

Margaret Amundson, Dental Hygienist

Born in 1924 in St. Paul, Margaret Amundson grew up in the nearby community of White Bear Lake. After completing a University of Minnesota program in dental hygiene, she worked in a dentist's office in St. Paul and lived at home with her parents. Rationing and shortages of certain items, Margaret recalls, were simply a part of everyday life.

We would stand in line to get meat or certain other groceries that weren't too available [or were] very limited in supplies. A lot of time on my lunch hours I would hear about a store in downtown St. Paul, a grocery store, that had, say, pork or chicken or something that day, so I would spend my lunch hour standing in line, hoping that by the time I got to the counter they would still have something left. And you bought whatever it was; it wasn't choice cut or what have you . . . [or] deciding, "Oh, I'm going to have leg of lamb this week" or something. Some of that stuff was just nonexistent, and you just took what you could get and made do.

Margaret believes the difficult prewar period helped make wartime shortages easier to handle. "You know back then, we were just coming out of the Depression. You were used to being very conservative with your food and getting by and making do and so forth, so it wasn't a real hardship. If we went to rationing now, it would be much more difficult because we're so used to having anything we happen to want."

—Thomas Saylor

Thomas Saylor, associate professor of history at Concordia University, St. Paul, is the author of Remembering the Good War: Minnesota's Greatest Generation.



Margaret and fiancé Bill Amundson, a navy pilot, 1945

COURTESY MARGARET AND BILL AMUNDSON



In 2005 the Minnesota Historical Society launched a long-term project to preserve and present the history of "Minnesota's Greatest Generation," the men and women who grew up during the Great Depression and came of age during World War II. This essay is part of a series that spotlights the experiences of generation members from all walks of life. For more on the MHS project, visit www.mngreatestgeneration.org.

Star Island Beltrami and Cass Counties



IN 1820 EXPLORER Henry Schoolcraft and Michigan Territorial Governor Lewis Cass were seeking—unsuccessfully—the origins of the Mississippi River in the region that later became north-central Minnesota. They came upon a lovely body of water called Red Cedar Lake, about a dozen miles east of present-day Bemidji. Schoolcraft promptly renamed the lake in honor of the governor. Twelve years later, an Ojibwe guide from Gamisquawko miniss, a 1,163-acre island in northwestern Cass Lake, helped Schoolcraft peg Lake Itasca as the source of the Mississippi. By the late 1800s, the Ojibwe on Gamisquawko miniss had all but vanished, decimated by smallpox.

The pine-covered island punctuated by the 200-acre Lake Windigo was eventually renamed Star Island for its shape. In 1908 it was incorporated into the Minnesota (later, Chippewa) National Forest; one year later, the government issued a permit for a recreational residence on forest service land there, initiating a trend that continued through much of the twentieth century. The island developed further as vacationers purchased Native American property and erected summer homes. Today, 78 cabins and cottages dot Star Island's shores.

While Minnesotans built many of the dwellings, families from Kansas and Nebraska were also attracted to this

getaway from the summer heat. Moreover, its peaceful environment soothed souls chastened by a hurried urban life. A “healthful and recuperative” sanctuary—ironic considering the suffering of the Ojibwe—Star Island evolved into a middle-class, Heartland version of Martha’s Vineyard: a somewhat exclusive seasonal retreat inaccessible by automobile. In fact, a plan to erect a bridge to the island was defeated in the 1930s. Remoteness instilled a powerful sense of community among islanders, a feeling that continues today. Star Island is the envy of many seeking a tranquil refuge from the outside world.

—DENIS GARDNER

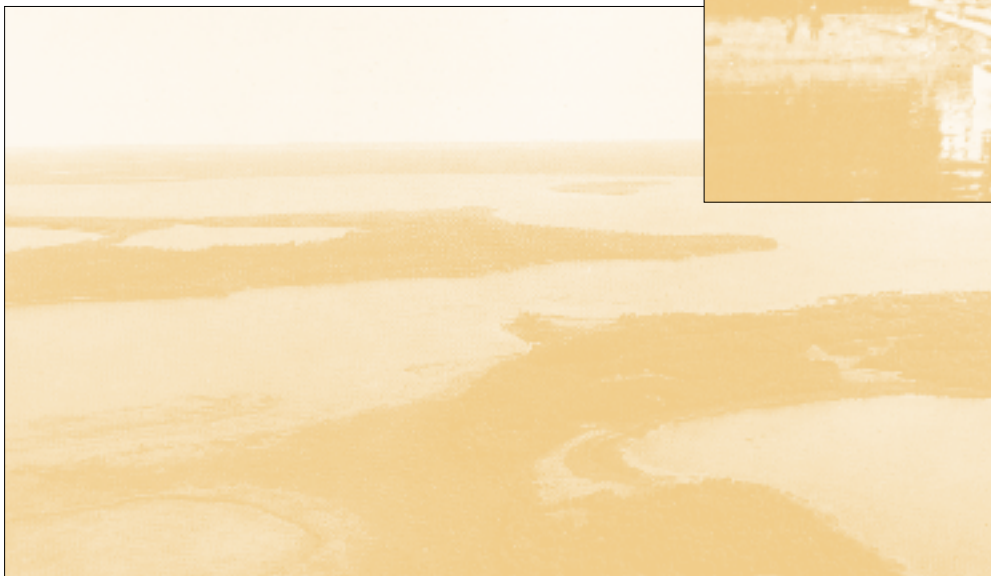
Denis Gardner is the author of Minnesota Treasures: Stories Behind the State’s Historic Places (2004).

Sources: Carol Ryan, *Star Island: A Minnesota Summer Community* (St. Paul: Pogo Press, 2000); Carole Zellie, “Star Island,” National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (draft), May 1989, State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.



LEFT: Aerial view of Star Island (middle ground), showing Lake Windigo, about 1970

ABOVE: Vacationers at the Star Island Inn, postcard, about 1920



MHS COLLECTIONS



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](#).