

Ho-ho-ho! It *Bears* Repeating—

# ADVERTISING CHARACTERS in the LAND of SKY BLUE WATERS

MOIRA F. HARRIS

**IF YOU HAVE EVER DRIVEN** by the lofty statue of the Jolly Green Giant in Blue Earth, paused for a “photo op” with Paul Bunyan in Bemidji, chuckled at the roadside poetry of Burma-Shave signs, or sung along with the Hamm’s Beer bear’s “Land of Sky Blue Waters” jingle, you’ve been touched by Minnesota-based advertising art. For more than a century Minnesota companies have marketed their products with memorable regional themes and characters created by in-house employees, advertising-agency staffers, and freelance artists. *Advertising Age*, a trade magazine, named Betty Crocker, the Jolly Green Giant, and the Pillsbury Doughboy among the century’s top ten advertising icons; the Burma-Shave and Hamm’s bear advertising campaigns placed among the 100 best campaigns.<sup>1</sup>

While artists such as Norman Rockwell, Maxfield Parrish, and Edward Brewer signed their paintings for magazine advertisements or posters, most illustrators remain unknown outside the advertising world. In fact, many advertising characters, or “brand icons,” have been the work of advertising agencies such as Leo Burnett in Chicago (once called “the sculptor of a Mount Rushmore of American brand icons”) and Campbell-Mithun in Minneapolis.<sup>2</sup>

As companies merge and become part of larger corporations based outside the state or country, only the memory of unique advertising campaigns may remain. This is an unfortunate loss because the ads are an important part of local business history. As television news anchor Dan Rather always says, “They are part of our world.”

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As television news anchor Dan Rather frequently says, “They are part of our world.”

The field of advertising art encompasses everything from colorful calendar images made famous by companies like St. Paul’s Brown & Bigelow to huge neon signs that become place markers in our towns. The rhyming signs invented by the Burma-Vita Company of Minneapolis for its shaving cream, though not strictly visual art, also have an important place in the history of Minnesota advertising. Similarly, every company and institution uses some sort of visual logo for its corporate identity and products. Target’s bull’s-eye, Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company’s 3M, and the familiar letters of Hormel Foods’ SPAM are well-known Minnesota examples.

One of the oldest of Minnesota’s advertising characters is Rastus, the Cream of Wheat chef. In 1896 the Diamond Milling Company of Grand Forks, North Dakota, began advertising Cream of Wheat before the company’s move to Minneapolis. Emery Mapes, the firm’s president and a former printer, had originally used a woodcut of a black chef carrying a skillet over his shoulder as the trademark on his cereal packages. When he met a waiter in a Chicago restaurant whose face he thought more appealing, he had artists create the character Rastus.<sup>3</sup>

After 1900 the company, renamed Cream of Wheat in honor of its most famous product, not only advertised in national magazines such as the *Ladies’ Home Journal* and the *Saturday Evening Post*, but it hired well-known illustrators to create scenes showing a smiling Rastus serving his nourishing fare. James Montgomery Flagg, N. C. Wyeth, and Philip R. Goodwin were among the 58 artists who painted Cream of Wheat ads. Wyeth’s painting *Where the Mail Goes, Cream of Wheat Goes* (1906), which substituted a white mailman for the black chef, was one of three canvases later donated to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.<sup>4</sup>

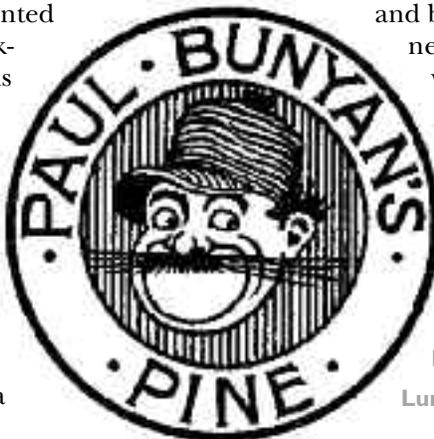
Between 1911 and 1926 St. Paul portraitist and illustrator Edward V. Brewer painted 102 scenes for Cream of Wheat, making this client the major source of his income.<sup>5</sup> Some artists signed their work and received a credit line as well, but Brewer took the identification one step further. He appears in one painting as a sculptor working on a bust of Rastus, who poses with his head jauntily tilted and a cheerful smile on his face. Today, the face of Rastus still appears on Cream of Wheat boxes, a

trademark as recognizable as the Quaker Oats man or the Gerber baby.

