

EYEWITNESS

PHOTOGRAPHER EDWARD WESTON arranged female figures on sand dunes and a bell pepper in a tin funnel in order to highlight “the thing itself.” Here, the Minneapolis commercial photography firm Norton & Peel pursues a commercial equivalent: a pared-down image that directs our attention to center stage. The stuff of a coffee break inspires us to consider the aesthetics of still-life staging and the fine points of pleasing a client.

In July 1957 Jay Manufacturing Company hired Norton & Peel to create this image of a sleek, five-gallon container and a graceless, squared-off cup dispenser. Elegantly accomplishing the manufacturer’s objective, the photographer positioned his camera to register the subject at and below eye level, an accommodating position that invites us to walk up to the counter and grab a cup. The nebulous, light-gray background is a banner, moved during exposure, both to highlight the objects and eliminate the distractions of the factory setting. Norton & Peel frequently employed this device when shooting industrial artifacts; the blur also facilitated cropping when a picture was reproduced in catalogs and other print advertising.

But this ease of approach and the graphic reference to a steaming, stovetop percolator must not be mistaken for nostalgic leanings toward a more casual past. Business—at ten cents a cup, the margin on coffee was high even then—inspired this newfangled contraption for dispensing an old-fashioned beverage. The slightly angled view, relative to the edge of the counter, makes the coin-collector appear to be shouldering aside the urn, like an overeager partner in a vaudeville duo jostling for downstage position. The urn, though alluring in its luminous rotundity, is in fact the supporting player in this drama; close inspection of its label reveals that it is not a Jay Manufacturing product. The brutish cup dispenser/coin-collector, created in Jay’s Jim-Jak division, commands the camera’s most preferential treatment, though the coffee vessel itself offers far more sustenance, both liquid and visual.

—GEORGE SLADE

George Slade is the artistic director at the Minnesota Center for Photography and the editor of Minnesota In Our Time: A Photographic Portrait (2000).



MHS COLLECTIONS

FEW ACTS OF CHRISTIAN DEVOTION are as poignant as meditating while tracing the footsteps of Jesus as he was led to his death. Pilgrimages to Jerusalem to make this walk began in about the third or fourth century and continued into the Middle Ages. Later, sites replicating the sorrowful march were established in Europe, often where miracles had occurred. Eventually, congregations began erecting their own “Way of the Cross” consisting of meditation spots, or “stations,” depicting events Jesus experienced just before his crucifixion. Immigrants brought the tradition to America.

In New Ulm, about 90 miles southwest of Minneapolis, Father Alexander Berghold and the Sisters of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ created an elaborate Way of the Cross along a hill adjacent to Loretto Hospital and the Saint Alexander Home, two facilities managed by the nuns. Constructed in 1903–04, the Way of the Cross consists of 14 small brick-and-concrete stations, all holding ornate statuary from the Bavarian Academy of Art in Munich, Germany. A stone grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes is situated midway up the path. The Way of the Cross terminates at the Sorrowful Mother Chapel, a rotund

brick-and-stone structure atop the hill. The sides of this handsome church are marked with arched entrance bays, while a bell tower crowns the roof.

Although local contractor August Puhmann appears chiefly responsible for building the Way of the Cross, the Sisters helped by pushing wheelbarrows full of construction materials. Today, the religious order no longer has a presence in New Ulm, but its rich symbol of Christian devotion remains, open to any seeking spiritual retreat.

—DENIS GARDNER

Denis Gardner, who has documented properties for the National Register of Historic Places and the Historic American Engineering Record, is the author of Minnesota Treasures (2004).

Sources: Bishop Raymond A. Lucker to Susan Roth, Minnesota National Register Historian, Mar. 6, 1996; Marilyn J. Chiat to Susan Roth, Oct. 22, 1993; and “Way of the Cross,” National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (draft), n.d.—all in State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul; *Prairie Catholic*, June 1992, p. 9.



DENIS GARDNER PHOTOS

Way of the Cross and Sorrowful Mother Chapel, New Ulm, Brown County



Copyright of **Minnesota History** is the property of the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, or email articles, however, for individual use.

To request permission for educational or commercial use, [contact us](#).