Knights of the Plow: Oliver H. Kelley and the Origins of the Grange in Republican Ideology* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990).

Ross recalled last hearing from Hathaway in his "later years," when Hathaway either "was going up the ladder or reached the bottom. I'm not sure which."[80]

Ross emphasized that Hathaway was "a guy with such talents and with such long historic labor and political contributions." Berman agreed, calling Hathaway one of the "last of the Mohicans" of the American Communist Party.[81]

Jim McCartney *is a St. Paul author who wrote a cover profile of Farmer-Labor Party founder William Mahoney for the Fall 2022 issue of* Ramsey County History. *After a long career as a newspaper journalist, including twenty-five years as a business reporter for the* St. Paul Pioneer Press, *he joined Weber Shandwick public relations' healthcare and science teams in 2006, where he worked before going on his own in 2020.*

NOTES

1. "The Communist Problems in Our Farmer-Labor Party Activities," May 1936, 432, in Hathaway materials, folder 4, Minnesota Historical Society, (hereafter MNHS); *The People of the State of New York against Comprodaily Publishing Company, Inc. and Clarence A. Hathaway," Case on Appeal* II (New York: The Hecia Company, n.d.), 802, https://www.google.com/books/edition/New_York_Court_of_Appeals_Records_and_Br/XlNJ4jonopUC?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=%22clarence+Hathaway%22+Minnesota&pg=PA3733&printsec=frontcover; "Farmer-Labor State Convention," *Sauk Centre Herald*, February 4, 1937, 5; John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, "Researching Minnesota History in Moscow," *Minnesota History*, 54, no. 1, (Spring 1994): 7; Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 259-261, https://archive.org/details/heydayofamericanooookleh/page/n9/mode/2up?q=Nat+Ross.

2. Klehr, 261; Timothy Madigan, oral interview with Karl Emil Nygard, September 13, 1973, in Minnesota State University Oral Interviews 16, https://red.mnstate.edu/oral_interviews/16. Communists would solidify their influence on state government with assigned state jobs. For example, Karl Nygard, a Communist who was elected mayor in Crosby, Minnesota, in 1932 (the first Communist mayor in the country), accepted a job in the Minnesota Highway Department after helping organize support for the Farmer-Labor Party in 1936. He was one of many Communists who worked in state government during the Benson administration.

3. "Editor Scoffs at Red Charge Against State," *Minneapolis Star*, October 19, 1938, 8. At a student forum at the University of Minnesota in 1938, Clarence Hathaway told the audience there were about 100,000 Communists in the US and 2,500 in Minnesota. That would end up being at or near the all-time peak of the Communist Party's popularity in the state and country.

4. "Clarence Albert Hathaway," in US WWII Draft Registration Cards, 1942, www.ancestry.com; Solon De Leon with Irma C. Hayssen and Grace Poole, eds., *The American Labor Who's Who* (New York: Hanford Press, 1925), 99; Bernard K. Johnpoll and Harvey Klehr, eds., *Biographical Dictionary of the American Left* (Westport, CT; Greenwood Press, 1986) 186-187; Klehr, 27. "History of the IAM (Timeline), International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers website, https://www.goiam.org/about/history-of-the-iam/; "Mass Meeting Sunday on Compensation Act," *Minneapolis Journal*, March 5, 1913, 9. In March 1913, the year Clarence Hathaway joined the International Association of Machinists (IAM), over 1,400 of its Minnesota members gathered in support of a workmen's compensation bill in front of the state legislature.

5. Peter Rachleff, phone conversation with editor, October 7, 2024.

6. Tom O'Connell and Steve Trimble, interview with Orville E. Olson, March 24, 1977, in Los Angeles for "Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project," MNHS, https://www.mnhs.org/sites/default/files/collections/cache/10249539/AV1990_228_72_M.pdf.

7. Theodore Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia: The Formative Period* (New York: Viking Press, 1960), 100.

8. *The People of the State of New York against Comprodaily/Hathaway*, 795.

9. De Leon, Hayssen, and Poole, 99.

10. Peter J. DeCarlo, "Nonpartisan League," *MNopedia*, https://www.mnopedia.org/group/nonpartisan-league. Members of the Nonpartisan league banded together in Minnesota to control their political and economic rights; "New Radical Party To Pick Committee," *Minneapolis Star*, July 29, 1923, 1. "Nonpartisans Turn Down Labor's Plan for 'Super League,'" *Minneapolis Star*, September 8, 1923, 11, 18; *The People of the State of New York against Comprodaily/Hathaway*, 796; Millard L. Gieske, *Minnesota Farmer-Laborism: the Third-Party Alternative* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), 82. William Mahoney papers, "Report of the Farmer-Labor Federation Convention, March 12, 1924," box 1, correspondence and misc., 1890-1929, MNHS.

11. William Mahoney papers, "Report of the Farmer-Labor Federation Convention." To learn more about William Mahoney, see Jim McCartney's 2022 article, "Farmer-Labor Founder William Mahoney and his Battle with Communists," in *Ramsey County History*, https://rchs.com/publishing/catalog/ramsey-county-history-fall-2022-william-mahoney/.

12. *The People of the State of New York against Comprodaily/Hathaway*, 815. *Merriam-Webster* provides basic definitions of the following: Socialism–"A stage

of society in Marxist theory that is transitional between capitalism and communism and is distinguished by unequal distribution of goods and pay according to work done," *See* https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/socialism. Communism–"An economic and political theory that advocated the elimination of private property and the common sharing of all resources among a group of people. . . . Today, it usually refers to the political and economic ideologies originating from Karl Marx's theory of revolutionary socialism, which advocates a proletariat overthrow of capitalist structures within a society; societal and communal ownership and governance of the means of production; and the eventual establishment of a classless society," *See* https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/communism.

13. "History of the Communist Party, USA," CIA website, released August 27, 2008, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP90-01226R000100140026-0.pdf; "Karl Kautsky, Georgia, Chapter XIII," in *The Moscow Bonapartism*, (1921), retrieved from Marxist Internet Archive, July 19, 2024, https://www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1921/georgia/ch09.htm. It took Clarence Hathaway a while to find his footing within the party. In 1920, he was expelled for "his support of a group that deserted the Comintern line." From 1919 to 1922, he supported the "Michigan group that founded the Kautskian proletarian party, which considered the Soviet Union an imperialist state, due to its destructive invasion of Georgia and the minimal political role that the proletariat had in Soviet Russia."

14. *The People of the State of New York against Comprodaily/Hathaway*, 797.