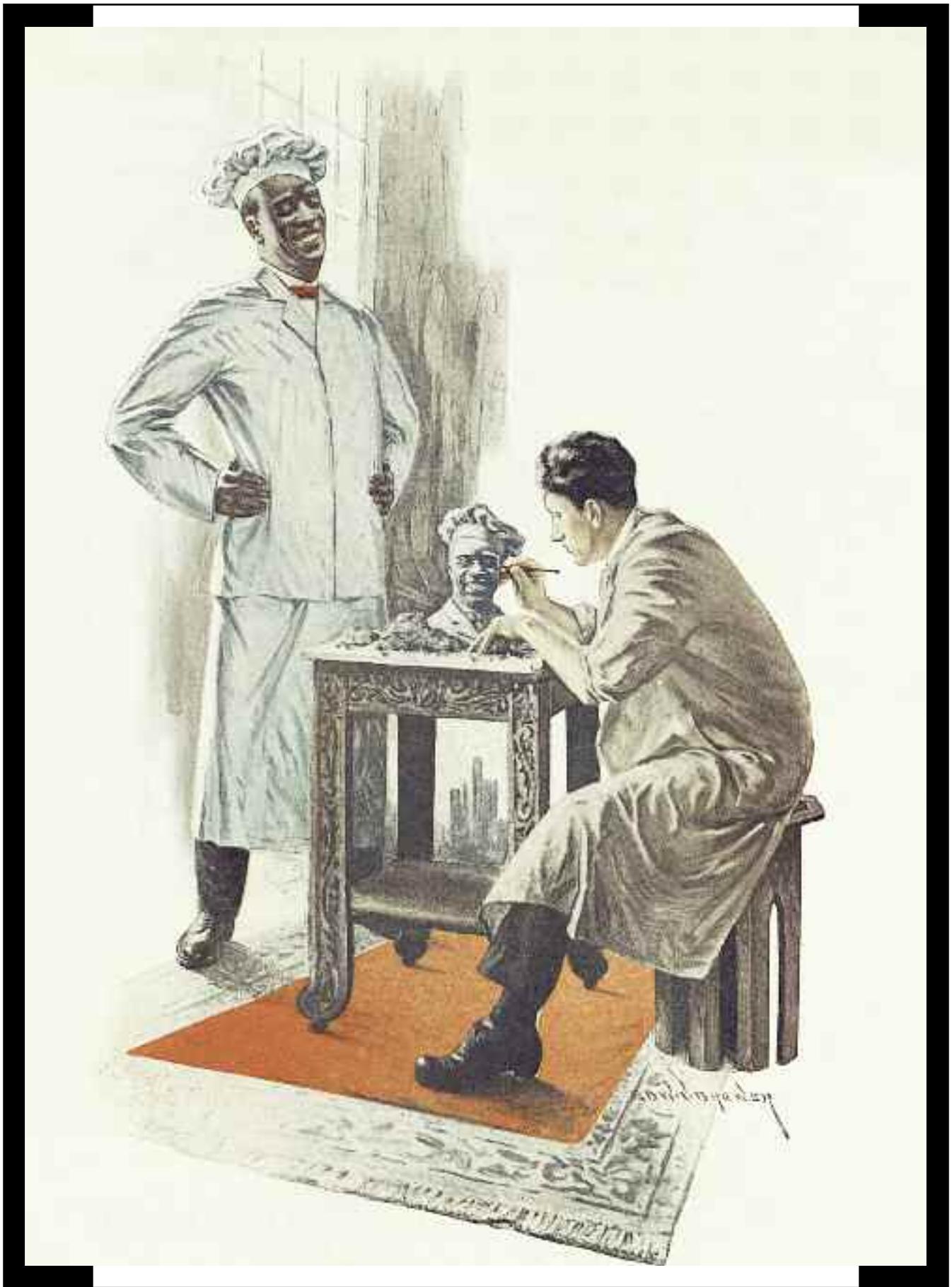
Another familiar Minnesota advertising character is lumberjack Paul Bunyan. Although primarily a character in tall tales and legends, Bunyan served as the brand icon of T. B. Walker’s Red River Lumber Company and owed at least some of his fame to that original connection.<sup>6</sup> William B. Laughead of Walker’s advertising department was responsible for the first visual images of the giant logger that appeared in a small book in 1914. Many artists have drawn Bunyan since and created appropriately giant statues. Although no definitive version of the oversize lumberjack exists, his shirt is usually plaid, his overalls blue, and his hair black.

Unlike Bunyan, Reddy Kilowatt, the lightbulb-nosed symbol of electric power, wasn’t born in Minnesota but instead was the brainstorm of Ashton B. Collins Sr., general manager of the Alabama Power Company. Collins had attended an industry convention where executives were discussing how electricity could be personalized and humanized for consumers. While he was returning home, a storm with dramatic lightning bolts inspired his idea for Reddy Kilowatt. More than 200 utility companies around the world have used the character since he was introduced in 1925; Collins himself left the Alabama company to form his own licensing venture.<sup>7</sup>

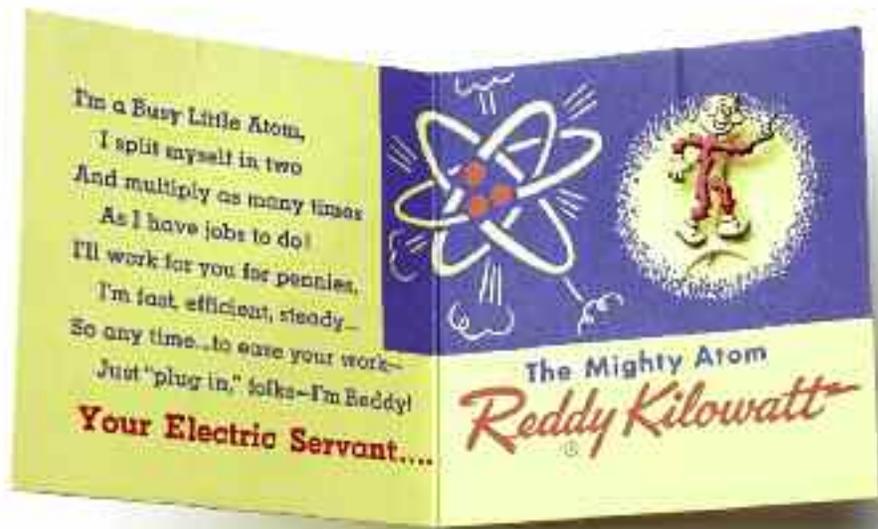
In Minnesota, Reddy has played a very important part in Northern States Power (NSP) Company’s marketing activities since 1942. He appeared in ads and on such objects as billboards, pens, and jewelry. In 1959 Reddy was replaced by the popular cartoon duo Homer and Roy, who promoted NSP’s “Electricity’s Penny Cheap” slogan for the next 14 years. Reddy could still be seen in cameo appearances on television commercials and in 1960 as a 30-foot neon sign. In the spring of 1998, however, NSP purchased exclusive rights to Reddy and created the Reddy Kilowatt Corporation as a wholly owned subsidiary. Billboards and bus signs announced “He’s back!” The new Reddy Kilowatt has rounder eyes and wears running shoes instead of elf footwear, but he retains his angular, red, lightning-bolt body. He also has a sibling, a small-sized pal named Reddy Flame, whose blue-flame head and body symbolize the company’s distribution of natural gas. Boasting pipeline



