

Minnesota: On-the-Road Histories

By John Radzilowski

(Northampton, MA: Interlink Publishing, 2006. 238 p. Paper, \$20.00.)

This book is part of a projected travel series covering all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In it, Radzilowski, an adjunct member of the University of St. Thomas history faculty in St. Paul, skillfully accomplishes the publisher's goal by providing a relatively brief overview of Minnesota's history from its geologic past to the twenty-first century.

Most of his narrative covers such familiar ground as the influence of geographic factors on Minnesota's development, the various Native American inhabitants, French and British periods, American frontier development, and the emergence of the Twin Cities and the key industries of agriculture, lumbering, and iron mining. Although this undocumented work was not intended to be comprehensive or scholarly, Radzilowski, nonetheless, introduces some new coverage. He is particularly insightful on the economic and social aspects of rural history and the contrast between the metropolitan and rural areas.

Any writer of a short history has to make hard decisions about inclusion and exclusion. Rather than depend on a standard political and economic approach, Radzilowski chose to portray some social history, including coverage of the state's professional baseball and football teams, the Minnesota Twins and the Minnesota Vikings. There is some merit in this approach. Outside of its legendary boreal winters, these teams account for much of Minnesota's national identity.

Generally, the author touches only lightly on the state's colorful political history, with less than a page on the Populist and Progressive periods combined. However, perhaps to satisfy the publisher's seeming desire to include unique aspects of state history, the election of Independent Jesse Ventura in 1998 is briefly described. Because this is the first history of Minnesota published since that election, Radzilowski's assessment is worth noting: "A flamboyant former pro wrestler, radio host, and suburban mayor, Jesse 'the Body' Ventura upset both party candidates. . . . Despite all the fanfare of his election, however, Ventura's time in office resembled a marketing gimmick. The state's basic policies changed but little."

With the exception of the Dakota War of 1862, whose coverage entails nearly one of the nine chapters, Radzilowski moves briskly from era to era. Admittedly, the conflict is the single, best-known incident in the state's history and prob-



ably will have particular appeal to "on-the-road" readers of history.

This unindexed book has two major special features. Interspersed throughout are highlighted boxes containing capsule information on "Must-See Sites" and "Famous Minnesotans." The 22 sites include such significant historic places as Pipestone National Monument, Fort Snelling, and Split Rock Lighthouse and such current attractions as the Mall of America, Science Museum of Minnesota, and Ironworld Discovery Center. Excepting railroad baron James J. Hill, the nine famous Minnesotans are from Minnesota's fairly recent past: writers F. Scott Fitzgerald and Sinclair Lewis, musician Bob Dylan, cartoonist Charles M. Schulz, aviator Charles A. Lindbergh, actress Judy Garland, and politicians Hubert H. Humphrey and Walter F. Mondale.

This very readable book is highly recommended to on-the-road readers and anyone else who is interested in a quick survey of Minnesota's history.

Reviewed by William E. Lass, *emeritus professor of history, Minnesota State University, Mankato. His extensive writings on Minnesota history include Minnesota: A History (1998), now in its second edition.*

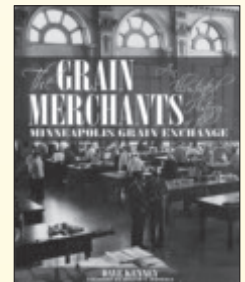
The Grain Merchants: An Illustrated History of the Minneapolis Grain Exchange

By Dave Kenney

(Afton, MN: Afton Historical Society Press, 2006. 216 p. Cloth, \$40.00.)

Few organizations are as central to Minneapolis history as the Minneapolis Grain Exchange. Established in 1881 as the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce, the Grain Exchange has endured for more than 125 years as a central market for buying and selling hard red spring wheat and other commodities. As such, it has influenced the development of agriculture, flour milling, transportation, and other aspects of the regional economy. Its members have been leaders in creating the social and cultural institutions key to the quality of life of the city. Yet few outside the grain trade know the story of the Grain Exchange, and even fewer understand its function.