15. De Leon, Hayssen, Poole, 99; Leon Trotsky, *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, 1, https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1924/ffyci-1/intro.htm. Leon Trotsky (1879-1940) wrote: "For a young and weak Communist Party, lacking in revolutionary temper, to play the role of solicitor and gatherer of 'progressive voters' for the Republican Senator La Follette is to head toward the political dissolution of the party in the petty bourgeoisie. After all, opportunism expresses itself not only in moods of gradualism but also in political impatience: it frequently seeks to reap where it has not sown, to realize successes which do not correspond to its influence;" Richard Cavendish, "Leon Trotsky assassinated in Mexico," *History Today* 65, no. 9 (2015): https://www.historytoday.com/archive/months-past/leon-trotsky-assassinated-mexico; "Leon Trotsky, Russian revolutionary," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Leon-Trotsky. Trotsky was second only to Vladimir Lenin as a hero of the Russian Revolution and was Joseph Stalin's rival and critic. Once in power, Stalin had Trotsky expelled from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1927 and exiled to Turkey in 1929. He was killed by a Soviet-backed assassin in Mexico City in 1940; Jim McCartney, "Farmer Labor Founder William Mahoney and His Battle with Communists," *Ramsey County History* 57, no. 3 (Fall 2022): 8; "New Radical Party To Pick Committee," *Minneapolis Star*, July 29, 1923, 1; Charles R. Cheney, "Nonpartisans Turn Down Labor's Plan for 'Super League,'" *Minneapolis Star*, September 8, 1923, 11, 18.

16. John Earl Haynes, *Dubious Alliance: The Making of Minnesota's DFL Party* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 13, https://archive.org/details/dubiousalliancem0000hayn/mode/2up?q=Hathaway.

17. Benjamin Gitlow, *I Confess: The Truth About American Communism* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1939), 206; Benjamin Gitlow, *The Whole of Their Lives: Communism in America—A Personal History and Intimate Betrayal of its Leaders* (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1948), 116.

18. Clarence Hathaway, "Hathaway Tells of Communist Plots in Labor Movement," *Minnesota Union Advocate*, January 1, 1925, 4; Gieske, 95-97; Mary Lethert Wingerd, *Claiming the City: Politics, Faith, and the Power of Place in St. Paul* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 258.

19. "Duluth To Hear C. A. Hathaway At Four Meetings," *Daily Worker (Chicago)*, March 13, 1924, 4.

20. J. T. Murphy, "First Year of the Lenin School," *The Communist International* 4, no. 14 (September 30, 1927): https://archive.org/details/270930MurphyFirstyearleninschool/page/n1/mode/2up.

21. Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, Kyrill M. Anderson, *The Soviet World of American Communism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 48, https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Soviet_World_of_American_Communism/u-05jqehzvcC?hl=en&gbpv=1&bsq=Hathaway; John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, "Researching Minnesota History in Moscow," *Minnesota History* 54, no. 1, (Spring 1994): 6-7; Larry Fitzmaurice, "Two Hathaway Witnesses, Now US Employees, Once Were Red," *Minneapolis Star*, January 13, 1954, 27; John McIlroy and Alan Campbell, "The Leadership of American Communism, 1924–1929: Sketches for a Prosopographical Portrait," *American Communist History*, (2019): 37, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337176499_The_Leadership_of_American_Communism_1924-1929_Sketches_for_a_Prosopographical_Portrait.

22. "James P. Cannon, Trotskyite, Dead," *The New York Times*, August 23, 1974, https://www.nytimes.com/1974/08/23/archives/james-p-cannon-trotskyite-dead-head-of-socialist-workersjailed.html; McIlroy and Campbell, 37; "Leon Trotsky," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Leon-Trotsky/Exile-and-assassination.

23. Klehr, 26.

24. "Communists File List of Candidates," *The Brooklyn Daily Times*, October 8, 1930, 3, 20; "Borough of Brooklyn, Communist Party, Hathaway Representative in Congress, 3rd District," *Brooklyn Eagle*, November 1, 1932, 12; "Borough of Brooklyn, Communist Party, Hathaway Representative in Congress, 7th District," *Brooklyn Eagle*, October 29, 1934, 8.

25. "Expect 250 at St. Paul Parlay," *Daily Worker*

(New York), February 4, 1933, 2; "Win Recognition of St. Paul Packing Shop Committee," *Daily Worker (New York)*, August 18, 1933, 3; "Police Raid St. Paul Meat Strike Meetings," *Daily Worker (New York)*, November 30, 1933, 3.

26. Maurice Isserman, "When New York City Was the Capital of American Communism," *The New York Times*, October 20, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/20/opinion/new-york-american-communism.html.

27. Haynes, 13, 16, 19.

28. Klehr, 260; A. F. Lockhart, "More Third Party Talk," *Minnesota Union Advocate*, November 19, 1936, 4; *The People of the State of New York against Comprodaily/Hathaway*, 799.

29. Clarence Hathaway, radio address, 1936 undated, in Hathaway materials, folder 3, MNHS.

30. Klehr, 191; Haynes and Klehr, 6-7, 11. According to John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, "Communists began moving into the Farmer-Labor Association (FLA) by affiliating various Communist-led clubs and CPUSA auxiliaries with the FLA. Each group that affiliated gained the right to send delegates to local and state Farmer-Labor conventions." To learn more about the Farmer-Labor Party, see our RCHS podcast series, "March of the Governors," https://rchs.com/publishing/catalog/march-of-the-governors-26-the-farmer-larbor-party/.

31. Haynes and Klehr, 6-7. Earl Browder told his Communist colleagues that Gov. Elmer Benson, in New York for a Conference of Governors in 1937, spent much of his time conferring with Clarence Hathaway and him.

32. Tom O'Connell, "Benson, Elmer (1895-1985)," *MNopedia*, https://www.mnopedia.org/person/benson-elmer-1895-1985.

33. "Minnesota," *Statistics of the Congressional Election of November 3, 1936*, 17, https://clerk.house.gov/member_info/electionInfo/1936election.pdf.

34. Klehr, 260-1.

35. Klehr, 260; Clarence Hathaway, "Problems in Our Farmer-Labor Party Activities," *The Communist*, May 1936, 432-3, in Hathaway materials, folder 4, MNHS. Also known as the General Drivers Strike or the Minneapolis Truckers Strike, the Minneapolis Teamsters Strike was a pivotal event in both local and national labor history. To learn more, see https://mndigital.org/projects/primary-source-sets/minneapolis-teamsters-strike-1934.

36. Haynes and Klehr, 13-14.

37. Klehr, 264.

38. Klehr, 263.

39. Klehr, 261.

40. "Congress Race–Eighth District," *Austin Daily Herald*, November 5, 1936, 13; Klehr, Haynes, and Anderson, 43; Haynes, 29-30.