Paul Bunyan logo of Red River Lumber Company, 1920s



"A Proud Day for Rastus," Cream of Wheat ad, *Saturday Evening Post*, March 28, 1914



Reddy Kilowatt lapel pin (7/8") on ad card, about 1955

arms and legs and an oven-knob nose, Reddy Flame was drawn by a Minneapolis artist following guidelines established by NSP's communications department.<sup>8</sup>

**THE TALE OF ANOTHER** Minnesota icon, the Jolly Green Giant, begins properly, for a giant, with the Brothers Grimm and a sweet-tasting pea. The Minnesota Valley Canning Company of Le Sueur had been canning peas and corn since 1903. In 1921 Ward Cosgrove, company secretary, brought home a larger sized, tastier pea from Europe, for which the company then sought a trademark. When a lawyer advised them that the pea could not be protected, but a label and character or brand icon could be, the giant was born. The first fierce, ogre-like image that appeared on labels came from a book of fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm. Le Sueur artist Jack Baker is credited with both the original drawing and the advertising slogan, "Picked at the fleeting moment of perfect flavor."<sup>9</sup> Baker's creation, which looked more like a dwarf than a giant, wore a bearskin suit and a scowl. Cradled in his arms was a very large pod of peas.

The first major change in the character's image came in 1928, when executives changed his skin from white to green. A copywriter from Erwin Wasey and Company in Chicago also thought the figure should stand taller, and so the giant grew, now proudly holding high his peas or corn. When advertising copywriter Leo Burnett opened his own agency in 1935, Minnesota Valley Canning became one of his first accounts. Burnett is supposed to have called the muscular man the "jolly" Green Giant. A full-page ad in *Life* magazine in 1946 noted these ancestors on the giant's family tree: the Grimm Brothers' giant, Paul Bunyan, and

Hiawatha. While the first two bear weapons, Hiawatha, like the Jolly Green Giant, carries a large ear of corn. By 1950 the brand icon had become so widely known that Minnesota Valley Canning renamed itself the Green Giant Company to take advantage of its success.<sup>10</sup>

Over the years the figure of the giant became sleeker, more muscular, and taller, but he has remained unmistakably green from his hair to his suit of leaves and bare feet. Making the transition from label design to print ads was easy for the giant, but in 1959 his move to television proved difficult. Neither a man in a green rubber suit, a puppet, nor an animated figure seemed to work, according to Robert Noel of the Leo Burnett agency. Finally the idea of standing a life-sized figure in a miniaturized valley emerged. This giant stood with his hands on his hips as he smiled and later boomed his happy "Ho-ho-ho!" Other subtle changes since have included a weight gain to make him appear more mature, shoes, and a red scarf, introduced on boil-in-the-bag frozen-food packaging.<sup>11</sup>

While early advertising used a naturalistic figure, ads placed in the *New Yorker* magazine beginning in the 1950s featured a cartoon Green Giant. In 1960 the cartoon character appeared in one unusual two-page spread devoted to the experiences of a summer worker in Le Sueur. The feature reprised author Max Shulman's story "The Fleeting Moment of Perfect Flavor," written for *Northwest Life* magazine 15 years earlier. In it, Shulman described how, as a Paul Revere on a bicycle, he had been hired to alert workers when the right moment to pick peas had come.<sup>12</sup>

In 1994 the Minneapolis design firm of Pedersen Gesk was hired to improve package design. Rather than the full figure of the giant, the company chose a head-and-shoulders view, but the important characteristics of the Green Giant went unchanged. Action and speech, other than his "Ho-ho-ho!'s," remained the domain of his junior companion, Little Green Sprout, introduced in 1973.<sup>13</sup>

Sprout, another character with a penchant for green, has been described as a combination of Tom Sawyer and Peter Pan. As a sidekick, Sprout could speak and act in ways that the Giant could not, much as Robin the Boy Wonder contrasts with Batman. Many preliminary versions of Sprout surfaced before the creative staff at Leo Burnett felt that they had found the right concept. Credit for that idea has been given to a 12-member group including Robert Noel, Al

Samuelson, and Milt Schaffer, an artist who had previously worked with Walt Disney.<sup>14</sup> Not only did Sprout speak, but he soon became a new star in the collectibles world. Plastic Sprouts, rag-doll Sprouts, and even a pamphlet on manners written for children were soon being produced with his image.

