

Book Reviews

THE ARCHITECTURE OF EDWIN LUNDIE.

By Dale Mulfinger. Foreword by David Gebhard;
essay by Eileen Michels.

(St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1995. 132 p.
Cloth, \$60.00; paper, \$45.00.)

The architects who achieve international reputations are almost always as skilled at self-publicity as they are at stylistic innovation. Oftentimes in the twentieth century these larger-than-life figures are also remembered for the degree to which their ideas outstripped their ability to realize them; that is, for leaky roofs, over- or under-heated interiors, and poor ventilation. The architecturally oriented tourist to the Twin Cities is likely to begin, as I did upon my first visits, with buildings designed by prominent out-of-towners like Frank Gehry, Philip Johnson, Erich Mendelsohn, Eliel and Eero Saarinen, and Frank Lloyd Wright. Those who live in Minnesota, like their counterparts in cities across the country, learn to appreciate distinctive local talents whose understated but numerous contributions to the region's built environment charm rather than thrill and whose close relationship with local builders encouraged outstanding craftsmanship rather than path-breaking forms. Edwin Lundie, who practiced in St. Paul from 1917 until his death in 1972, was such an architect.

The Architecture of Edwin Lundie provides a handsome introduction to the architect's work. Particularly important are its detailed descriptions, photographs (most in color), and scale plans of Lundie's houses and cabins, all of which remain in private hands, many sited well out of view from public roads. At the core of the book are sections devoted to Lundie's country houses, urban residences, and North Shore cabins. Although arranged somewhat confusingly in alphabetical order by patron rather than chronologically, this survey amply demonstrates that behind Lundie's unassuming facades a wealth of often whimsical and always carefully designed details enliven casually open living areas as well, at times, as more private bedrooms and baths.

Assembled by Dale Mulfinger, a Minnesota architect whose practice, like Lundie's, is mostly domestic, the book is also enriched by an introduction by the late David Gebhard and an essay by Eileen Michels. Gebhard has few peers in his knowledge of and advocacy for the generation of comfortably traditional architects to which Lundie belonged, men (and less often women) whose practice spanned the interwar years and sometimes, as in Lundie's case, extended well beyond. Michels, who organized an

exhibition of Lundie's work held at the Minnesota Museum of Art shortly after the architect's death, offers more details, placing his professional training, extraordinary rendering skills, and early religious commissions in a regional and national context. An interview with Lundie originally published in *Northwest Architect* and a timeline of the commissions for which he did renderings completes the volume's scholarly apparatus.

For this reader, the book's greatest treats were the illustrations of eight of the cabins Lundie erected along the North Shore of Lake Superior. For those who vacationed in this thinly settled area, Lundie invented the peasant vernacular it never had, designing houses that could have come out of a Scandinavian storybook but whose folkish details never become cloying or overwhelmed their muscular wooden framing. This mythic approach to regionalism, which reminds me of the chalets Bernard Maybeck favored for hillside sites in Berkeley, California—an architecture in which inventive images are rooted in real structure—is as much an antidote to the thinness of most postmodernism as a welcome alternative to the abstraction Lundie himself refused to embrace.

Reviewed by Kathleen James, an assistant professor in the department of architecture at the University of California, Berkeley. From 1990 to 1992 she taught at the University of Minnesota. Her book Erich Mendelsohn: The Architecture of German Modernism will be published by Cambridge University Press in 1997.

JOHN DILLINGER SLEPT HERE: A CROOKS' TOUR OF CRIME AND CORRUPTION IN ST. PAUL.

By Paul Maccabee.

(St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1995. 362 p.
Cloth, \$45.00; paper, \$24.95.)

Paul Maccabee's entertaining chronicle of the gangster era in St. Paul starts with a bang: "Just before 11:30 A.M. on December 4, 1928, St. Paul underworld czar Daniel 'Dapper Dan' Hogan—heavy with a late-morning breakfast—walked toward his Page coupe. The 48-year-old Irishman had parked the car in the white stucco garage just behind his West Seventh Street home. Awaiting Hogan, hidden behind the rear end of the engine block and the bottom of the footboard, was an explosive charge wired to the starter."