41. "Tom Davis Assails Dies Quiz on State," *Minneapolis Journal*, October 19, 1938, 22; "Dies Committee," *Densho Encyclopedia*, https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Dies_Committee/; "McCarthy and Army-McCarthy Hearings," United States Senate website, https://www.senate.gov/about/powers-procedures/investigations/mccarthy-and-army-mccarthy-hearings.htm; "Have You No Sense of Decency?" United States Senate, https://www.senate.gov/about/powers-procedures/investigations/mccarthy-hearings/have-you-no-sense-of-decency.htm; "What were the results of McCarthyism?" *Encyclopedia Britannica*, October 25, 2018, https://www.britannica.com/question/What-were-the-results-of-McCarthyism. The McCarthy hearings were a US Senate subcommittee investigation into alleged Communist influence within the press and the federal government. Allegations of communist ties, often without credible evidence, led to many ruined lives and lost jobs. Sen. Joseph McCarthy himself would ultimately be rebuked for his role: "Have you no sense of decency?" one defendant's attorney asked him. McCarthy lost his Senate seat.

42. Klehr, 207; Haynes and Klehr, 12. With Earl Browder in Moscow, on February 18, 1938, Hathaway confirmed to the CPUSA's elite what Communists in Minnesota already knew—that their goal was to form a democratic front—a coalition "of the forces opposed to the fascists." Hathaway explained that the Communist party had, of necessity, decided to accept a somewhat hidden role in the coalitions it was helping to build.

43. Haynes and Klehr, 12.

44. "Editor Scoffs at Red Charge Against State," 8. In attendance at Clarence Hathaway's University of Minnesota speech was a senior political science student from South Dakota named Hubert Humphrey, who asked if fascism could gain a foothold in the US. Hathaway replied, "It can happen here, unless the people are alarmed and keep reactionaries out of office."

45. Klehr, 264.

46. Marda Liggett Woodbury, *Stopping the Presses: The Murder of Walter W. Liggett* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 102.

47. "Near v. Minnesota, 283 U.S. 697 (1931)," Justicia US Supreme Court website, https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/283/697/#top. This came a year after Howard Guilford, who made similar accusations about Olson and organized crime, was shot and killed in 1934. Three years earlier, Guilford's newspaper partner, Jay Near, had won a US Supreme Court case—"Near vs. Minnesota." The court ruled that the state violated the First Amendment in banning the publication of a newspaper it considered malicious or scandalous.

48. *The People of the State of New York against Comprodaily/Hathaway*, 806.

49. Liggett Woodbury, 198-9; Martin Young, "Liggett Murdered By the Underworld for His Scavenging," *Daily Worker*, February 24, 1936, https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/pubs/dailyworker/1936/v13-n047-NY-feb-24-1936-DW-Q.pdf.

50. Jack Quinlan, "Looping the Loop," *Minneapolis Journal*, September 8, 1938, 9; "Thomas E. Dewey Dies; Ran for President Twice," *Star Tribune*, March 17, 1971, 1, 14. Thomas Dewey would serve as New York

governor (1943-1954) and ran unsuccessfully for president against Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1944 and Harry S. Truman in 1948.

51. *The People of the State of New York against Comprodaily/Hathaway,* 807; Liggett Woodbury, 207, 209. Clarence Hathaway said in court that much of the material in the stories had already appeared in the *Minnesota Leader*, the Farmer-Labor Party's newspaper.

52. "Mrs. Liggett Wins $2,500 Suit from Daily Worker," *Editor & Publisher*, May 27, 1939, 28.

53. "Fuhrer Expected to Reject F. R.'s Plea for Peace," *Minneapolis Tribune,* August 25, 1939, 1; "They're Playing for Keeps Now," *Minneapolis Star*, June 23, 1941, 3.

54. John Wickland, "Unionist Hathaway Down, But Not Out," *Minneapolis Tribune*, December 11, 1949, 37.

55. Lecture to a workers school, April 13, 1940, in Hathaway materials, folder 2, MNHS; Clarence Hathaway notes, April 27, 1940, in Hathaway materials, folder 2, MNHS.

56. Klehr, Haynes, and Anderson, 75.

57. Eugene Kincaid and Russell Moloney, "Hathaway," *The New Yorker*, September 30, 1939, 11, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1939/09/30/hathaway.

58. Kincaid and Moloney, 11.

59. "Communists Expel Hathaway, Editor," *The New York Times,* January 13, 1941, https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1941/01/13/88096881.html?pageNumber=1.

60. "Communists Expel Hathaway, Editor."

61. Wickland, 37.

62. Liggett Woodbury, 210; "Communists Expel Hathaway, Editor;" McIlroy and Campbell, 37; "Miscellaneous Information from Morris Childs—Clarence Hathaway," Meeting Between Morris Childs, Eugene Dennis, and Gus Hall in New York City, March 11, 1960, in FBI Files on Operation SOLO, 9, https://archive.org/details/FBI-Operation-Solo/100-HQ-428091-Serial 0712-0725/page/n29/mode/2up?q=zClarence+Hathaway. Clarence Hathaway was identified as an FBI informant from 1920 onward in a March 23, 1960, document to FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover detailing a meeting between Morris Childs, the FBI's highest-ranking infiltrator of the CPUSA, and top CP leaders Eugene Dennis and Gus Hall. The memo was declassified by the FBI in a thirty-five-volume file on the Childs operation, code-named SOLO, and published on August 2, 2011, on the FBI's website: FBI Files on Operation SOLO, vault.fbi.gov/solo.

63. Klehr, Haynes, Anderson, 48.

64. George Pritchard, "Missing Editor Found In City," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, January 24, 1946, 1, 7.

65. Pritchard, 1, 7; "Hathaway, Once Ousted, Would Rejoin Communists," *Minneapolis Times*, January 24, 1946, 1.

66. Klehr, Haynes, and Anderson, 44; "Congress of Industrial Organizations," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Congress-of-Industrial-Organizations. The Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) was a federation of industrial union workers (including unskilled and semiskilled factory workers) in North America that operated independently between 1937 and 1955 before joining forces with the American Federation of Labor to form the AFL-CIO; Pritchard, 1, 7; "Hathaway Named," *Minneapolis Star*, April 26, 1946, 7; "16-cent Hike Ends Strike at Telex," *Minneapolis Star*, June 20, 1946, 17; George Pritchard, "Owner-Worker Forum Ends Telex, Inc., Strike," *Star Tribune,* June 20, 1946, 7; "Civic Committee, Union Rap Curb on Punch Presses," *Minneapolis Star*, August 13, 1946, 2; Frank Dose, "Minnesota CIO Makes Annual Wage Demand," *Minneapolis Star*, November 4, 1946, 13; "CIO Studies State Taxes," *Minneapolis Star*, December 14, 1946, 2; "Union to Assume Picketing of Osseo Plant," *Minneapolis Star*, January 7, 1947, 5.

67. William Mahoney, open letter to Elmer Benson and others, April 1, 1944, in William Mahoney papers, box 1, correspondence and misc., 1942-1944, MNHS.