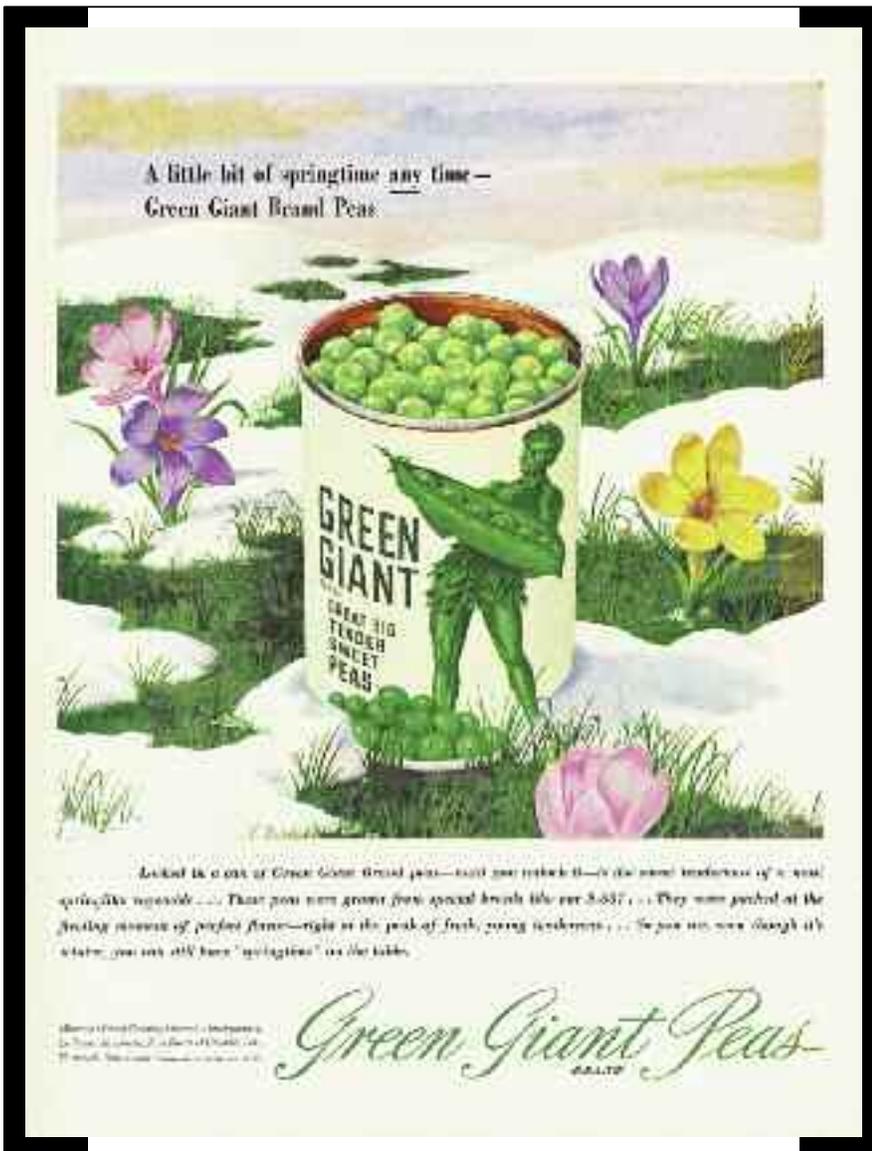
Today, on a hill along State Highway 169 above the company's original headquarters in Le Sueur, the Jolly Green Giant rises from a billboard to survey his valley. Another tribute to his fame, a large statue, stands in a southern Minnesota park near Blue Earth. Like the numerous statues of Paul Bunyan, this fiberglass Jolly

Green Giant, erected in 1978, not only advertises commercial products but promotes tourism by attracting visitors to this example of roadside Americana. Now part of the Pillsbury Company under the Diageo corporate umbrella, the giant (sans Sprout) is part of a \$20 million advertising campaign to establish him as an even more powerful brand icon.<sup>15</sup>

**WHEN THE MINNESOTA** Cooperative Creameries Association, incorporated in 1921, decided to hold a contest to select a brand name and logo for its sweet-cream butter, Land O'Lakes was the winning name. The organization changed its name to Land O'Lakes Creameries Association in 1926, and its popular logo featuring an Indian maiden has now been a Minnesota brand icon for almost seventy-five years.<sup>16</sup>

The first Land O'Lakes logo—a young woman in profile shading her eyes and looking across a lake—was the work of an unknown designer. In 1928 a painting of the girl, now raising a butter carton toward the viewer, inspired a new, more complex design. It appeared on

Jolly Green Giant magazine ad, 1947



Little Green Sprout dolls, inflatable (25") and hard-plastic (6 1/2"), mid-1970s

Land O'Lakes packaging until 1939, when illustrator Jess Betlach created the basic look used today. Eliminated from his scene are the flowers, cows, and other details of the 1920s landscape. The maiden, who is somewhat taller, sits on a grassy knoll with a band of blue representing the lake and a large, very buttery sky filling the background.

For several decades another young Indian girl joined Minnesota's family of brand icons. Instead of a feather in her headband, however, she wore a blue



Land O'Lakes butter box, 1920s, and label, 1928-39

flame. In 1959 the Minneapolis Gas Company introduced Minnegasco, a cartoon figure intended to symbolize the company, the city's Indian heritage, and natural gas. Drawn by Gene Carr of the Knox-Reeves agency in Minneapolis, Minnegasco appeared in print advertising, brochures, television animation, and on company uniforms, trucks, and even propane-storage tanks. The Minnegasco image painted on a 108-foot tank in Burnsville was probably the tallest brand icon ever used in Minnesota. In the 1980s the company's logo was redesigned and guidelines for her use were developed, but Minnegasco was gradually phased out. While the company had received some criticism for using a Native



American woman as its symbol, the reason reported for the phase-out was simply the desire for a more modern image.<sup>17</sup>

**WHILE AD CAMPAIGNS** are usually the work of an advertising agency, the memorable Minnesota Burma-Shave signs were an in-house idea. In the mid-1920s Allan Odell, son of the owner of the Burma-Vita company, had noticed a series of signs advertising a gas station posted along an Illinois roadside. He suggested using that approach to promote his company's new shaving cream, but agencies in Minneapolis told him it wouldn't work. So Odell and his brother Leonard began making the signs themselves, using scrap lumber and stenciling the words of short, humorous verses on the boards. The last board always carried the name "Burma-Shave" in script. The Odells paid landowners \$25 for the use of their property, and the installers of the red-and-white signs were known in the company as "PhDs" or "post-hole diggers." Lining the highways for some four decades, Burma-Shave boards were no longer erected after 1965 because of federal highway-beautification laws. But the signs loom large in the minds of Minnesota travelers who remember them fondly.<sup>18</sup>

An unusually long-lived advertising character, domestic queen Betty Crocker, began her role almost accidentally. In spring 1921 the Minneapolis-based Washburn-Crosby Company ran a picture-puzzle advertisement in a national magazine. The puzzle showed a village scene with customers carrying sacks of Gold Medal Flour out of a store to their trucks. The prize for completing the puzzle was a pincushion fashioned as a miniature sack of the flour. Some 30,000 readers responded, including several hundred who also wanted to ask questions about cooking. When distributing the prizes, the company's advertising department decided to sign the letters "Betty Crocker," combining a friend-

ly sounding woman's name with the last name of a recently retired board member. An image of Betty Crocker first appeared in print ads in the early 1920s. By 1924 the fictional Crocker hosted a radio program. Four years later recipes with her signature graced sacks of Gold Medal Flour, and by 1932 signed coupons for silverware made their appearance.<sup>19</sup>

