

## Our readers write . . .

Deborah L. Miller's illustrated essay, "More than a Meal: Menus in the Minnesota Historical Society Collections" (Fall 2014) elicited praise from many readers, including Ruth Stryker-Gordon of St. Paul who also gently offered a correction. She relates that she

"read your article with interest. However, there was a reference to James Gray. You described him accurately but he would have been about 13 years old when that meal took place. I suspect that meal was for his father, the mayor of Minneapolis at that time.

"James Gray, the author and professor [described in the article], was my uncle, and I was very close to him."

After a bit of further research, Miller replies, with thanks for the correction

"The dinner was indeed **not** for the critic, literature professor, and author, but for his father, the newspaper editor and mayor of Minneapolis. The senior Mr. Gray, who was born in 1862 and died in 1916, edited the daily *Minneapolis Times* newspaper and was associate editor of the *Minneapolis Journal*. He was mayor from 1898 to 1900.

"The Gray family donated papers of both father and son to the MNHS library. The elder Gray's papers include copies of speeches he made as mayor, newspaper columns he wrote, and political cartoons of him by local artists. His

son's papers hold letters from actors and authors, a screenplay for Warner Brothers, business histories, and lecture notes for courses he taught at the University of Minnesota, among many other things."

Maureen K. Reed's family history intersects David Thompson's article "The Mail Is Coming! 100 Years of the Railway Post Office in Minnesota," published in the Spring 2015 issue. She wrote

"Please extend my thanks to David Thompson for his article on the railway mails. My maternal grandfather Daniel C. Kennedy (b.1879) grew up on a farm outside of Caledonia. He and two of his brothers (Patrick L. and John P.) went to work for the railway mails when they came of age in the late 1890s. Subsequently all three moved to St Paul. My grandfather continued with the Post Office until he died in 1946, at which time he was superintendent of mails.

"I am very eager to read parts of the article to my mother, who is now blind, 104 years old, and sharp as a tack. She has many stories about her father's employment with the Post Office, and she is very proud of his contributions to the development of the system. We have a great photo of him sitting at his desk in what is now known as the Landmark Center. Mr. Thompson's insights and scholarship brought the whole thing into view in a new way."

■ History Day award: Sarah Hirsch's paper, "The Mayo Brothers: Operating on Ideals," has won the 2015 *Minnesota History Magazine* Award for the best senior-division History Day paper on a Minnesota topic. Addressing this year's theme, "Leadership and Legacy," her paper examines the ways in which the Mayo brothers built upon the traditional nineteenth-century medical practice their father, William W. Mayo, had established in Rochester. Under the leadership of William J. and Charles Mayo, who had trained in surgery rather than general practice, today's famous clinic evolved into both a new business model and an innovative, safer medical center that gained public confidence for doctors, hospitals, and surgery, in particular. Hirsch shows that the family legacy includes the concept of unified care

delivered by a collection of specialists—salaried partners—operating under a board of governance, as well as medical advancements in tools, surgical methods, and diagnostics, all leading to reduced mortality rates.

Hirsch is a tenth-grader at White Bear Lake High School—North Campus. Her award includes a \$50 prize.

■ A new book from University of Nebraska Press, Gilbert L. Wilson's *Uses of Plants by the Hidatsas of the Northern Plains*, edited and annotated by Michael Scullin, brings to light a valuable cache of ethnobotanical information long held in an archival collection. In 1916 Wilson, an anthropologist, began working closely with Buffalo Bird Woman, a respected Hidatsa born in 1839 on the Fort Berthold Reservation, North Da-

kota, to study her people's use of local plants. The result of their collaboration is a detailed treatise, including quotes from Buffalo Bird Woman, on how nineteenth-century Hidatsa gathered, prepared, and used plants and wood for food, medicine, smoking, fiber, fuel, dye, toys, rituals, and construction. The 432-page cloth book (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014, \$65.00) also includes line drawings and maps.

■ More than 350 black-and-white photos and 18 maps help comprise a ride back in time in Aaron Isaac's newest book, *Twin Ports by Trolley: The Streetcar Era in Duluth—Superior* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014, 342 p., cloth, \$39.95). Seven brief chapters tell the story, beginning with the transition from horses to horsepower, and

continuing through streetcars and daily life, the men and women who worked on the cars, behind-the-scenes workers and work that kept the cars running, and the buses and jitneys that spelled the end of the era. Chapter 5, “A Tour of the City,” lays out all of the lines in Duluth and Superior—as well as the ones that were never built. Chapter 7, “Survivors and Remnants,” contains 12 appendixes that present various types of information: Duluth’s ridership by year and mode, passengers by route segment, bus route changes, 1924–39, and interstate riders, to give a few examples. The photos, many of them large and detailed, will especially interest readers familiar with the Twin Ports.

■ During the 1960s, a few large firms, including IBM, dominated the computer industry. And then, along came the upstart Control Data. Donald M. Hall’s *Generation of Wealth: The Rise of Control Data and How It Inspired an Era of Innovation and Investment in the Upper Midwest* (Minneapolis: Nodin Press, 2014, 258 p., paper, \$19.95) tells the title story, in-

cluding the engineers, executives, and entrepreneurs—well-known men such as Seymour Cray—who made it all happen. As the title suggests, the book covers the boom-and-bust story of Control Data itself but also how that company “primed the pump of local investment,” leading to currently flourishing companies in the medical-device industry, for example. While the book is clearly based on research, readers who are interested in that information will be disappointed by the decision to eschew footnotes in favor of a chapter-by-chapter list of sources at the book’s end.

■ Three recent publications provide a wealth of information for travelers to the Dakotas—armchair or otherwise. *County Capitols: The Courthouses of South Dakota* (Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2014, 178 p., paper, \$29.95) presents the story of each community and its courthouse in alphabetical order from Aurora County to Ziebach. Author Arthur L. Rusch consulted period newspaper and archival sources to discover the schemes, battles, bidding wars, and

other nefarious acts waged by desperate settlers intent on winning the courthouse prize for their community. An introductory essay by Jason Haug, formerly of the state’s Historic Preservation Office, discusses “Where History and Architecture Meet: The Legacies of South Dakota’s Courthouses.”

Expatriates and other rural midwesterners, as well as urban readers, will enjoy historian William E. Lass’s well-researched but also personal account, *A South Dakota Country School Experience* (Mankato, MN: Minnesota Heritage Publishing, 2014, 79 p., hard cover, \$8.00). Six chapters, illustrated with color and black-and-white photographs and drawings, present the physical facilities, students, teachers, courses, extracurricular activities, and leisure-time entertainment of the one-room Emmett School near Beresford in the state’s southeastern Union County.

Now in its third edition, the State Historical Society of North Dakota’s *A Traveler’s Companion to North Dakota State Historic Sites* (Bismarck, 2014, 206 p., paper, \$23.95) showcases 68 locations, including state, local, and federal historic sites and parks. The new material includes color and black-and-white historical photographs, seven major new sites, additional pages of text, and full-color maps.

■ Expansion in 1967, the first for the National Hockey League, brought Minnesota the North Stars professional hockey team. Adam Raider’s *Frozen in Time: A Minnesota North Stars History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014, 260 p., hard cover, \$28.95) covers the team’s years in the state before owner Norm Green took it to Texas. The first half of the book chronicles the highs and lows of that story; the remainder is devoted to player, coach, and staff profiles, season-by-season summaries and other statistics, and team rivalries. The final chapter introduces the Wild, product of the NHL’s second expansion.

## Minnesota HISTORY

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