68. H. H. Humphrey, remarks to attendees at the President's Club Breakfast, Oklahoma-Sheraton Hotel, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, March 13, 1967, 29, http://www2.mnhs.org/library/findaids/00442/pdfa/00442-02155.pdf; Orville Freeman, interview with Hyman Berman and Carl Ross, Minneapolis, August 5, 1988, 2, for Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project, MNHS, https://collections.mnhs.org/sites/default/files/collections/cache/10249445/AV1990_228_20_M.pdf. Orville Freeman, a close associate of Hubert Humphrey's, recalled how the left wingers ran roughshod over the 1946 DFL convention. One leftist told Humphrey, who was standing on the floor of the convention, "to sit down you little son of a bitch before I knock you down."

69. Bill Brust, "Stalinism and the Farmer-Labor Party in the 1930s," in *Defending Principles: The Political Legacy of Bill Brust* (Oak Park, MI: Mehring Books, 1972), https://www.wsws.org/en/special/library/defending-principles-bill-brust/stalinism-farmer-labor-party-1930s.html.

70. Brust.

71. Brust; Anders Lee, "How Hubert H. Humphrey Purged the DFL of Socialists," *Racket,* March 27, 2023, https://racketmn.com/how-hubert-h-humphrey-purged-the-dfl-of-socialists.

72. H. H. Humphrey, remarks, 28.

73. "The CIO School Plan," *Minneapolis Star*, June 18, 1947, 22; Gordon Mikkelson, "CIO Convention Fight Brews on Communism," *Minneapolis Star,* October 28, 1947, 11; "Ouster Demanded for Five State CIO Officials," *Minneapolis Star,* March 12, 1948, 1; "Humphrey Forces Map New Drive," *Star Tribune*, May 2, 1948, 1; "UE Foes Fight Hathaway," *Minneapolis Star*, December 4, 1949, 20; "Hathaway Ousted by UE Local," *Minneapolis Star*, December 9, 1949, 1.

74. "Hathaway, Once Ousted," 1; "Miscellaneous Information from Morris Childs," 8; "Vera Hathaway, Red Editor's Wife, Faces Deportation," *Star Tribune*, June 13, 1953, 24; Larry Fitzmaurice, "Deportation Reversal Recalls Other Cases," *Minneapolis Star*, April 24,

1958, 2C; "Hathaway is Chairman of N.Y. Red Group," *Minneapolis Star*, February 1, 1960, 2.

75. "Miscellaneous Information from Morris Childs," 1-11; Tim Weiner, *Enemies: A History of the FBI* (New York: Random House, 2012), 50.

76. "Miscellaneous Information from Morris Childs," 1-11.

77. "Miscellaneous Information from Morris Childs," 1-11.

78. "Miscellaneous Information from Morris Childs," 1-11.

79. "Hathaway, Former Red Editor, Dies," *Minneapolis Star*, January 25, 1963, 8; "Clarence A. Hathaway," death notice, https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/K2MR-WMH/clarence-adelbert-hathaway-1894-1963; "Clarence A. Hathaway," Find a Grave, https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/49992137:60525; "Haymarket Martyrs' Monument," National Historic Landmark Nomination, National Park Service, February 18, 1997, https://npgallery.nps.gov/pdfhost/docs/NHLS/Text/97000343.pdf.

80. Hyman Berman, interview with Carl Ross, Part III, June 30, 1987, 40, Twentieth Century Minnesota Radicalism Project, MNHS, https://collections.mnhs.org/sites/default/files/collections/cache/10249481/AV1990_228_36_3_M.pdf.

81. Hyman Berman, interview with Carl Ross, 40.

Notes to sidebar on p. 9

a. Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Kyrell M. Anderson, *The Soviet World of American Communism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 280, https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Soviet_World_of_American_Communism/u-05jqehzvcC?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=andre+marty+clarence+hathaway&pg=PA41&printsec=frontcover; Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 186, 257-258; For basic definitions of socialism and communism, see endnote 12 in main article. The *Merriam-Webster* definition of fascism follows: "A populist political philosophy, movement, or regime . . . that exalts nation and often race above the individual, that is associated with a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, and that is characterized by severe economic and social regimentation and by forcible suppression of opposition," *See* https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fascist.

b. "Austrian Issue Brings Battle in New York," *The Michigan Daily*, February 17, 1934, 1.

c. Klehr, 114.

d. "5,000 Reds Battle with Socialists at Garden Rally," *The New York Times*, February 17, 1934, 1. https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1934/02/17/95474111.html?pageNumber=1.

e. "5,000 Reds Battle with Socialists at Garden," 1; Tom Cassidy, "500 Hurt in Red Riot," *Daily News*, February 17, 1934, 72.

f. Irwin Silber, *Press Box Red: The Story of Lester Rodney* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 8; "5,000 Reds Battle with Socialists at Garden," 1.

g. Klehr, 114-117; Klehr, Haynes, and Anderson, 284, 289.

h. Klehr, 114-117.

"An Opportunity to Speak, to Act, to Contribute, to Belong"

The Everyday Activism of the North Central Voters League in St. Paul

ADAM BLEDSOE

In 1926, the *St. Paul Echo* reflected on the necessity for Black activism in Minnesota, arguing that:

> [d]isillusionment comes early to those of us . . . who are dusky in hue. Democracy is oftener than not demonocracy; justice seems to have two facets; opportunity, translated to us by white tongues, comes through as lack of opportunity; and even Christian loses much of its meaning.
>
> But we must all learn . . . that we must live with our skins, and that perpetual complaint will do little to help our cause. Forgetting what we are is impossible as long as we are surrounded by a white world, but there is open to all of us that avenue of escape down the hard path of conscientious endeavor in every worth-while pursuit. That is the only simple panacea for the vanquishing of racial obstacles.[1]

Minnesota's capital city offered insight into the imperative of the *Echo*'s call. A 1930 study of local businesses found that 80 percent of surveyed firms would not consider hiring Black workers, and many unions had constitutional bans on admitting Black laborers. A majority of Black Twin Citians worked in a few industries—railways, meat processing, hotel and restaurant hospitality, and domestic labor, for example—where they frequently experienced long hours, low pay, and demeaning treatment from their clientele and bosses. In the face of these hard realities, Black communities committed themselves to various paths of "conscientious endeavor." Mobilizing on numerous fronts, these early twentieth-century Minnesotans helped enact a fair employment ordinance, and later, a law in Minneapolis—one of the first of its kind in the country. Across different industries, local Black-led unions scored several workplace victories, which improved labor conditions. They also took the lead in passing the country's first statewide fair housing bill in 1961.[2]