Dave Kenney's terrific new book, *The Grain Merchants*, should change this. Its elegant writing and rich illustrations make a complex story accessible and entertaining to a gen-



eral reader. In just over 200 pages Kenney guides us through 125 years of Grain Exchange history, from its beginnings as a cash grain market to the rise of futures trading and the recent introduction of new commodities and electronic trading. Along the way he explains such mysteries as the open outcry system, hedging through futures, and the often-quirky customs of the men and women who have worked there.

The Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce was established to create a free and open market, directly challenging the Minneapolis Millers Association, a grain-buying monopoly maintained by the city's flour millers. The goal of the monopoly was to keep prices down by preventing "dangerous competition," and by 1880 it consumed nearly all of the wheat shipped into the city. Within a few years, however, the new group had destroyed the millers' monopoly, as surplus grain poured into Minneapolis.

Kenney demonstrates, however, that the victorious Chamber of Commerce did not tolerate competition. Farmers who initially had applauded the chamber soon argued that its membership of millers and line elevator operators were conspiring to keep crop prices down. Farmers would fight back by forming cooperative elevators. Later they would form the Equity Cooperative Exchange to challenge the Chamber of Commerce directly. Kenney doesn't shy away from the sometimes-unflattering details of how the chamber fought these and other battles.

One of the book's major successes is placing the story of the Minneapolis Grain Exchange, as it was renamed in 1948, within the context of national and international developments. Especially revealing are the links to transportation changes, with the growth of railroads fueling the city's grain trade, and new technologies like trucks, hopper cars, and barges diverting grain away from Minneapolis in the twentieth century. The book outlines how the farm depression of the 1920s and 1930s, New Deal and postwar price supports, and the oscillations of the Cold War and détente affected the Exchange.

The Grain Merchants is a model of well-written history for a general audience. Kenney opens each chapter with short vignettes from the time period. He pauses frequently to define technical concepts, yet often delays full explanations in the interest of moving the narrative forward.

The book also offers key insights into the neighborhood surrounding the Grain Exchange. Visitors to downtown Minneapolis who have puzzled over the nearby Flour Exchange building will discover how it was constructed by William Eustis as office space for grain traders. Eustis bought a membership in the Chamber of Commerce for the sole purpose of blocking attempts to move it closer to the heart of downtown. A central chapter features the architecture and

beautiful restoration of the three buildings that make up the current Minneapolis Grain Exchange.

The Grain Merchants is the culmination of a multiyear project to document and interpret the story of the Exchange, which celebrated its 125th anniversary in October 2006. Kenney makes effective use of recent interviews with long-term Exchange members, including accounts by pioneering women traders. Readers who pick up this book will be rewarded with honest appraisals of the Exchange's successes and failures, as well as fresh insights into an important aspect of Minneapolis history.

Reviewed by David Stevens, public programs coordinator at Mill City Museum, located a few blocks away from the Minneapolis Grain Exchange. He has been delivering educational programs about Minneapolis history for over ten years and has served on the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission.

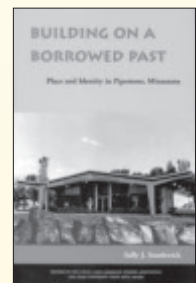
Building on a Borrowed Past: Place and Identity in Pipestone, Minnesota

By Sally J. Southwick

(Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005. 204 p. Cloth, \$38.95; paper, \$18.95.)

In the words of Sally Southwick, the town of Pipestone was "built on an idea." Many towns sprang up in southwest Minnesota in the late-nineteenth century, drawing their lifeblood from the railroads that began to thread their way through the state. Pipestone didn't fit that pattern. When the town was founded in 1876, it was 40 miles from the nearest rail connection. But it was also adjacent to the pipestone quarries, already famous in literature as a sacred Indian site. The town founders were confident that their unique cultural resource would bring attention, new residents, and the railroad to them. They were right. From the town's inception, the residents of Pipestone used the image and myth of the quarries to promote their community, encourage tourism, and construct their collective identity, both as a unique locality and as part of the American story.