Betty Crocker's first official portrait was rendered by Neysa Moran McMein, a well-known illustrator and portrait painter. Historian James Gray wrote that the artist had given Betty Crocker "a fine Nordic brow and shape of skull, a jaw of slightly Slavic resolution, and features



Minnegasco, Minneapolis Gas Company icon

that might be claimed contentedly by various European groups (eyes, Irish; nose, classic Roman)—the perfect composite of the twentieth-century American woman." She was serious, competent, and reassuring. Popular-culture observer Karal Ann Marling noted that the face within its oval outline hints at a colonial portrait and "suggests the past, a heritage, a disembodied memory and maternal authority."<sup>20</sup>

Eight portraits of Betty have appeared since her debut, with her newest change dating to 1996. At the time her most recent makeover was announced, a small exhibit in the University of Minnesota's Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum displayed her previous incarnations. This exhibit reflected a national advertising effort, called "The Spirit of Betty Crocker," that marked the icon's seventy-fifth birthday.<sup>21</sup>

Betty's newest image, painted by University of Minnesota at Morris art professor John Stuart Ingle, was one part of the celebration. Another aspect was a contest selecting 75 women who embodied the qualities of Betty Crocker, fictional homemaker and heroine. These women were "committed to family and friends . . . resourceful and creative in handling everyday tasks, and enjoyed cooking and baking." Their faces became part of a computerized composite from which Ingle created his portrait. Betty Crocker still wore her hair short, as she always had. She still dressed in red and white. But her ethnicity had changed. Her skin tones hinted at a mixed heritage. The first lady of food, as

James Gray called her, was serene and competent as ever, but her appearance was a bit more Hispanic or Native American than pure Nordic. The winners of the contest received a copy of the portrait, a Betty Crocker red-spoon diamond pin, and a copy of *Betty Crocker's New Cookbook*. Grants of \$500 went to local elementary schools and a selection of 75 Betty Crocker products to local food banks on behalf of each winner.<sup>22</sup>

Since 1954 a red teaspoon with Betty's name written on it (rendered by corporate design firm Lippincott and Margulies) has graced the company's flour and food mixes, cookbooks, and houseware products. When Betty Crocker appears, only her framed face is ever seen, thus avoiding the problem of a wardrobe that might need frequent updating. In May 1998 General Mills announced the creation of a larger Betty Crocker division supported by a multimillion-dollar advertising campaign.<sup>23</sup>

General Mills' Minnesota rival, Pillsbury Company, has a familiar brand icon of its own. Poppin' Fresh Doughboy originated as a three-dimensional dough-colored body sporting a white chef's toque and scarf and bright blue eyes. He was created in 1965 by Rudy

Betty Crocker, as redesigned in the 1990s





Pillsbury's Poppin' Fresh Doughboy (7"), 1970s

Perz of the Leo Burnett agency. The intent was to group all of the company's refrigerated dough products together under one symbol. For more than three decades he has appeared on packaging, in print ads, and in television commercials, where a poke to his stomach elicits his delighted giggle. This sound was first recorded by Paul Frees, who also provided the voice of Boris Badenov in the *Rocky and His Friends* animated cartoons. For television, Doughboy is filmed using stop-motion technique, and each new position of his limbs or change in his mouth requires a different head or body.<sup>24</sup>

Today the Doughboy's website ([www.doughboy.com](http://www.doughboy.com)) features numerous variations of the character in plush and vinyl, as well as his cookbooks and games. Licensing an advertising character for production as a toy is not common, but Poppin' Fresh looks soft, cuddly, and stuffed. Warren Dotz and James Morton, historians of advertising icons, note that Poppin' Fresh is a "gold mine among collectors"; at one time Sears Roebuck

sold dolls of him, his children Popper and Bun Bun, and their pets. In a 1998 offer called "More Fun Than a Bun!" a beanbag Doughboy capable of riding an Oscar Mayer Wienerwhistle sled could be purchased for cash and UPC symbols cut from the food-product packaging.<sup>25</sup>

**SELDOM SEEN TODAY** yet one of the best remembered of Minnesota's brand icons is the Hamm's Beer bear, a figure with an up-and-down history but a well-established domain in northern Minnesota. What are the bare facts about the happy-go-lucky bear? As a brand icon he is younger than Betty Crocker and the Jolly Green Giant but older than Poppin' Fresh. When the Theo. Hamm Brewing Company began business in 1865, it first advertised with its founder's signature in script and an eagle that carried a small banner in its beak. Names and eagles are perhaps the most common brewery trademarks, indicating pride and ethnicity as well as power and patriotism.<sup>26</sup>

By the 1950s Hamm's had been using trademarked Minnesota slogans such as "Refreshingly yours from the Land of Sky Blue Waters" and "Born in the Land of Sky Blue Waters," but the company's advertising took off nationally only after a cartoon bear appeared in the company's television ads. The concept was probably first suggested by Howard Swift, a Los Angeles artist who had worked on Walt Disney's animated film *Fantasia*. In 1953 Swift visited Minnesota to make his suggestion that the brewery use a humorous bear to advertise its beer. The company and Campbell-Mithun, its Minneapolis ad agency, agreed, and the bear debuted the following year in a 60-second television commercial that showed him trying valiantly to keep his footing in a Bunyanesque activity—log-rolling. The icon was first sketched for what became prize-winning television ads by Cleo Hovel; the unforgettable jingle music came from the old song *Natoma*, reworked by Ernie Garven to words written by Don Grawert.