It's a wonderful opening—especially if read aloud in the clipped, staccato manner of Walter Winchell—and it sets the tone for what follows, which is the most detailed account ever written of St. Paul's infamous age of criminal mayhem. Much of St. Paul's gangster saga is fairly well known, but it's a story that until now has been told only in bits and pieces (which, incidentally, is how "Dapper Dan" ended up). Maccabee's book is the first to knit the whole sordid story together. He invested 13 years of research into it, conducting 250 interviews and waging a one-man battle with the FBI to obtain old files. The result of these labors is a book that is likely to remain definitive for years to come.

As Maccabee tells the story, St. Paul's troubles began around 1900 when an unsavory character named John J. O'Connor became the city's chief of police. Soon thereafter the Saintry City became a haven for criminals. What drew them was the so-called O'Connor system, basically a not-in-my-backyard approach to crime control, its operation greased by regular bribes to police. Under the system, criminals from far and wide were permitted to take refuge in St. Paul, provided that they committed no crimes in the city while enjoying its hospitality.

This peculiar system, which continued to operate well after O'Connor's departure in 1920, corrupted city government at all levels. And as more and more gangsters assembled in St. Paul, they couldn't resist the urge to conduct business in the city. A series of high-profile crimes in the early 1930s—most notably the kidnappings of William Hamm and Edward Bremer—earned St. Paul the dubious honor of being labeled one of "America's poison spots of crime" by a crusading U.S. senator.

Maccabee fleshes out this basic history nicely and then offers a bullet-by-bullet account of the escapades of the gangsters who called St. Paul (and occasionally Minneapolis) home. Such lethal if colorful figures as John Dillinger, Lester "Babyface Nelson" Gillis, and Alvin "Creepy" Karpis play prominent roles. There's also a large cast of minor characters, ranging from gun molls to crooked cops to assorted petty hoodlums.

In other words, Maccabee has plenty of juicy material to work with, and he squeezes it for all it's worth. Along the way, we find out who shot, stabbed, double-crossed, or blew up whom, and we're also treated to plenty of information about hideouts, machine guns, automobiles, and other necessities of life for the well-equipped gangster of the 1930s. In addition, Maccabee mixes in some funny stories, including the case of one gun-happy gangster who nearly shot off a vital body part when the pistol tucked under his belt accidentally discharged.

None of this, it must be admitted, is very inspiring. With the possible exceptions of John Dillinger and Alvin Karpis, most of the gangsters depicted in this book come across as garden-variety psychopaths. Outlaws and gangsters, as many sober academic tomes have instructed us, are enduring figures of fascination in our society, representing the dark and dangerous side of the American dream. Maccabee, however, doesn't really deal with the "why" of his violent characters, which is probably just as well, since his book makes no attempt to offer profound insights into the nature, extent, and meaning of American criminality.

Instead, Maccabee is content to construct a well-researched narrative that adheres closely to the surface of events. The book's flat but fast prose, reminiscent of wire-service writing, is perfect for the sensational subject matter, and the pages fly by in a blur of bullets, bombs, and bad guys, most of whom—to quote Thomas Hobbes's well-known phrase—led lives that were nasty, brutish, and short.

Another of the book's strong points is its epilogue, which functions as a guide to the gangster era in the Twin Cities. It offers an excellent "crooks' tour" complete with detailed maps, a crime chronology, and a rogues gallery. For this section alone, the book is worth its price.

The book's deficiencies are those found in most popular history. The social and cultural context is pretty thin, and there's not much in the way of analysis. Nor does Maccabee pursue some of the intriguing historical questions raised by his own research. It would have been interesting, for example, to learn more about the dynamics of St. Paul city government and the full extent of police corruption during the gangster era.

The episodic structure of the book is also a bit unsettling. Short chapters—there are 67 in all—are grouped into 11 thematic sections which don't always hold together particularly well. As a result, the book has a jumpy feeling, and it reads more as a series of self-contained stories than as a cohesive narrative.