Building on a Borrowed Past is more than a fascinating exploration of Pipestone's history. This fine-grained study of a single community illuminates the larger process of culture production and offers significant insights on the ways that Euro-Americans rewrote the history of expansionism and dispossession of native people.



By the end of the nineteenth century, the image of the “noble savage” who inevitably faded away in the face of progress had become embedded in the national iconography. This mythical Indian was a product of romantic literature and entirely disconnected from the living, breathing people who struggled to survive and make a life within the harsh conditions imposed upon them. The less that white Americans actually interacted with native people, the more they constructed nostalgic images that erased tribal distinctions and reinforced national and personal ideals. The Yankee Protestants who made up Pipestone’s first generation embraced these romantic images to craft their town’s unique identity.

The pipestone quarries made their way into the national consciousness first through accounts of European explorers who knew of the site only by reputation as a place sacred to the Dakota and other Plains tribes. The pipes that were a central part of tribal ceremonies were carved from the red stone of the quarries. Americans who later visited the site, in particular the artist George Catlin, embellished its significance, which then was seized upon by romantic Victorian writers—most notably Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (who never set foot in Minnesota). With each permutation, the history of the quarries moved farther from its tribal sources.

Southwick traces the evolution of the legend into “fact.” Pipestone’s boosters spread the story far and wide to attract new residents to their unique community, build tourism, secure an Indian boarding school, and win designation for the quarries as a National Historic Monument. In nearly every instance, for more than 100 years, the stanzas from Longfellow’s *Song of Hiawatha* were prominently featured. The mythical power of the place became ever grander—an “Indian Eden,” a pan-Indian “shrine of peace.” Demonstrating the power of this constructed history, even government reports repeated the same nineteenth-century sources. Most tellingly, native people themselves were never consulted or asked to recount their version of the history, though they continued to visit the site regularly.

The contrast between the mythical Indian and contemporary tribal members created an ongoing tension. Residents of Pipestone encouraged Indians to visit the quarries and carve the stone, valuing the added “authenticity” they provided for tourists. At the same time, residents complained about the “red skins” and “squaws” who came into town. Furthermore, no account of the quarries included the 60-year legal battle that the Yankton tribe waged with the federal government over title or the disputes between the Yankton and other tribes over rights to the land.

Curiously, the Native American perspective is also somewhat neglected in Southwick’s account. She acknowledges

this in the introduction, declining to “presume to give voice to tribal perspectives” by interpreting the significance of the quarries on behalf of the tribes. However, without some understanding of the meaning and significance that the quarries held for native people, it is difficult to judge how broadly the constructed legend departs from their tradition. The reader is left to wonder whether the Yankton and other tribes contested the interpretation as well as the ownership of the pipestone quarries. Some Indians, as Southwick notes, participated in the commodification of the quarries, carving stone trinkets for the tourist trade, acting as guides or pageant participants. Did others resent or dispute the appropriation of their past? In the 1960s the American Indian Movement (AIM) launched a direct challenge for interpretive authority. Quite likely this was the culmination of long-simmering discontent rather than a new cultural consciousness. Some further development of the Native American perspective would enrich this already absorbing study.

Building on a Borrowed Past is no simple local history. In the story of Pipestone, readers will find also a thought-provoking exploration of the politics of identity, race, and culture that have shaped the larger American narrative.

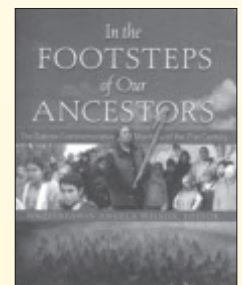
Reviewed by Mary Wingerd, who teaches American history and directs the public history program at St. Cloud State University. She is the author of Claiming the City: Politics, Faith, and the Power of Place in St. Paul.

In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors: The Dakota Commemorative Marches of the 21st Century

Edited by Waziyatawin Angela Wilson

(St. Paul: Living Justice Press, 2006. 324 p. Paper, \$29.95.)