Later the bear appeared on packaging, glassware, beach towels, sports schedules, salt-and-pepper shakers, decanters, and even giant watches. Like his character colleagues, he was a frequent participant in civic events and rode atop parade floats in summer and winter festivals. After the founding family sold Hamm's in 1965, the brewery's advertising was handled by other firms, not all of which shared Minnesotans' fondness for the bear and his "Land of Sky Blue Wa-a-ters" music. Though absent from television after 1968, the bear continued to be marketed as a collectible character and as a point-of-purchase display item. When consumers and beer distributors protested his absence,

he returned briefly in 1972 but quickly vanished again, replaced on television by a live Kodiak bear named Sasha who roamed the state's boundary waters with his trainer, Earl Hammond. On October 7, 1979, the cartoon version reappeared in a full-page ad in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press's* sesquicentennial salute to the city. In the ad, old photographs of the Theo. Hamm Brewing Company stressed the brewery's history while in the corner a happy bear (drawn by Bill Stein) hugged both a bottle and Carl Milles's onyx Indian statue known as *The Vision of Peace*.

Hamm's bear counter-display calendar (16"), about 1970



Even the most appreciated brand icons need to be updated and renewed. Over the years, like Betty Crocker and the Jolly Green Giant, the bear's image for various forms of print media was redrawn by Bill Stein, Pete Bastiansen, Pat Nolan, Ray Pedersen, Cy DeCosse, and Patrick DesJarlait. While fundamentally a black bear with a panda-like white stomach, in his later years he sported a short, red bartender's jacket and, occasionally, even spoke, pointing out cheerfully, "It bears repeating!" Throughout, his basic appeal remained that of a friendly, klutzy creature cavorting with his animal friends amid the "pines and lofty balsams," as the jingle goes. While corporations generally prefer characters "to reflect strength, heroism, and honesty," advertisers have found that the public likes and remembers characters with other traits, such as the cheerful loser.<sup>27</sup> The bear gets into trouble and is often defeated (like Charlie the StarKist tuna; Trix, the cereal rabbit; or Tony the Tiger), but in triumph or in defeat he awakens a sympathetic response in viewers.

A DIFFERENT MINNESOTA animal—the thirteen-lined ground squirrel, or gopher—was first chosen by the legislature in 1857 to represent the state. Today, the gopher officially represents both the University of Minnesota and all of Minnesota's cities, towns, and residents, but in one of its first uses St. Paul artist R. O. Sweeny cartooned the state's legislators as rodents pulling a program favored by railroad interests in an 1858 loan scandal.<sup>28</sup>

There have been several versions of the university's gopher over the years. George Grooms, an Iowa artist,



Hamm's bear coasters



drew a semirealistic seated gopher in 1940. Wearing a cheerful smile and a beanie, that gopher was used for more than three decades despite the artist's later admission that his model had been a chipmunk.<sup>29</sup>

In 1979 the director of the University of Minnesota alumni association, Vince Bilotta, decided that a new gopher would be a fitting symbol for the group's seventy-fifth anniversary. Bilotta liked the Hamm's Beer bear so he called the brewery for the name of the artist. The original artist was dead, he was told, but Bill Stein, who had drawn the bear many times for ads, could be contacted in Minneapolis. Stein's resulting cheerful gopher was accepted and sent on mascot duty until 1985, when an updated image was sought again.<sup>30</sup>

Macho and aggressive was what the gopher should now be. Steve Wanvig, an artist from Owatonna, drew a running, fist-in-your-face rodent wearing an "M" letter sweater. For the sports crowd, that was the right image. Others preferred the old gopher and formed a protest group called SOW or Save Our Wimp, championing the mild-mannered demeanor of the previous gopher. With slight changes to reduce his ferocity—removing his claws, thinning his torso—another version was approved for use by the university and licensed to the numerous manufacturers of memorabilia. The spelling of his name was also established as "Goldy," a nickname originally derived from sportscaster Halsey Hall's name for the winning Golden Gophers football teams



University of Minnesota New Student Week pin with gopher (2 1/4"), 1948

of the 1930s coached by Bernie Bierman.<sup>31</sup>

Since 1952 students wearing gopher costumes have entertained fans at games and other university events. At first Goldy was selected from the football marching band. In recent years Goldy, who was once considered male, has become "a universal Gopher," so male and female students both don the large head-and-tailed costume. Like the original Hamm's bear and the Land O'Lakes Indian maiden, the gopher is silent.<sup>32</sup>

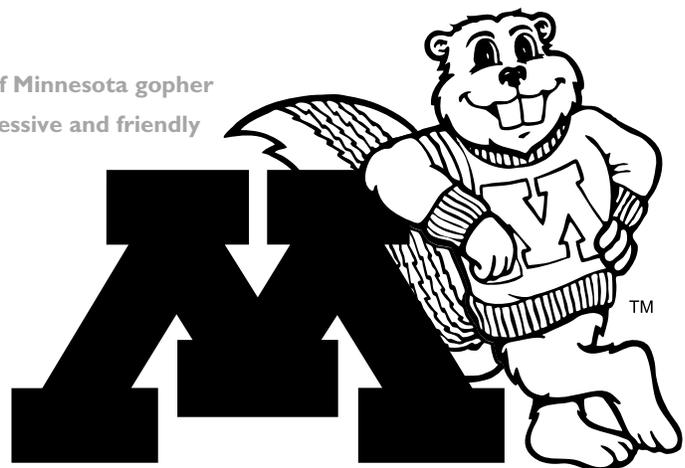
**FROM A COMPANY'S VIEWPOINT,**

the success of a brand icon is measured by how effectively it establishes the product in the marketplace. Do consumers remember and purchase the product because of the character? If sales drop, is it the brand icon's fault? What if the character's popularity surpasses the product's allure, with the result that the consumers buy the toy, for example, and not the cereal? Ultimately a brand icon's corporate existence depends on the product's success.

