



Children and dogs, Northfield (MHS COLLECTIONS)

Front Stoop



EVEN DOGS HAVE THEIR DAY in the Minnesota Historical Society photo archives. Its collections database, at last count, lists more than 500 dog images. This doggy photograph, shot in about 1899, is my favorite. The children are Louis and Rita Cruttenden, seated on the front stoop of their home at 417 Union Street in Northfield. Their father, Dr. Henry Cruttenden, was a dentist, and Louis eventually practiced with him. The image was among the glass-plate negatives discovered decades ago in Citizens National Bank, which once housed the dental office. The picture made its way to the Minnesota Historical Society in 1989.

Maybe the photographer from Northfield's Chamberlin Studio took more formal shots of the family later that day. Meanwhile, the dogs and children seem to be watching the world go by. Louis has the pets in tow, as Rita looks toward the big guy a bit suspiciously. The children are neat and tidy, all dressed up. Louis is wearing his schoolboy cap, scuffed shoes, soft bowtie, plaid shirt-waist, and short pants. (The pants are so wide they might be a skirt for boys, not unusual in that time.) Rita, sitting like a little lady, looks older and rather old-fashioned for

the time. Her dress was modeled after adult clothing.

Even my dog's veterinarian was hesitant to name the breeds. To the left: pug? French bulldog? Right: Chesapeake retriever? Lab? He settled on "mutts." Most dogs back then were mixed breeds, he said, and rarely did they live as long as today's pampered pets.

Few dogs in the MHS photo collection are identified. Such indignity! You know how we're frequently advised to label our photos with dates (or approximate dates) and full names? Well, that goes for naming pets in pictures too. One MHS photo from about 1910 identifies the dog as "Funny" but hesitantly labels the person as "Madge Barclay(?)." Finally, the dog gets the upper paw.

—Peg Meier

Peg Meier's nonfiction books about Minnesota include *Wishing for a Snow Day: Growing Up in Minnesota (2010)* and *Through No Fault of My Own: A Girl's Diary of Life on Summit Avenue in the Jazz Age (2011)*.

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