In August 1862, in response to starvation and federal officials’ withholding of food and annuities, a group of Dakota warriors attacked European American settlers and ended up fighting several battles against soldiers and civilians. The Dakota War resulted in the hanging of 38 Dakota men in Mankato—the largest mass execution in U.S. history—and the removal of the Dakota and the Ho-Chunk (formerly: Winnebago) from Minnesota. In 2002, a group of Dakota women and men planned the first of six projected biennial marches marking the trail followed by the Dakota at the end of the war, when federal of-



officials removed able-bodied men first to Mankato and then to a prison camp at Davenport, Iowa, and removed women, children, and elderly men first to Fort Snelling and, in the spring of 1863, to a desolate reservation at Crow Creek, Dakota Territory.

The war and its aftermath left a legacy of pain and dislocation for the Dakota people, and the commemorative marches aim at beginning a healing process among them and a reclaiming of their history and their historic bonds with the Minisota Makoce, the Land Where the Waters Reflect the Skies. *In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors* documents the first two Dakota Commemorative Marches, in 2002 and 2004, through essays, poems, stories, and photographs by participants.

This volume, edited by historian and march organizer Waziyatawin Angela Wilson, a descendant of one of the women on the original march, provides searing accounts of the war and of the violence directed at the Dakota. As evidence of its enduring impact, Dakota people regularly avoid New Ulm because of the hateful violence with which residents greeted the Dakota on their journey to Mankato and Fort Snelling. For many on the 2002 and 2004 marches, the stop in New Ulm and the discussion with residents proved to be among the most wrenching moments of the seven-day march. There, white townspeople, some of them descendants of the inhabitants in 1862, brought up the deaths in their community that resulted from the war and raised the possibility of a reconciliation with the Dakota that would acknowledge loss and pain on both sides. For the Dakota writing in this volume, however, the concept of reconciliation ignores the broader context of colonization within which the war took place: the European Americans in New Ulm were there as a result of a vast theft of Dakota land perpetrated by the U.S. government, a crime from which those European Americans and white Minnesotans since have

benefited. Other native people participating in the marches draw powerful parallels with their ancestors' experiences of colonization and removal; for Ho-Chunk historian Amy Lonetree, the 2004 march was a return not only to her Dakota ancestors but also to her Ho-Chunk ancestors who did not participate in the war but were removed nonetheless with the Dakota.

The stories in this volume are often difficult to read: They tell of the generations-old historical pain experienced by the Dakota and other indigenous peoples and of the raw emotion experienced by marchers coming face-to-face with their ancestors' struggles; they also tell of participants grappling with their responsibilities as white allies of the Dakota. Yet the volume as a whole also offers a possibility of hope. Dakota participants found relatives, rediscovered physical and spiritual strengths, and began a process of reconciliation among themselves. Most powerful, perhaps, among the stories of the second march were those recognizing that the war imposed difficult choices on Dakota people struggling for survival. As a result, some fought against the U.S. Army and some worked as scouts for the army; some converted to Christianity and some sought to maintain the traditions that had sustained them for generations. As Wilson notes, "The march allows us to address these issues and to develop a sense of compassion for all of our People."

In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors provides a powerful account of Dakota history through the voices of Dakota people. It also compels the reader toward an understanding of the on-going effects of that history and contemporary efforts to heal the wounds that it inflicted.

Reviewed by Colette A. Hyman, *professor of history at Winona State University. She is currently at work on a book-length study of Dakota women titled Women in Exile: Mdewakanton Dakota Women in the 19th Century.*

Our Readers Write: The arresting image of an unidentified woman photographing an unknown subject, the focus of Christian Peterson's "EyeWitness" essay (Winter 2006–07), caught the eye of Charles H. Turpin, past president of the Minneapolis Photographic Society. To Peterson's essay about this 1930s-era member of the Minneapolis Photographic Society, her equipment, amateur photo clubs, creativity, and competition, Mr. Turpin adds:

"The central activity of every photo club in the Twin Cities . . . is a monthly or biweekly competition we call a Salon. . . . Club members aspire to produce two to four competitive images each month to show fellow club members and be judged—usually by an outside judge. Winners receive awards and points toward a Photographer of the Year competition. . . . This competition is taken very seriously.