The success of the many cartoon advertising figures is often linked to the popularity of Walt Disney's animated films and to the animation experience of artists such as Milt Shaffer and Howard Swift. In an article about the cartoon character Joe Camel, created in 1974 for Camel cigarettes, tobacco-company executives observed, for example, that consumers "are often more trusting of cartoon representatives than their real-life



University of Minnesota gopher logos, aggressive and friendly



counterparts.” Certainly, cartoon characters easily made the switch from movie entertainment to television advertising. As writers Dotz and Morton comment, “The successful character needed a personality; it had to be somebody,” and “Television made ad characters real.”<sup>33</sup>

Advertising characters can do more than simply advocate the purchase of a product. As Marilyn Kern-Foxworth observed, “Whether real or fictitious these icons establish an image” and perpetuate “perceptions of other peoples and other cultures.” For her, Rastus, the Cream of Wheat chef, represents “a subservient, very docile side of African American life, and we no longer see ourselves that way.” Similarly, Joe Camel’s swinging lifestyle became so well known and was perceived to be so attractive to children that public pressure eventually forced the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company to cease using him as a brand icon for its cigarettes. According to a marketing executive, however, the ads were targeted at smokers aged 18 to 24 years, not children. Joe Camel was intended to be someone “who’s fun, who you’d like to be around.”<sup>34</sup>

Successful brand icons can have exceptional longevity, as have many of the Minnesota characters. Icons may be de-emphasized as ad campaigns change but later revived and reintroduced. One writer has called this reuse “retro chic,” an “update based on fond memories of an idealized past.”<sup>35</sup> Brand icons endure even when companies become divisions of larger corporate entities with headquarters located in other states.

When a company withdraws a product from the marketplace or ceases to advertise widely, brand icons develop another life in the world of collectibles and popular culture. Collectors’ guides establish values for these examples of commercial art and marketing, while collector groups attempt to document what a company produced and licensed. Statues of the most famous brand icons, such as Paul Bunyan and the Jolly Green Giant, will continue to be visited in person or at websites such as [www.roadsideamerica.com](http://www.roadsideamerica.com). Publications like the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, *Saturday Evening Post*, or even the *New Yorker* (where Leo Burnett felt the Green Giant would reach a new market) once brought ads from Minnesota companies to a national audience. Now websites carry their words, images, and collectible items to global markets.

**Famous Trademarks of MINNESOTA . . .**

Invite you to measure Minnesota for your decentralization requirements.

Let your expansion plans include Minnesota. We will help you select an ideal location to fit your requirements. Minnesota labor will measure up to your needs, both from a qualitative and a quantitative standpoint. Here are the trademarks of some of the well known companies who have found that Minnesota fully measures up to the requirements necessary for profitable enterprise. Come to Minnesota for your vocative and investigate business opportunities while here.

**MINNESOTA Land of 10,000 Lakes**

For full information write, Department of Business Research and Development, State Capitol, St. Paul, Minnesota.

Ad showing famous Minnesota trademarks, including the Land O’Lakes maiden, *Fortune*, 1946

Similarly, what once seemed totally commercial and ephemeral now becomes worth saving. Urban preservationists have launched campaigns to save the largest examples of corporate marketing—neon signs—and argue that classic signs are an important part of a commercial district’s heritage. St. Paul’s blinking Jacob Schmidt brewery letters and the red “1st” on the First National Bank Building and Minneapolis’s Grain Belt beer bottle-cap and the Northwestern National Bank weatherball have contributed to Minnesota’s heritage of advertising art.<sup>36</sup>

Even Minnesotans who never drank beer or used shaving cream will not soon forget the jingles, signboards, and cartoon creatures that were once a part of the state’s life. As newspaper columnist Joe Soucheray commented when the fate of the Hamm’s brewery buildings was being discussed in fall 1997, “It was only a beer, Hamm’s, but when that building comes down you will hear a faint tom-tom in the wind.”<sup>37</sup> And, perhaps, in farewell salute to a friend and brand-icon colleague, a “Ho-ho-ho!” and an embarrassed giggle will join that echoing drumbeat. □

## NOTES

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1. *Advertising Age*, Mar. 29, 1999, supplement, 18-19, 44.
2. See *New York Times*, Mar. 22, 1998, p. C7. When Leo Burnett died in 1971, the Green Giant Company noted his passing and its long relationship with his agency. See articles and sketch of a tearful Green Giant in *Nibletter*, July 1971, p. 1.
3. *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, Oct. 7, 1993, p. 1D, 2D; “Cream of Wheat’s Cream,” *Fortune* 19 (Jan. 1939): 72.
4. David R. Stivers, archivist, Nabisco Corp., to author, Oct. 5, 1998; James Tenser, “The Nabisco Century: One Hundred Years of Great Tastes,” *Brand Marketing*, May 1998, p. 80; photograph, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, Feb. 24, 1971, p. 4E. See also Patricia Condon Johnston, “Edward Brewer, Illustrator and Portrait Painter,” *Minnesota History* 47 (Spring 1980): 3-15, for the artist’s career and some Cream of Wheat ads.
5. Alice L. Muncaster, Ellen Sawyer, and Ken Kapson, *The Baby Made Me Buy It: A Treasury of Babies Who Sold Yesterday’s Products* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1991), 80.
6. Robert M. Hanft, *Red River, Paul Bunyan’s Own Lumber Company* (Chico, CA: Chico State University Center for Business and Economic Research, 1980), 209.
7. Bruce Colt, telephone conversation with author, June 12, 1998; *New York Times*, Oct. 1, 1998, p. C5.
8. Carol Pine, *Northern States People: The Past Seventy Years* (St. Paul: North Central Printing, 1979), 104; Northern States Power, *Annual Report, 1960*, back-cover photograph; *Energywise*, newsletter, Summer and Autumn 1998, p. 1; *New York Times*, Oct. 1, 1998, p. C5.
9. Janice Jorgensen, ed., *Encyclopedia of Consumer Brands* (Detroit: St. James Press, 1994), 1: 226.
10. *Life*, July 15, 1946, p. 22.

