A Temporary Shelter for Six Children Under 12: St. Joseph’s Orphanage  
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'The Best School in the City,’ 1896–1916  
Mechanic Arts High School: Its First 20 Years

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The first Mechanic Arts High School building, right, shares the site at Central and Park Avenues with the old Madison School, left, where grade school pupils are playing. This spectacular 1911 photo by Charles P. Gibson also reveals a long-vanished neighborhood in downtown St. Paul. Minnesota Historical Society collections. See article beginning on page 4.
In this issue historian John Larson takes us back to the turn of the twentieth century to the founding and early years of one of St. Paul's best known educational institutions: Mechanic Arts High School. Founded in 1896, Mechanic Arts High School exemplified the educational philosophy that identified vocational education and training as a prerequisite for the citizens of a nation that was rapidly undergoing industrialization. Using materials such as the high school's own student publications, Larson chronicles the first two decades of the school's history, its years under the leadership of Principal George Weitbrecht, who was an extraordinary educator.

Janet Postlewaite Sands shifts our attention to another kind of institution in a memoir of her months living at St. Joseph's Orphan Home in 1945-46. Although she was only seven at the time, Janet Postlewaite's recall of the events in her family's life that forced her and her brothers and sisters to take up temporary refuge at the orphanage is both clear and vivid. Paul Nelson follows Janet Sands's memoir with a brief essay that provides the background and history of St. Joseph's Catholic Orphan Home. In light of current newspaper headlines that raise probing questions about the function and value of orphanages today, Janet Sands's family story asks us to consider these issues in a broader context and complexity than we might first have thought necessary.

Ray Barton's account of how he reacted to the news of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. As Barton explains, the events in New York, Washington D.C., and western Pennsylvania on September 11, 2001, helped bring back his own recollections of his youthful years between 1941 and 1945 when the United States was fully committed to war with its Axis foes.

Clara M. Claussen and Frieda H. Claussen in memory of Henry H. Cowie, Jr. and by a contribution from the late Reuel D. Harmon
Letters to the Editor

Who Was Jacob?
I really enjoyed G. Richard Slade’s St. Paul banking history article. The article refers to “brewer Jacob Bremer” when discussing the recapitalized Empire National Bank. I am familiar with Adolph and Otto Bremer, but not Jacob. Can you give me some information about him?

Ronald J. Zweber, St. Paul

Author Slade says, “Must have been Otto. Slip of the author.”

1790? 1792?
In the biography of Lucius Ordway that was published in the fall issue, two different dates were given for Aaron Ordway’s birth: 1790 and 1792. Which was it?

Louise Schofield, Maplewood

It was 1792.

Where Was It?
My grandparents lived in St. Paul many years ago. I’m now eighty, but I remember that they talked often about attending the Church of St. Mary. Apparently it was in the downtown area, not far from where they lived. Can you tell me more about it?

Mary Louise Ryan
Fargo, North Dakota

St. Mary’s was the first Catholic church established in St. Paul after the Cathedral itself. The city was growing, and so were its churches. In 1935 the Reverend James M. Reardon published a little history of the church. It was built, he wrote, in 1866 on the northwest corner of Ninth and Locust Streets in Lowertown, then a residential neighborhood “in the center of a plateau lying between the upper town and what is now known as Dayton’s Bluff.” (The railroads had not yet arrived to pave the area with their tracks.) The church was an English Gothic structure built of dressed blue limestone, Reardon wrote, and “ornamented at the southwest corner with a campanile,” a square tower that was a downtown landmark for many years.

The Family Bank
G. Richard Slade’s article in the winter issue on the struggles of St. Paul’s banks revived several memories. I particularly remember talk about the National Exchange Bank where my father banked. I was too young to remember much about the 1920s, but I do recall his fears that the bank was “a bit shaky.” Slade’s article explained it all for me—how the bank was saved from failure in 1926 and, moreover, how and why it changed its name to the Empire National Bank of St. Paul. I hadn’t realized that the Empire was our old National Exchange. Nice to piece that together. Interesting article.

Jane Sheffield, Lake Elmo

Jimmy Griffin’s Memoir
I found your excerpt from Jimmy Griffin’s memoir in the spring issue fascinating. I think I was part of the crowd at Seventh and Wabasha that he was trying to subdue. I remember coming out of a late movie and waiting for a streetcar in front of the St. Francis. I was only sixteen and I got out of there fast!

Lew Morton, St. Paul

A Magnificent Mansion
News of the redevelopment of the old Hamm Brewery site reminds me of that magnificent mansion that stood on top of the hill just above the brewery. Steps down the hill linked it to the brewery. Whatever happened to that house?

Marty Lewis, Shorewood

That was the mansion built by William Hamm, Sr., about 1887. Larry Millette describes it in his book, Lost Twin Cities, as a “Queen Anne confection with a round corner tower, a profusion of gables, and large arched windows on the second floor that echoed those of the brewery down below.” After family members moved elsewhere, the house became a nursing home, then stood vacant until it burned down in 1954, victim of an arsonist.

Flandrau or Flandreau?
I’m writing a paper for my high school history class, and I need to know the correct spelling of Charles Flandrau’s name. I’ve seen it Flandrau and Flandreau. Help!

Constance Harvey, St. Paul

We’ve seen it both ways too. Most historians spell it without the “e”—Flandreau. However, Flandreau, South Dakota, uses the “e.”