Such activism demonstrated Black Minnesotans' commitment to changing the everyday conditions under which they lived. Nonetheless, the mid-twentieth century saw many residents continuing to live life on the margins of society. Whereas by late 1964, unemployment in the Twin Cities had dropped to around 3 percent and employment reached record proportions in 1965, nearly 17 percent of nonwhite families in the largely Black Selby-Dale (Rondo) neighborhood of St. Paul lived below the poverty line. Community members complained of the city's public schools' de facto segregation, while local scholars criticized the "focusing [of] remedial programs on schools in the Negro ghetto." In 1970, a survey noted that Black St. Paulites lacked representation in the public sector, as agencies rarely employed workers of color, and there were no Black elected officials.[3] This exclusion from St. Paul's mainstream institutions was not lost on community members. Some residents diagnosed this marginalization as structural, arguing:

> Poor people are not poor by their own desire or lack of enthusiasm or lack of initiative. They are poor because of the system that was created by someone else. They are victims of their own society.[4]

As was the case in many US cities, imposed immiseration bred frustration. Concerned residents advised St. Paul Mayor George Vavoulis that "unless an anti-poverty program [was]

developed for the Negro community . . . ,'a Watts or a Chicago or a Boston,' could happen [here]." This warning was clearly a reference to the spate of urban rebellions that took place across the country in the 1950s and '60s in response to persisting unequal distribution of power and resources in Black communities.[5] In an attempt to harness this discontent for constructive ends, a group of St. Paulites began organizing at the grassroots level.

Origins of the North Central Voters League

In November 1963, a unique organization was "born on a street corner . . . when six men met to talk about community improvements and the 'vacuum' of concern emanating from downtown."[6] This group included Raymond Hill, a waiter at a Minneapolis hotel; Lester Howell, an unemployed waiter and sometimes janitor; Robert Anderson of the St. Paul Housing Authority; and three men employed by the railroad at Union Depot—James Thomas, retired Red Cap; Richard Travis, a dining car waiter, and Jack Payne, a Pullman porter.[7]

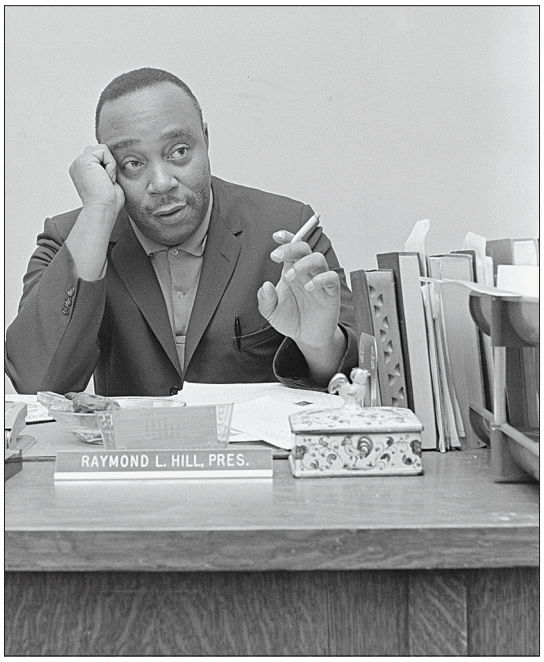
The men collectively decided the community needed "an organization that will do something for us."[8] They sought:

> . . . some place for these kids to play. . . . some kind of a library so [the] children can grow up with a little pride, and some knowledge of what their parents are doing for them.[9]

The group concluded that the people at city hall "don't care about any one person but they sure listen to a lot of people, especially if they are voters."[10]

Chipping in five dollars each, the organizers sought to make concrete the "dream of a community in which all . . . would be able to make a contribution. A dream where everyone would receive equal representation under the law." They took these collective funds and their plan to the Gopher Elks Lodge. The Elks offered them space to meet and wished them luck.[11] Thus, the North Central Voters League (NCVL) came into existence.

According to NCVL President Raymond Hill and Vice President Jesse Miller, the league was "the 'new voice' of the St. Paul Negro community which speaks for 'the man on the street, the poor people here.'" Twin Cities griot Mahmoud El-Kati explained that the members of the NCVL were mostly working class, representing "a variety of occupations in the workaday world, [with] a disproportionate number [having] backgrounds in the railroad industry." A few members were college educated, and most were middle-aged and older. Elder El-Kati's mention of railroad workers in the NCVL is significant given the militant labor activism that punctuated the railroad and hospitality industries in the early twentieth century.[12] League members who had experience in the railyards and restaurants of the Twin Cities very likely would have been aware of or even had experience with this



North Central Voters League President Raymond Hill did not mince words when it came to addressing disparities in St. Paul's Black community. The NCVL first met at the Gopher Elks Lodge at 559 Carroll Avenue before moving to a building on Iglehart. *Photograph by Dwight Miller, in* Minneapolis Star, *December 26, 1965, courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society's Newspaper Photo Negatives Collection. Elks Lodge image also courtesy of MNHS.*

activism. The local, collective forms of organizing that typified the early twentieth century labor movement acted as forerunners to the militant, grassroots approach that informed the NCVL's early days.

The league insisted that ". . . the time ha[d] passed when the poor should merely ask for help," contending that they must instead make clear demands. The NCVL strongly believed such demands "must originate in the poor community" and claimed the league would act "to fill a need, to meet the wishes and the aspirations of the people." In the process, they would give "ghetto-dwellers 'an opportunity to speak, to act, to contribute, to belong.' The Voters League [was] a bulwark."[13] With this commitment to carrying out the will of the community, the NCVL embarked on its first focused project.

Influencing St. Paul Politics

As its name suggests, the NCVL initially concerned itself with voter registration.

> They begged people to register; they argued with people until they registered; they borrowed cars to take people down to City Hall to register. On October 13, 1964, they had registered 1,054 people, most of whom had never registered before in their lives.[14]

The process of registering voters was no easy feat given that, in early 1964, the league had less than twenty members. Nonetheless, "in one day, they transported 232 persons to the voter registrar in three chartered buses."[15] Not content to simply register voters from the Selby-Dale neighborhood, the NCVL also played an important role in bolstering Black candidates' electoral campaigns.