"In the 1930s, about the only activity where a woman could regularly compete head to head on a fair and even basis with men was camera club photography. And they did! Judges then and now are not allowed to know the name of the maker of the images. . . .

"I'm sure what the lady in the picture is thinking is . . . how to capture an image that will be a winning entry in next month's salon."

■ The lure of furs, gold, and timber first attracted European Americans to Minnesota's Arrowhead region, but prosperity came later from iron ore and shipping. In *A County Built on Iron: St. Louis County, Minnesota, 1856–2006* (Virginia Beach, VA: Donning Co. Publishers, 2006, 184 p., hardcover, \$34.95 plus 7.5% tax and \$5.00 shipping), Bill Beck chronicles the ups and downs of a region that encompasses the finest natural harbor on the Great Lakes—at Duluth—and the Mesabi and Vermilion Iron Ranges, which helped fuel America's rise to industrial might in the late 1800s and early 1900s. This amply illustrated large-format book is available from the St. Louis County Historical Society, 506 W. Michigan Ave., Duluth 55802; 218-733-5786; www.thehistorypeople.org.

■ Want to know more about the photographers who created those great images in the Minnesota Historical Society's collections? Visit the new Directory of Minnesota Photographers, now available at www.mnhs.org/people/photographers. Links to the directory are also available on the MHS website's People page, Collections page, and Photo and Art Database. Resulting from almost 65 years of hard work and dedication from an array of people, the directory is a compilation

of biographical and historical research about commercial photographers and studios that have operated in Minnesota since the 1850s.

■ German Americans were one of the largest immigrant groups in Minnesota, as in the nation, during the Civil War era, and they comprised nearly 10 percent of all Union troops. The English translation of a 2002 German publication, *Germans in the Civil War: The Letters They Wrote Home* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006, 521 p., cloth, \$59.95), mines the North America Letter Collection in Gotha, Germany, to present more than 300 missives to the Old Country from 78 immigrants—men and women, soldiers and civilians, Northerners and Southerners. Editors Walter D. Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Helbich contend that although the topics of the letters, like the correspondents themselves, exhibit great diversity, the collection represents a decidedly German view of the war. From this conclusion, they argue against the claim that the Civil War was a great leveler of ethnic antagonisms.

■ Now available from the St. Cloud Area Genealogists, Inc., are two CD-ROMs, collectively the *Index to the Obituaries listed in the St. Cloud Daily Times*

from 1887 to 1927. The databases on these two CDs (1887–1907 and 1908–1927) hold tens of thousands of names, and each disk identifies the name and, depending on information originally included in the obituary, ages, maiden name, parents, siblings, relatives attending the funeral, military service, and the date and page of the notice. The CDs are available from the genealogical group, P.O. Box 213, St. Cloud 56302-0213 for \$22.00 each plus \$4.00 handling per order.

■ Charles Rumford Walker's 1937 classic, *American City: A Rank and File History of Minneapolis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005, 278 p., paper, \$18.95), is back in print with an excellent new foreword by historian Mary Lethert Wingerd. Walker's book, which sets the stage with a chapter on the "Golden Age of Empire," goes on to detail the infamous Minneapolis truckers' strike of 1934, a turning point in labor history. In clear and accessible prose, Wingerd's 25-page essay, "Radical Politics and the Minneapolis Labor Movement: Legacies of an American City," analyzes the socioeconomic and political context of the struggle and its aftermath, provides helpful biographical detail on Walker, and assesses the "losses and legacies" of the strike and the era.

■ Andrew Keith tells of his three trips through the northern Midwest in *Afloat Again, Adrift: Three Voyages on the Water of North America* (Minneapolis: Aliform Publishing, 2006, 240 p., paper, \$15.95). This isn't a "nail biting" memoir, nor is it a deep, soul-searching array of encounters; instead, it presents factual snippets from his journeys. The author's format is a bit confusing at first: He begins with his trip down the Mississippi with Pat, but in the next chapter is with Herb in the Boundary Waters, and then is kayaking through the Great Lakes with Paula. He bobs back and forth between his trips, a technique that works once the reader gets oriented to his daily-diary style.