But these shortcomings detract little from the book's overall appeal. *John Dillinger Slept Here* is a fine work of popular history, lively, well researched, nicely illustrated, and packed with good stories. And though it doesn't offer any comforting moral, it does suggest that the St. Paul of today is a lot duller (though not, statistically, safer) place to live than it was 60 years ago when bad men roamed the streets with fast cars, loose women, and large-caliber machine guns.

Reviewed by Larry Millett, architecture writer for the St. Paul Pioneer Press and author of Lost Twin Cities (MHS Press, 1992) and Twin Cities Then and Now, which is forthcoming from MHS Press in Fall 1996.

BETTER RED: THE WRITING AND RESISTANCE OF TILLIE OLSEN AND MERIDEL LE SUEUR.

By Constance Coiner.

(New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. 282 p. Cloth, \$45.00.)

At the end of Alice Walker's 1992 novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, just before the hero, Tashi Evelyn Johnson Soul, dies, she sees friends unfurl a banner on which is written in giant letters "Resistance is the secret of joy!" I kept thinking of this fictional story of female revolution against oppressive systems as I read Constance Coiner's carefully researched and lucidly argued examination of the lives and works of Tillie Olsen and Meridel Le Sueur. Setting these women's writings within the context of proletarian literature produced during the American heyday of the Communist Party (CP) in the

1930s, Coiner asserts that both women attempted to disrupt conventional (passive) ideas of reading and mainstream proletarian literary standards. Furthermore, she argues that these subversions proceeded most often from Olsen's and Le Sueur's feminist analysis, which compelled them to analyze culture through multiple lenses and to valorize community over individualism.

Coiner's delineation of the political and aesthetic context within which these two women struggled to voice their own and others' plight is intellectually substantial and convincing. Her exposure of the essentially sexist structures and values within the CP makes clear just how unusual Olsen and Le Sueur were in relation to their peers. As Coiner points out, most women writing for the party chose to accommodate rather than confront male domination. Perhaps the most significant impact on literature of such unchallenged domination was that the party only supported positive images of working-class struggle. Publishers interested in fostering the aims of the CP, in turn, tended not to print stories dealing with women's issues—such as abortion, abuse by husbands, loneliness, birth, and child care. Simultaneously, the party looked to its women members to take care of all “domestic” matters, leaving the more explicitly political and public concerns to the men. Coiner's fascinating study shows just how deeply such a system impinged upon Olsen and Le Sueur and just how often each woman resisted such strictures, producing stories about the lives and feelings of working-class girls and women that quite went against the party grain.

As a literary critic, I was most impressed by Coiner's deft and nuanced analysis of particular works both as reflections of and resistances against the accepted proletarian aesthetic. One of her most cogent points turns around whether a given story is told by a distanced narrator, using the popular reportorial style of the times, or by a participant narrator, describing from the inside how it feels to live in poverty, degradation, and despair. Coiner draws a telling distinction between Le Sueur, whose family background was solidly middle class, and Olsen, who grew up in circumstances very like those of her fictional characters. Finding Le Sueur's ambivalent relationship to working-class life to be a determining factor in both the point of view adopted in her stories and in her sense of residual guilt over her unavoidable beginnings, Coiner nonetheless praises “Our Fathers,” “Annunciation,” and “Corn Village.” Significantly enough, each of these stories deals with autobiographical content rather than the more explicitly political and working-class subjects found in the rest of Le Sueur's corpus.

Since feminists have made Meridel Le Sueur into a virtual goddess figure, it is as refreshing as it is necessary to find a scholar who is willing to point out ironies and inconsistencies in her writings. Coiner's treatment of Tillie Olsen is equally textured, centering as it does on the weakening effect the material circumstances of her life had on her prose. Trying to mother four small children, hold down minimum-wage jobs, and still find not only the time but the internal quietude and focus needed to produce powerful literature proved to be too much for Olsen for many years. Coiner does not hesitate to speak about this sad reality. Rather than finding it miraculous

that Olsen managed to write what she did (a romanticizing tendency on the part of some critics), she assigns praise and regret where they belong.