Earlier that year, on Tuesday, March 10, 1964, resident Katie McWatt secured a nomination for St. Paul City Council. This was a noteworthy development, as McWatt's election would have made her "the first Negro to win elective office in the history of the Saintly city." As one of the first organizations to endorse her campaign, the NCVL was the most visible and aggressive supporter of the McWatt campaign on every level. The league also held candidate forums to support McWatt for the council seat. Despite the best efforts of McWatt, her supporters, and the NCVL, she lost a closely contested race in the at-large election that fall. Still, NCVL's support of McWatt's campaign helped raise its local profile and set a precedent for supporting future Black political candidates.[16]

Katie McWatt's run for St. Paul City Council energized the Black community and inspired others to follow in her footsteps. *Campaign button courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*

Two years after McWatt's nearly successful run for city council, on March 24, 1966, St. Paul police officer James Mann announced his intention to run for the St. Paul Board of Education, making him the first Black candidate to run for the city's school board. The NCVL endorsed Mann immediately, and President Hill served as cochair of the campaign committee. The first public rally for Mann's candidacy was held at a new office location at 739 Iglehart Avenue three days later.[17]

> [There, s]ome 150 persons heard Mann criticize the present school board for what he called a 'flagrant misuse of funds' in allocation of federal aid. He said money allocated for the Summit-University area was channeled to other schools . . . .[18]

In addition to these denunciations, Mann pointed to de facto segregation in the city's public schools.[19] Despite speaking to many residents' concerns, Mann, like McWatt, did not succeed in gaining public office. Undaunted, the NCVL continued its work in the community.

Grassroots Education Programs

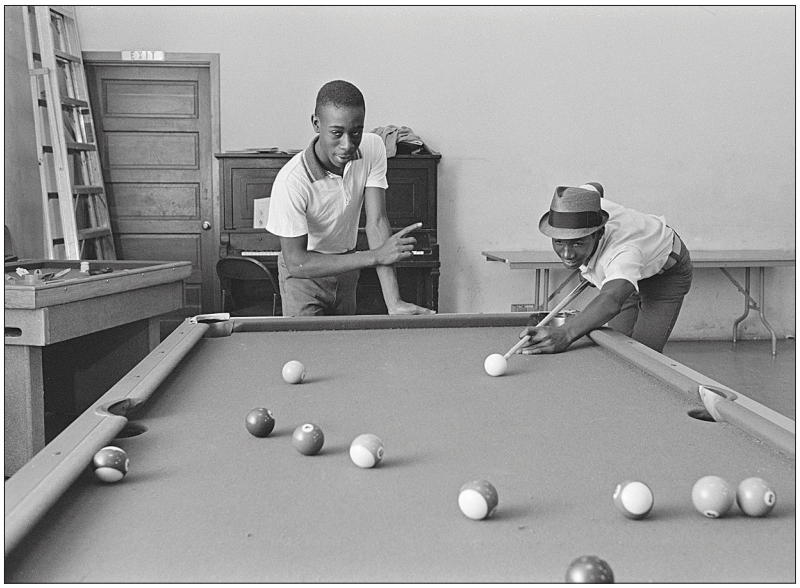
The league sought to build a variety of grassroots programs in the Selby-Dale neighborhood. In October 1965, it submitted a proposal to the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), requesting $1.4 million in federal antipoverty funds to create, among other things, educational programming, including adult education and job training. NCVL received $329,000. While certain programs—such as music and some adult classes and typing and office skill courses—ran without government aid, the league's access to federal funds allowed it to implement a range of educational classes.[20]

The Adult Education Program, a part of the Community Action Program (CAP), offered free

courses and included basic education "to teach those who [did] not read, or who want[ed] help in general reading improvement. It [was] also for high school drop-outs. The class [gave] help and instruction in spelling, and arithmetic." They provided high school equivalency diploma classes, consumer education, and courses in sewing and typing. Through this program, the NCVL also hosted lecture discussion groups on home, family life, and sex education in an effort to strengthen the "general moral fiber of the community." The first lecture topic was "Proper Sex Education for children," covering "growing up, going steady, planning for marriage, interfaith marriages, [and] developing sound sex attitudes."[21]

The league offered a number of educational spaces for youth, as well. For example, the Reading Room, a volunteer program run without federal funds, started with community book donations. The Reading Room committee hoped to offer children reading and other cultural activities that would eventually include music, drama, art, and dancing at the center on Saturdays and some evenings.[22]

Other youth-focused programs included the establishment of daycare centers to provide "social orientation and develop communication skills for children." By 1966, the NCVL ran daycare at St. James A. M. E. Church and St. Phillips Episcopal Church, which were operating half-day morning and afternoon classes. By February 1967, a third center was scheduled to open at the Church of St. Peter Claver. Aside from instruction, the children received checkups from a visiting physician. Staff sought to enhance its educational approach by attending the Project Head-Start convention at Bethel College in June 1964, where they joined other daycare providers from around the Twin Cities to learn more about the unique phases of childcare, the importance of community involvement, and arts, crafts, and activity ideas. The NCVL reportedly impressed the other convention attendees with its proposed cultural enrichment program.[23]



The Teens in Action program—sponsored by the North Central Voters League, directed by Donna Frelix, and based at the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center—created structured social activities and job opportunities for teenagers. Here, Frelix's son, John (*left*), and his friend, Jack Allison (*right*), learned to play pool at the center. *Photograph by Charles Bjorgen, in* Minneapolis Star, *July 28, 1967, courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society's Photo Negatives Collection.*

Beyond their work with younger children, the NCVL focused its energy on reaching teenagers and young adults. In June 1967, the league started the Teens in Action program, under the direction of Donna Frelix. The goal of this program was to reach 400 teens between the ages of thirteen and seventeen. That summer, the young people went horseback riding, swimming, bowling, picnicking, and camping. "One group made a trip to the Tyrone Guthrie Theater to see the Greek tragedy 'The House of Atreus.' Another formed a glee club." A girls' judo class was soon added, as well.[24]

One of the unique aspects of Teens in Action was the fact that the teens, themselves, helped supervise the program. Twenty group leaders were individually tasked with recruiting "10 youngsters from the street corners, pool halls and empty lots, where the hard-to-reach youths with nothing to do usually are found." NCVL leaders would "send guys down to the pool hall who [knew] the languages . . . with all the different slang" and who could relate to the demographics the league wanted to reach. Robert (Bobby) Hickman, a thirty-one-year-old group supervisor, noted that the program's staying power came from the fact that "when [the youth] know there's someone who cares . . . they usually come back."[25] While programs like Teens in Action sought to engage youth through leisure and recreation activities, an equally important area of NCVL intervention among young people was employment.