The tales are enriched by the emotions Keith and his companions experienced in responding to weather, hunger,



danger, and the friends they made along the way, as well as bits of history of each region and descriptions of the lay of the land. This is not a guidebook, but it does encourage one to think about the getting back to nature, camping near the water, listening to the loons, smelling the campfire, and being aware of the dangers of violent weather and swift-flowing waters.

■ As Minnesota nears its statehood sesquicentennial, its oldest institutions are also celebrating theirs. One such landmark has just published *A Portrait of this Place Called Collegeville: Saint John's at 150* (Collegeville: Saint John's University Press, 2006, 150 p., cloth, \$39.95). Edited by Hilary Thimmesh, O.S.B., this collection of essays, poems, sidebars, and

many photographs—both black-and-white and color—presents a century and a half of Benedictine life and education in central Minnesota. Not a linear history, the book instead offers topical chapters, such as Derek R. Larson's on Saint John's use of the land, Joseph Farry's "A Scientific, Educational, and Ecclesiastical Institution," and Robin Pierzina, O.S.B.'s, chapter on the arts at Saint John's.

■ Memoirist Harvey Ronglien recaptures the vanished world of state orphanages in *A Boy from C-II, Case #9164* (Owatonna: Graham Megyeri Books, 2006, 199 p., paper, \$13.95 plus \$3.00 postage and handling). In 1932, after illness and a jail sentence dissolved his family, four-year-old Harvey and his

five-year-old brother were sent from Swift County to the Minnesota State School for Dependent and Neglected Children in Owatonna. There he lived for 11 years, separated from his brother but surrounded by children who became his family. Ronglien's book chronicles how he became a "State School kid," an identity that has followed him through his life. His account which, he says, some alumni find too positive and some, too negative, concludes with the clear message that institutional life "is not conducive to raising emotionally healthy children." This book can be ordered from the publisher, P.O. Box 925, Owatonna 55060.

■ The distinctive history of Carlton—railway hub, sawmill town, farm-service center, and county seat—is engagingly recounted in *Carlton Chronicles* (Cloquet: Carlton County Historical Society, 2006, 160 p., paper, \$20.00). Historian Francis M. Carroll traces the 125-year story, beginning with the fur trade and encompassing the village's reincorporation as a city in 1974 and the suburban community that developed around motels, gas stations, and Black Bear Casino after Interstate 35 bypassed the settlement. The book's ample supply of photographs, selected by Marlene Wisuri, adds another dimension to this story of people, places, and events. When ordering from the publisher (218-879-3924), include \$1.30 tax (Minnesota residents) and \$5.00 for shipping.

■ In a slender volume, editor Ted Genoways presents *Papermill: Poems, 1927-35, Joseph Kalar*, the written legacy of a Bemidji Teachers College graduate who labored in the mills of International Falls (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2006, 73 p., cloth, \$30.00, paper, \$14.95). As poet Robert Bly has said, Kalar's work gives "a better sense . . . of the mood and suffering of the Depression than much longer works," while Genoways's introduction, "Proletarian Night: The Life and Work of Joseph Kalar," deftly supplies the regional, historical, and literary context for the poet's short but intense career.

MINNESOTA HISTORY

Publisher, *Gregory M. Britton*; Editor, *Anne R. Kaplan*; Design and Production, *Percolator*

Minnesota History is published quarterly and copyright 2007 by the Minnesota Historical Society, 345 Kellogg Blvd. West, St. Paul, MN 55102-1906; www.mnhs.org. Membership in the Society includes a subscription to *Minnesota History*. Basic individual memberships are \$55.00; for information, write the Membership Office at the address above or at membership@mnhs.org. Subscriptions to *Minnesota History* are \$20.00 per year. Back issues are \$5.00 each plus tax and \$2.75 postage; add 50¢ for each additional copy; call 651-297-3243 or 1-800-647-7827. Magazine text is available in alternative format from the editor.