Of all Coiner's literary analyses of these authors, the most important in terms of other women writers is her argument about the tensions running through Le Sueur's and Olsen's literary production. That tension is at times between action and inaction, where the workers are agential while the management sits removed from the streets where life actually goes on, observing and manipulating forces that will end strikes, marches, and rallies before they can cause genuine inconvenience to those in power. Stylistically, tension is set up between fragmentary, reported sketches and more coherent, lyrical reflections. Subject matter heightens tension when it depicts aspects in women's lives not replicable in the lives of their men: childbirth, maintaining a coherent household, coping with men who often drink to lessen their own pain only to strike out against the women nearest them. Finally, Coiner finds an overarching tension between a traditional, monological authorial voice, claiming as it must total if limited knowledge, and the more experimental, dialogical or even kaleidoscopic authorial voices, asserting the multivocality in all stories as well as the inherent variety of consciousnesses that comprises history and politics at any moment.

I recommend this book to all those interested in American politics during the 1930s, to those concerned with the roots of modernist literary thought and practice, and to those convinced that self-conscious women will often find it impossible to ascribe wholeheartedly to any conventional system (even ones purported to be “revolutionary”). This book is solid history, subtle literary analysis, and just plain absorbing reading.

Reviewed by Toni A. H. McNaron, professor of English and women's studies at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. She is the author of numerous publications, including Voices in the Night: Women Speaking about Incest (1982), The Sister Bond: A Feminist View of a Timeless Connection (1988), and Not So Gay: A Lesbian Looks at Academe, 1964–1994 (1996).

UP TO THE PLATE: THE ALL AMERICAN GIRLS PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL LEAGUE.

By Margot Fortunato Galt.

(Minneapolis: Lerner Publications Co., 1995. 96 p. Cloth, \$17.21.)

During World War II when gas and other commodities were rationed, Rosie the Riveter helped build airplanes, and Joe DiMaggio was shipped overseas, America's pastime seemed in jeopardy. President Roosevelt urged major league baseball to keep the sport alive to give hardworking and sacrificing Americans a regular, inexpensive, and familiar game to boost morale and temporarily take their minds off the war. As it turned out, the men's game did not come to a halt, but patriotic concern led to an opportunity for women athletes that they had not even dared imagine. *Up to the Plate* describes the All American Girls Professional Baseball League from its

beginnings in 1943 with owner Philip K. Wrigley to its eventual demise after the 1954 season, moving from a time in America's history when women, of necessity, often engaged in endeavors formerly reserved for men to a time when peace-time roles for women reflected a decidedly more homebound, traditional image.

In writing this addition to Lerner's Sports Legacy Series, Galt mines the league's archives at the Northern Indiana Historical Society, borrows from the scrapbooks of individual players, and passes along stories told her by veterans of the league now in their 60s and 70s. She clearly enjoys and respects these women and their accomplishments as baseball players and wants to tell their story as it reflects the gendered context of the times. To that end, she includes photographs and accounts of the charm-school experience required of all players as well as the general rules which they had to follow to accommodate Wrigley's emphasis on "moral, feminine" players. Among those rules: ALWAYS appear in feminine attire when not actively engaged in practice or playing ball. In later years when they traveled by bus, players could wear slacks while riding but had to change into skirts, comb their hair, and touch up their lipstick if they left the bus, even to go to the restroom. Chaperones were employed to assure conformity to the rules of decorum.

Galt gives a thorough account of the evolution of the game through the years of the league, as the size of the ball, the distance from the pitcher's mound to home plate, the distance between bases, the underhand to sidearm to overhand pitching style all changed to become more nearly like the men's game. She recounts the on-field exploits of league stars, cites the statistics so loved by baseball aficionados, and describes remarkable games played before thousands of appreciative fans. And she reminds the reader that the "promise of good money was as much a lure to the league as the chance to play professional, new-style ball. Wrigley offered players from \$50 to \$100 a week, depending on their age and experience. With the national wage average at \$40 a week, some league players made more money than their fathers."

