

Lucinda Holst

Married and the mother of three, Lucinda Holst lived on a farm near Austin. During the war years, she recalls, the farm supplied most of what her family needed, just as it had before.

“Well, I can’t say life changed; we just went on living. We were living on the farm; we just had to go on. I can’t remember that there was anything different. . . . We were exempt. There wasn’t any of us [in the service]. See, our children were too little, and my husband was a farmer, so he had to stay home.

“We were so diversified with farming. We had cows, and chickens, and everything, so we had our meat. I churned butter. You know, the only thing that affected us was sugar and flour. That was a struggle, and shoes for the children. We had to have stamps [for shoes], but our kids went barefoot in the summertime, which stretched it out.

“My garden was about the same size it was before, and I did lots and lots of canning. . . . I came out of the garden with pails of green beans. And cucumbers. Carrots by the bushels. . . .

For food we weren’t suffering. Well, I suffered because I couldn’t bake as much as I’d like to, because of the lack of flour and sugar. We used syrup a lot, for sugar. A good substitute.”

Thomas Saylor



Above: *Lucinda and Art Holst on their farm at war's end*

Thomas Saylor, associate professor of history at Concordia University, St. Paul, interviewed Lucinda Holst for Remembering the Good War: Minnesota's Greatest Generation. His newest book is Long Hard Road: American POWs During World War II (2007).



**Minnesota's
Greatest
Generation**

The Minnesota Historical Society is in the midst of 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.

Centennial Office Building, St. Paul



IN 1956 wrecking crews began tearing down one of St. Paul's most notable blocks of historic buildings, located on Cedar Street just south of the State Capitol. The old structures were swept away to make room for a big state project—the new Centennial Office Building, so named because its construction would coincide with the 100th anniversary of Minnesota's statehood.

The historic block not only overlooked the newly created State Capitol Mall on the west but also fronted on Central Park to the east. Established in 1884 and home to the first three St. Paul Winter Carnival ice palaces, the oblong little park had by the 1950s been in decline for years, as the once upscale neighborhood gave way to decay and state govern-

ment expansion. Even so, the park remained at the center of an impressive architectural ensemble.

The block leveled in 1956 offered an especially fine array of buildings. Anchoring the north end was the Thomas Blood mansion, a dazzling Richardsonian Romanesque home built in 1887 and designed by Clarence Johnston and William Willcox. Farther down the block were two fine homes, by the same architects, built around 1890 for Mary Hardenbergh and Joseph Frye. At the south end of the block stood the Macey Apartments, an elegant five-story building from 1892. Adjacent was another large apartment building, the Mayfair, constructed in 1906.

It was the sort of block that, in another time, might have inspired thoughts of preservation and renewal, but in the 1950s no such idea seems to have crossed anyone's mind. There was also the fact that plan-

ners saw the block as the most logical place to plant a new state office building.

Once the site was cleared, work began on the Centennial Building in 1958. It opened two years later. Designed by the Minneapolis firm of Thorshov and Cerny in a style that might be called File Cabinet Modern, the building has never been regarded as one of the beauties of the Capitol Mall. Still, its functionalist aesthetic nicely expresses the bureaucratic forces that ultimately doomed the old Central Park neighborhood. The park itself is gone as well, replaced in the 1970s by a parking ramp.

—LARRY MILLETT

Larry Millett, retired architecture critic for the St. Paul Pioneer Press, is the author of the illustrated handbook AIA Guide to the Twin Cities.