Creating Employment Opportunities

Critical of how the "power structure" worked to satisfy a few community members, while leaving the majority of the community "hidden inside ghettoes, hidden behind charts, graphs and statistics," the NCVL coordinated with Mayor Thomas Byrne's office and local businesses to facilitate job placement for youth and adults in St. Paul's Black neighborhoods. In August 1966, NCVL's Donald Johnson spoke at a meeting with the mayor, Gov. Rolvaag, "several large companies, the St. Paul Chamber of Commerce, organized labor and other public officials." The purpose was to "ease racial tensions through expanded job opportunities" and appeared to yield quick results when, that same day, the St. Paul Youth Opportunity Center (YOC) reported that "about 50 job offers had been received, mostly for unskilled positions in everything from foundry work to grocery store carryout." The following summer, the mayor met with representatives of twenty St. Paul businesses, asking them to "provide jobs for three weeks for up to 100 youths 13 to 19 years old." Organizations including NCVL helped recruit and refer youth to these opportunities.[26]

In February 1968, Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing (3M) announced it would open a job training center at a facility that produced coated abrasives and tapes "for unskilled minority and 'other disadvantaged' groups." In its planning, 3M consulted with the North Central Voters League and other organizations,[27] which were to refer prospective trainees. That May, the 3M training center opened,

> . . . accommodat[ing] 75 trainees in three eight-hour shifts, and [was] staffed with a special 12-man teacher team. Anyone taken in as a student at the center immediately [became] a 3M employee 'in training.' [The new workers] receive[d] benefits, including hospitalization, life insurance, holidays, vacations, rest periods, and service credit."[28]

Beyond recruiting and referring residents for employment opportunities, the NCVL played a crucial role in fostering community support for the establishment of new job-training institutions. In 1966, Minneapolis-based pastors James Holloway, Stanley King, and Louis Johnson announced their intention to create the Twin Cities Opportunities Industrialization Centers (TCOIC) program. From its conceptual beginnings, TCOIC counted on the support of the NCVL. The ministers initially aspired to have three locations: one in North Minneapolis, one in South Minneapolis, and "one in St. Paul with the cooperation, it hope[d], of the North Central Voters League."[29]

That fall, the TCOIC Steering Committee met with NCVL staff to forge a cooperative relationship. The league held a public meeting at its headquarters on September 21 to spread awareness of TCOIC and its potential benefits.[30]

The NCVL's support for TCOIC appears to have had some success in cultivating cooperation from Black St. Paulites. Editor-publisher Cecil E. Newman pointed to "more than 1,000 signatures from STP residents supporting the TCOIC," along with financial help from the community, including a $263 gift from the Auxiliaries of Mount Olivet Baptist Church. To further assist the TCOIC in finding its footing, the NCVL, along with other organizations, conducted a skill survey in the community to better determine what specific training programs were needed.[31] This hands-on approach, demonstrated in its aid to the TCOIC, typified all league work, including efforts to secure employment opportunities for community members, impact

In an undated photograph, Katie McWatt joins Gov. Karl Rolvaag (1963-1967 and later US ambassador to Iceland) (*center*) and St. Paul Mayor Thomas Byrne (1966-1970) (*right*) at a political event in St. Paul. *Courtesy of Ramsey County Historical Society.*

local politics and education, and improve life in St. Paul, generally.

The NCVL's Longer Legacy

The programs and approaches mentioned above are only a sample of what the NCVL offered its community during the mid-to-late-1960s. Other initiatives included an immunization clinic held on the first Wednesday of every month; a women's auxiliary program, which helped at-risk residents perform daily tasks; advocating against the expansion of police power in the city; helping organize food drives for impoverished families in Mississippi; summer field trips and recreational activities for children; a "leadership seminar to create a common front among churches and fraternal and other organizations;" holding space for activists from the wider, national civil rights movement to publicly present their activities and experiences; a Wednesday night forum in which attendees discussed "issues of the day," such as the environmental movement; and an attempt to create connections between the Black and Indigenous communities of the Twin Cities.[32]

NCVL members committed themselves to changing living conditions in St. Paul, promising consequences if city officials and business leaders ignored their demands. To ensure that those in power took them seriously, the league had "a direct action committee . . . whose sole responsibility [was] to put into operation plans that we have in the files in case we run into any difficulty. One phase of it would be . . . public demonstrations, and rent strikes."[33] This holistic agenda not only demonstrated concrete, on-the-ground outcomes while the NCVL was active, but also acted as a catalyst for later, everyday Twin Cities establishments.

In the midst of this progress, however, the NCVL's community presence began to wane following accusations of financial impropriety in 1968. Between May and October, the Ramsey County Citizens Committee (RCCC)—the designated overseer of county antipoverty programs by the OEO—took over the league's daycare centers, as well as its employment and community service programs.[34]

One allegation RCCC officials leveled against the NCVL was that "league officers charged food, principally spare ribs, to the child daycare project over a long period of time and then sold the ribs at Saturday night barbecues at the league headquarters to raise funds for other organization activities." According to these same officials, there existed no documentation regarding the amount of funds raised nor any explanation about what the league used those funds for. The RCCC also claimed that $22,263 in federal funds were unaccounted for and alleged NCVL misuse of funds from 1966 and 1967.[35]

The RCCC later offered to allow the NCVL to resume its role in executing federally funded programs if it agreed to refund $23,833 of supposedly misspent funds and dismiss then NCVL leaders Hill and Miller. Robert Anderson, chairman of the league at the time, stated that such an agreement was of no benefit to the NCVL or the public, and the offer was rejected. Anderson declared that "members and leaders of the Voters League had been accused of thievery. . . . and demanded that the accusations be substantiated . . . or withdrawn."[36]

While both sides eventually agreed to an independent audit and confirmed that the league would accept responsibility for the outcomes of that audit, disaccord persisted between the organizations regarding the extent to which the RCCC would control the NCVL's programming. The league filed two lawsuits against the RCCC for rent recovery, unpaid salaries, and punitive damages. In 1970, the matter was settled out of court when the RCCC paid Hill and Miller a total of $5,000, but the NCVL's ability to offer community-oriented poverty programs did not recover following this multi-year conflict.[37]

While this very public row seemed to have diminished the league's own role in St. Paul, the half-decade of work the NCVL did in the community had long-term effects that continue to positively influence the Twin Cities today. Some of the programs the NCVL created or supported went on to become well-established institutions in the Twin Cities. The TCOIC, for instance, merged with the vocational program Two or More in 1996 to form Summit Academy OIC, which currently runs two campuses in North Minneapolis.

According to Elder El-Kati, from an electoral perspective, we can understand the McWatt and Mann campaigns as "the beginning of the continuum of African American candidates

running for city council"[38] and other public offices. Present and past Black elected officials in St. Paul, including current Mayor Melvin Carter III and city council members Anika Bowie and Cheniqua Johnson, are, thus, part of a tradition started by community ancestors such as McWatt and Mann and supported, in early stages, by the NCVL.