Some teams remained associated with the same mid-western city throughout the league's history while others, like the Minneapolis Millerettes, were short lived and either found a new home city or traveled as "orphans" without a home schedule. While the war was still being fought many players worked in defense plants during the off-season. Others returned to retail shops, teaching school, or coaching amateur teams. Despite the emphasis on femininity, the players eventually received national attention for their abilities rather than as charming oddities playing a man's game. In 1947 the league traveled to Cuba, playing exhibition games with Cuban teams and garnering considerable publicity.

Galt does not ignore the racial segregation of the times and notes that the league had no African-American players. She does include a short piece on Toni Stone, the St. Paul native who played with the Indianapolis Clowns of the Negro (men's) baseball league.

And Galt also tells of the long silence that followed the league's final season, a time that seemed to erase its very existence. As Kay Heim McDaniel explained, "I didn't tell people for years that I played baseball. They wouldn't

have believed me. They'd have called for the straitjacket and hauled me off to the loony bin." Finally, in the early 1980s, players formed an association and held reunions, collected memorabilia, and swapped stories. In 1988 the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown created a permanent exhibit honoring them. Until the 1992 movie *A League of Their Own* told the fictionalized story of the All American Girls Professional Baseball League, most Americans were probably unaware of the contribution it had made to sports history.

In this richly illustrated volume, one of a handful of books now out about the league, Galt has done her part to assure that the legacy of these women athletes is remembered and relished.

Reviewed by Jane Curry, a recovering academic who writes and performs solo shows, including one on women and sports called "Nice Girls Don't Sweat." As a girl, she was called a tomboy. Today she would be called an athlete.

THE MINNEAPOLIS TEAMSTERS STRIKE OF 1934.

By Philip A. Korth.

(East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1995. 213 p. Cloth, \$27.00.)

On the morning of May 22, 1934, a peculiar calm hung over the market district of Minneapolis as two armed factions gathered. Three-fourths of the city's police force, reinforced by a businessmen's army of close to 1,000 special deputies, were met by a huge throng of Teamster-union pickets armed with baseball bats and wagon-wheel spokes. As tension mounted, a club hurtled through the air and struck a special policeman. The market district erupted. Within an hour the blood-soaked streets belonged to the union, and the distinguished members of the Citizen's Alliance (CA) fled for their lives.

The dramatic events of the summer of 1934 have been celebrated by labor and chronicled by historians as a turning point in the history of the working men and women of Minneapolis. Several years after the strike, sociologist Charles Walker published *American City*, a compelling narrative that is still a valuable source. In 1972 Socialist Workers Party leader Farrell Dobbs wrote *Teamster Rebellion*, a raw and detailed account of radical union men and women fighting for economic justice in a repressive city. And now, 61 years after the battles, Philip Korth has written another account.

Unfortunately, this new study contains little information not already available. In three "Voices" chapters, however, Minneapolis policemen, businessmen, and strikers tell the story of the 1934 strike with refreshing detail and dramatic immediacy. Korth's separation of his "Voices" interviews from his main narrative preserves their authenticity but weakens his rather academic presentation of that summer's desperate struggle. In attempting to analyze cause and significance, he isolates the strike from its historical context and fails to integrate the ferocious combatants with the dramatic battles that they fought.

The book is also riddled with serious misconceptions.

For example, Korth states that the Citizen's Alliance "failed to attract the core of the social, cultural and political elite of Minneapolis." In fact, important members of its board of directors, which included Pillsburys, Walkers, Daytons, Washburns, and Crosbys, were deeply involved in organizing and financing the Minneapolis Art Institute, the Minnesota Orchestra, and the Walker Art Center. Later he describes the "very loose" organization of the employer committees during the strikes as a product of the alliance's belief in individualism. He is unaware that the CA carefully organized each committee in an attempt to disguise its involvement.