11. *Memoirs of a Giant: Green Giant Company’s First 75 Years, 1903-1978* (Le Sueur: Green Giant Company, 1979), 24; *Nibletter*, June 1971, p. 5.
12. *New Yorker*, Apr. 16, 1960, p. 58-59; *Northwest Life*, 18 (Apr. 1945): 19-20.
13. *City Business*, Jan. 28, 1994; Paula Buchta, Pedersen and Gesk, vice-president, telephone interview with author, Oct. 28, 1998.
14. *Giant* (newsletter), Mar. 1973, p. 8-9.
15. *New York Times*, Aug. 9, 1999, p. C13; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Aug. 10, 1999, p. B1.
16. Here and below, “The Story of Land O’Lakes Name and Trademark,” leaflet (Minneapolis: Land O’Lakes, 1992); Kenneth D. Ruble, *Men to Remember* (Minneapolis: Land O’Lakes, 1947), 134-40, 235-51.
17. *Minneapolis Tribune*, June 27, 1961, p. 5; “The Minne Logo,” Minnegasco information sheet, 1990s. In 1969 the company’s annual report noted that Minnegasco was ten years old and had been used on billboards, customer bills, and jewelry and as a 13-inch doll and a 15-foot figure “outside major company properties.”
18. Sharon Carter, “Burma-Shave,” *American History* 31 (Jan.-Feb. 1997): 52-56; Morgan, *Symbols*, 88. For books that list all of the verses used on Burma-Shave’s roadside signs, as well as some poetic bits that never appeared on signboards see Frank Rowsome Jr., *The Verse by the Side of the Road: The Story of the Burma-Shave Signs and Jingles* (Brattleboro, VT: Stephen Greene Press, 1965); Bill Vossler, *Burma-Shave: The Rhymes, the Signs, and the Times* (St. Cloud: North Star Press, 1998).
19. James Gray, *Business without Boundary: The Story of General Mills* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954), 172.
20. Walt Reed, ed., *The Illustrator in America, 1900-1960’s* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corp., 1966), 98; Gray, *Business without Boundary*, 174; Karal Ann Marling, “Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book: The Aesthetics of American Food in the 1950s,” *Prospects* 17 (1992): 81.
21. General Mills, “Betty Crocker: From Yesterday to Today,” fact sheet, 1996; *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, Sept. 12, 1995, p. 1A, 10A. For earlier portraits, see Charles Goodrum

and Helen Dalrymple, *Advertising in America: The First 200 Years* (New York: Harry Abrams, Inc., 1990), 40. Artists involved in Crocker's makeovers included Hilda Taylor (1955), Joe Bowler (1965, 1968, and 1980), Jerome Ryan (1972), and Harriet Perchik (1986).

22. *Star Tribune*, Mar. 27, 1996, p. T1, T2; Gray, *Business without Boundary*, 183.

23. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, June 21, 1998, p. 2D.

24. William J. Powell, *Pillsbury's Best: A Company History from 1869* (Minneapolis: Pillsbury Company, 1985), 180; Warren Dotz and James Morton, *What a Character! 20th Century American Advertising Icons* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1996), 109.

25. Dotz and Morton, *What a Character!*, 109.

26. Here and two paragraphs below, see Moira F. Harris, *The Paws of Refreshment: The Story of Hamm's Beer Advertising* (St. Paul: Pogo Press, 1990), 32-33, 68-70. For the debate over the bear's creation, see *City Business* (St. Paul), Feb. 13-26, 1985, p. 1-2. More recently, controversy has surfaced over credit for both the concept and creation of the bear; see *Star Tribune*, Feb. 2, 1998, p. B5, and correction, Feb. 5, 1998, p. A2; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Feb. 3, 1998, p. 5B, and correction, Feb. 12, 1998, p. 2A.

27. Dotz and Morton, *What a Character!*, 116. By 1975 the company had been acquired by the Olympia Brewing Company of Tacoma, Washington. Subsequent corporate changes moved the Hamm's brands to the Pabst Brewery Company in 1983 and to Miller Brewery Company of Milwaukee in 1999.

28. Maureen Smith, "On Becoming Goldy," *M*, Fall 1996, p. 1-2. The cartoon was reproduced in William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota

Historical Society Press, 1961), 2: opp. 48.

29. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Mar. 29, 1997, p. 1A, 6A.

30. Vince Bilotta, "Introducing the Minnesota Gopher," *Minnesota*, Mar. 1979, p. 30. Some of the earlier gophers appear in the Nov. 1981 issue, p. 46.

31. *Minnesota Daily*, Nov. 4, 1985, p. 1, 10, Apr. 23, 1986, p. 1, 8.

32. Mike Tracy, public relations office, University of Minnesota, telephone interview with author, July 29, 1998. For a former mascot's experiences, see Ross Bernstein, *Gopher Hockey by the Hockey Gopher* (Minneapolis: Ross Bernstein Enterprises, 1992).

33. *New York Times*, Aug. 7, 1990, p. D7; Dotz and Morton, *What a Character!*, 104.

34. Marilyn Kern-Foxworth, *Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben, and Rastus: Blacks in Advertising, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 44, 45; *Star Tribune*, Oct. 7, 1993, p. 1D, 2D, Apr. 21, 1998, p. B1, B3.

35. *New York Times*, Aug. 4, 1998, p. C10, Aug. 13, 1998, p. D1. Writer Courtney Kane cited Mobil Oil's Pegasus, the Flying Red Horse, but Reddy Kilowatt's return to Minnesota is a similar example of retro chic.

36. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Sept. 28, 1997, p. 5C, June 2, 1998, p. 1E, 2E. When the Jacob Schmidt brewery was offered for sale in 1990, columnist Nick Coleman affectionately called its neon sign "an important emblem of St. Paul"; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Feb. 11, 1990, p. 3B. Coleman also cited writer Patricia Hampl's description of the blinking rhythm of the letters in *A Romantic Education* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), 14-17.

37. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Sept. 28, 1997, p. 5C.



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