Another NCVL contribution is its role in guiding emerging activists who went on to influence citywide grassroots politics. Bobby Hickman, for example, worked with the NCVL's Teens in Action program in the summer of 1967. One year later, he founded the Inner City Youth League (ICYL). The ICYL implemented long-term art education programs for youth throughout the late twentieth century, while also intervening in issues concerning employment and policing.[39] In addition to Hickman, the NCVL helped launch the public career of Elder El-Kati. El-Kati moved to St. Paul from Cleveland in 1963 and got involved with the NCVL during McWatt's city council campaign. League members eventually asked El-Kati to teach community-oriented Black history classes. He explains:

> They opened the [new] Hallie Q. Brown Center . . . and said 'Can we have space to teach Black history?' That's how I got into this thing. They did that. Next thing I know I was at this church, that church, that church. . . They the ones started my little . . . excursion . . . little trek in the Black history experience.[40]

El-Kati subsequently became one of the most stalwart educators in the Twin Cities. Among seemingly countless contributions, he helped create the Department of African American and African Studies at the University of Minnesota, taught history at Macalester College for decades, led the education program at The Way community center in Minneapolis, and helped start and run a variety of grassroots educational programs, such as Asili: Institute for Women of African Descent—a project that, itself, spawned a variety of other organizations, including the African American Academy for Accelerated Learning, Imhotep Science Academy, the Cultural Wellness Center, and Papyrus Publishing, Inc.[41]

The Way (later the New Way) community center in Minneapolis was one of many programs that blossomed out of the original work or was inspired by the initial grassroots efforts of St. Paul's North Central Voters League. Mahmoud El-Kati was an educator there. Today, Elder El-Kati continues to inspire and lead the community at large. *Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.*

We Cannot Forget; Work Continues

The North Central Voters League committed itself to becoming an institution *of* the community, making important interventions in the day-to-day lives of residents by listening to their needs and helping to create opportunities that did not previously exist. Over just a few years, the league implemented a variety of programs aimed at improving the lives of low-income Black St. Paulites.

The influence of the NCVL was not ephemeral, however, as we continue to live in the wake of what the league, its institutional forbears, and its activist progeny have wrought. As community members who occupy a world inherited from our elders and ancestors, we must recognize early advocacy groups like the NCVL that have unapologetically strode "down the hard path of conscientious endeavor"[42] in an attempt to leave us with a community that is a little more livable.

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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 Ȟeyáta Othúŋwe (Cloud Man's Village).

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

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

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

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MARCH OF THE GOVERNORS PODCAST

listen to the podcast

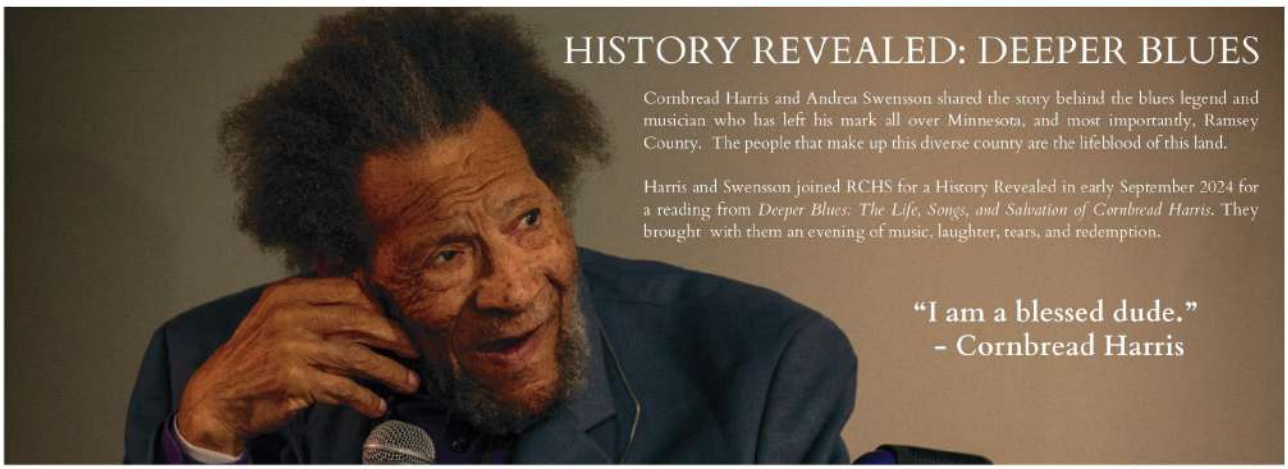
We thank the *March of the Governors Podcast* team for all of their hard work and the tales they shared in the four years producing and creating this exemplary capsule of history that centered around Minnesota governors. Paul Nelson, Bob Ernt, and Don Lee and their contributors brought to life the public service these governors put forth. The podcast series concluded in November, and we give the team a round of applause for this production.

The podcast started during the pandemic and developed into something that delved into lives, politics, and the people behind the revered role of leading their state into the future. The series provided brief snapshots of Minnesota's governors during their terms in office. As you might imagine, there's far more to each of their stories, both positive and negative.

Thank you for joining us on this journey, and we hope you will be inspired to learn more.

Pictured: Don Lee, Paul Nelson, and Ken Peterson

March of the Governors Contributors:
Paul Nelson, Bob Ernt, Don Lee (Host and Producers);
Tom Beer, Sydney Beane, David Bly, Rebekah Coffman, Anne Field, Frederick Johnson, Tom O'Connell, Ken Peterson, Hampton Smith, Tyler Norris Taylor, Steve Trimble, Frank White, Mary Wingerd, and Matthew Wright



HISTORY REVEALED: DEEPER BLUES

Cornbread Harris and Andrea Swensson shared the story behind the blues legend and musician who has left his mark all over Minnesota, and most importantly, Ramsey County. The people that make up this diverse county are the lifeblood of this land.

Harris and Swensson joined RCHS for a History Revealed in early September 2024 for a reading from *Deeper Blues: The Life, Songs, and Salvation of Cornbread Harris*. They brought with them an evening of music, laughter, tears, and redemption.

"I am a blessed dude."
– Cornbread Harris

Photo by Steven Cohen

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"An Opportunity to Speak, to Act, to Contribute, to Belong"

The Everyday Activism of the North Central Voters League in St. Paul

ADAM BLEDSOE, PAGE 23

In 1964, with the support of the newly established North Central Voters League (NCVL), St. Paul activist Katie McWatt ran for city council, winning the primary but falling short in the general election. She ran unsuccessfully for a Minnesota House seat four years later. Still, her determined efforts would pave the way for other Black Americans seeking public office. McWatt worked as an advisor with the Minnesota Employment Service Youth Opportunity Center and spent seventeen years at Central High School coordinating its Minority Education Program. She was vice-chair of the Ramsey County Democratic-Farmer-Labor (DFL) Party, president of the St. Paul NAACP, director of the St. Paul Urban League, first-chair of the St. Paul Housing Committee, and served on the board of the League of Women Voters Minnesota.

Here she is around 1968—possibly at that year's state DFL convention in St. Paul—sharing concerns with former St. Paulite Roy Wilkins, the executive secretary/director of the NAACP (1955-1977) (*third from left*); Walter Mondale (US Senator from Minnesota (1964-1976–later, vice president alongside President Jimmy Carter) (*fourth from left*); and others. To learn more about McWatt and the NCVL, read Adam Bledsoe's article on page 23. *Courtesy of Ramsey County Historical Society.*