In a final chapter, "Lessons," Korth concludes that the Citizen's Alliance was driven by a historical myth of individual liberty. Organized, collective activities would mean a loss of autonomy and force abandonment of the group's historical mission. In reality, the goal of the CA and its many allies was profitable business activity. Recognizing the danger of union organization as early as 1903, business leaders had organized the CA to unify their community and protect their industrial empire. The group worked diligently with other civic organizations to suppress unions and improve every aspect of what might now be called the "business climate."

Evaluating the strike's place in history, Korth discusses

the government's "neutral, honest broker's role" as it discovered "the will to discipline the business community to accept new economic, social and political relationships." Out of the strike, Korth contends, a new, harmonious consensus emerged. This analysis, of course, ignores the violent industrial upheavals of the 1930s, the anti-Communist witch hunts of the 1940s and 1950s, and the union-busting campaigns of the 1980s and 1990s.

In the last line of *The Minneapolis Teamsters Strike of 1934* Korth observes, "By regulating economic life, we can, ironically, move closer to fulfilling this original vision of social and economic justice promised by a market economy." In fact, what the CA learned was that massive, violent strikes led by dedicated Communists threatened the oligarchy the businessmen had defended for 30 years. The labor relations and anti-Communist strategies of the next 60 years would be determined by this "lesson." While the momentous conflict of 1934 remains a fascinating subject, this is a flawed recounting of events.

Reviewed by William Millikan, author of numerous articles on business and labor in Minnesota, who is writing a book about the Minneapolis Citizen's Alliance. His 1994 article "The Red Baiting of Kenneth C. Haycraft" won the Solon J. Buck Award for the year's best article in Minnesota History.

News & Notes

OUR READERS WRITE: William D. Erickson's article "Establishing Minnesota's First Hospital for the Insane" in the Summer 1992 issue inspired Kerwatin native Lawretta M. Grill, now living in California, to research hospitals for contagious diseases, also called detention hospitals. She found: "The village of Hibbing operated a detention hospital consisting of two main buildings, two stories high, located between First and Third Avenues between the D.M.&N. depot and Bennet Park Cemetery. I believe this is where I, at the age of about 5½, was a patient in 1915 because of scarlet fever. Minnesota laws at that time required immediate hospitalization. For me, it meant separation for six weeks with no visitors allowed." Any reader who can supply more information about the Hibbing Detention Hospital, please contact Mrs. Grill at 3411 Madrona Dr., Santa Barbara, Calif. 93105.

OJIBWAY LEADERS from Minnesota,

Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, and southern Ontario are included in John A. Ilko Jr.'s illustrated *Ojibwa Chiefs 1690-1890, An Annotated Listing* (Troy, N.Y.: Whitston Publishing Co., 1995, 78 p., \$6.50). About 800 men are listed in alphabetical order by "most popular name." English-language versions of names, locales, dates, and (where possible) short biographical sketches are included. The book may be ordered from the publisher, P.O. Box 958, Troy, N.Y. 12181.

CHASING RAINBOWS: A Recollection of the Great Plains, 1921-1975 by Gladys Leffler Gist (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1993, 157 p., cloth, \$24.95) tells of her family's struggle to make ends meet through the depression years, drought, and war. The Gists worked nine different tenant farms in Iowa and South Dakota before securing relative prosperity in the 1950s. Editor James Marten, a historian and

the husband of Gist's granddaughter, supplemented this memoir, originally written as a yearly summary of events, with extensive notes adding context and perspective to the account.

THE HISTORY of New Ulm is central to Virginia Strate's new novel, *The Last Bridge: The Adventures of Two German Brothers Who Came to Southern Minnesota* (St. Cloud: North Star Press, 1994, 247 p., paper, \$16.95). Burdened by their father's arrest for sedition in Germany, two boys and their uncle emigrated for the Turner colony in Cincinnati, eventually making their separate ways to Minnesota's town of Freiheit (Freedom). Both the brothers and Freiheit mature and prosper over the years until, in the book's climax, the United States entry into World War I causes trouble for loyal German Americans reluctant to support a war against friends and relatives overseas.



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