Minnesota History welcomes the submission of articles and edited documents dealing with the social economic, political, intellectual, and cultural history of the state and the surrounding region.

The Society assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors.

The Code below indicates that copying beyond that permitted by Section 107 or 108 of the U.S. Copyright Laws requires the copier to pay the stated per copy fee through the Copyright Clearance Center, Danvers, MA, 978-750-8400 or www.copyright.com. This consent does not extend to other kinds of copying, such as copying for general distribution, for advertising or promotional purposes, for creating new collective works, or for resale. ISSN 0026-5497-07/0013-\$0+\$1.00.

Periodicals postage paid at St. Paul, MN. Postmaster: Send address changes to Membership Office, 345 Kellogg Blvd. West, St. Paul, MN 55102-1906. Publication number 351660.

Printed on recycled paper with soy ink.



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OFFICERS Edward C. Stringer, *President*; Sharon Avent, *Vice President*; Brenda J. Child, *Vice President*; William R. Stoeri, *Vice President*; Nina M. Archabal, *Secretary*; Peter R. Reis, *Treasurer*

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL Abbot Apter, Sharon Avent, Diane Berthel, Brenda J. Child, Judith S. Corson, Mark Davis, Ram Gada, James T. Hale, Ruth S. Huss, Margaret Johnson, Elliot S. Kaplan, David A. Koch, David M. Larson, Mary Mackbee, Susan B. McCarthy, Pierce A. McNally, William C. Melton, Robert W. Nelson, Richard Nicholson, Dale Olseth, Ken Powell, Peter R. Reis, William R. Stoeri, Edward C. Stringer, Missy Staples Thompson, Paul Verret, Eleanor C. Winston

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS Tim Pawlenty, *Governor*; Carol Molnau, *Lieutenant Governor*; Mark Ritchie, *Secretary of State*; Lori Swanson, *Attorney General*; Rebecca Otto, *State Auditor*

Ethnic St. Paul



“THIS IS THE FIRST STORE erected on Seventh Street, built in the winter of 1858 by the present owner,” wrote J. Rowe across the bottom of this 1889 photograph of the Sebastian Pellegrini Confectionery, 91 East Seventh Street. The simple wooden building housing a business and residence stood in the heart of St. Paul’s downtown commercial district on the north side of East Seventh between Cedar and Robert Streets. This photo also captured Lewis Finkelstein’s brick pawn shop (89 East Seventh, partially visible at left) and a little bit of Harry Shepard’s photograph gallery (93 East Seventh, at right). Wooden sidewalks rise above the packed earth and streetcar tracks of the central downtown street.

While St. Paul is known for its distinctive ethnic neighborhoods, this image portrays a thoroughly integrated commercial district—an Italian American sweet shop side-by-side with a Jewish American pawn shop and the photography studio of a highly successful African American entrepreneur who by the early 1890s owned and operated three such businesses in town.

Perhaps when Rowe labeled his photograph he sensed that the days of small structures in the heart of downtown were numbered. Indeed, by 1891 the row of single-story wooden buildings had been replaced by the three-story brick Golden Rule department store, and the small wooden stores west of the confectionery were razed for larger structures. All three businesses relocated nearby and survived.

As for the photographers: In 1886 widow Ida M. Essery took over the successful business her husband Robert had started in 1874. Photographer Joseph H. Brown



ESSERY & BROWN, MHS COLLECTIONS

worked in her shop, and only in 1889–90, when the studio operated at 211 East Seventh Street, was the business listed as Essery & Brown. Their legacy photo reminds us of a time when downtowns thrived, businesses jostled for prime locations, and entrepreneurs lured pedestrians inside with appealing displays to see, smell, and touch.

—TRACEY BAKER

Tracey Baker, assistant head of reference at the MHS, has been researching Minnesota women photographers for two decades. She served for seven years on the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission.



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](#).