

Walk a Century

ANNETTE ATKINS



Button dress boots with
buttonhook and everyday oxfords worn by women
such as Sarah Christie Stevens, about 1900

MINNESOTA

My in My Shoes

MY FAVORITE SHOES ARE FLAT, black tie shoes that remind me of Sister Francita, my seventh-grade teacher, and of Katherine Hepburn, my other fashion idol. My friends tease me because these shoes are so dowdy, but they're comfortable. They don't pinch my toes or slide off when I walk down stairs. I can run if I have to, and my feet stay dry. Most importantly, they're "me." I wonder what Sarah Jane Christie Stevens would have thought of them.

Sarah and her husband William farmed near the village of Good Thunder, 14 miles from Mankato, on the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railway line. In 1900 she was 56 years old and had lived in the state for the better part of three decades. Like a third of the population, she was foreign born, though not German or Scandinavian like a majority of Minnesota's immigrants, but Scottish by way of Ireland. Her father was a Scottish weaver working in Ireland when she was born in 1844 to her Scots-Irish mother. The next year the family emigrated to Wisconsin. With her father, stepmother, half brother, and three brothers Sarah moved on to Minnesota in the mid-1860s and lived there until her death in 1919. By the year 1900 she had been married for about 20 years and had four stepchildren, two daughters of her own, and a husband she clearly loved, even if she did call him Mr. Stevens to outsiders, including her brothers. He was 19 years older than she.¹



1900-2000



The village of Good Thunder, Blue Earth County, 1909

Sarah faced the twentieth century full of memories of her own and Minnesota's past. She had witnessed the Civil War, the coming of the railroads, the rise of populism, and the creation of White Earth Reservation, as well as the recently concluded Spanish-American War. She watched the coming of the telephone, the bicycle, and the automobile, though she owned none of them, and a modern improvement most important to her: rural free delivery of the mail. She campaigned for prohibition of alcohol and suffrage for women. Minnesota granted women the vote on school-related matters in 1875, paving the way for Sarah's election as Blue Earth County's superintendent of schools in the 1890s. Although she died before Minnesota ratified the woman-suffrage amendment, she did live to see Prohibition. World War I, too. Her pantheon of famous Minnesotans would have included Ignatius Donnelly, Henry H. Sibley, Alexander Ramsey, Little Crow, and Archbishop John Ireland. John Lind, born in Sweden, was governor in 1900 but was defeated that November by Samuel R.

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Van Sant, a Civil War veteran. Knute Nelson from Norway, Minnesota's first foreign-born governor, and Cushman Kellogg Davis, another former governor, were her senators.

Sarah's village, Good Thunder, was named after a Dakota man who had converted to Episcopal Bishop Henry Whipple's Christianity and who, having aided whites during the Dakota War, was known to them as a "good Indian." She would not have had much contact with the Dakota, however, most of them having been removed to Nebraska in the 1860s. She would not have known many African Americans either. Of the state's 1.7 million residents, they comprised just under 5,000. About half lived in St. Paul. She might, though, have had contact with J. R. Wysong, one of only 200 Chinese in the state; he operated a steam laundry in Mankato.²

Sarah agonized over the safety of her brother Sandy who had joined the gold rush to Alaska in 1898 and hadn't yet returned in 1900. She regularly corresponded with her brother Tom, a Congregational minister, and his wife, Carmelite, who were working in Turkey. Her other brothers farmed, William near Winona and David, who raised sheep, in Montana.³

Her father had encouraged her brothers in their education and they had encouraged her. She was chronically in money trouble, and throughout her life she searched for schemes to make a little cash. She opened a doomed seamstress business, sold magazine subscriptions, taught school, sold garden produce. She suffered from the confinements of gender roles and rejoiced when her daughter entered medical school and then practiced medicine with her doctor husband first in Virginia, Minnesota, then in Minneapolis. I drive past what was once her daughter's house—at 2550 Dupont in Minneapolis—and try to imagine Sarah coming and going. I can almost see her.

I don't know if Sarah Christie Stevens had a favorite pair of shoes. In her thousands of letters—available for study in the library at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul—she did not describe her shoes once, nor even a shopping expedition. Not worth her notice, but worth ours. Watches tell one kind of time, our shoes another, if only we know how to read them. They can tell us a lot about her, about her times. Comparing her shoes with our own, we can also learn a lot about the past 100 years in Minnesota.

IF WE PRESUME that in her fashions Sarah Christie Stevens was like other rural, white women of her time and place, we can construct a virtual inventory of her

closets. First, though, she probably didn't have a closet. Some late-nineteenth-century houses had built-in closets, but most had free-standing wardrobes instead. The storage of clothing—and shoes—didn't demand too much space, so a compact wooden clothing cupboard would do just fine. The 42-room James J. Hill house on Summit Avenue in St. Paul, built in 1891, had 10 family bedrooms, a dining-room table big enough to seat 22 for dinner, and lots of closets. Its design preceded the invention of hangers, however, so closets offered hooks and drawers, with no space beneath the clothes to kick—or carefully arrange—even a modest number of shoes. Nor were wardrobes practical for shoes. The front door opened several feet above the floor, so to store shoes you had to pick them up, drop them into the well of the wardrobe, and then in the morning lean over and fish them out again. More likely, Sarah didn't go to that trouble. Instead, she'd have pushed her shoes under the bed—it stood up high and had lots of room underneath.

The shoes she wore most often—her work boots—rarely made it inside the house. They stayed in the boot room or on the porch. Every farm house had an entryway where people dropped their wet, muddy outdoor shoes before going into the house. Mud and dirt must have been the nightmare of many a farm woman, and “take off those shoes,” her mantra. In any case, it was easier to leave them, muddy, at the door than to clean them off only to go back outside an hour or so later and get them muddy again.

Nineteenth-century advice manuals may have designated the home as woman's proper sphere, but that wasn't a luxury available to most women, even if they wanted it. Sarah's sphere for a time had included teaching at Carleton College in Minnesota and Wheaton College in Illinois and supervising Blue Earth County's school system, but in 1900 it revolved around the daily demands of her and William's farm. She was a working woman by anyone's standards. In her 1902 journal she kept track of her summer pro-

duce. She raised, harvested, and then sold, canned, or otherwise preserved peas, lettuce, turnips, asparagus, radishes, carrots, parsnips, tomatoes, cabbage, onions, black raspberries, blackberries, currants, gooseberries, white currants, apples, grapes, celery, parsley, cucumbers, and plums. Like most midwestern farm women, she also raised and sold chickens and eggs. In April and May 1900 alone, she delivered 1,440 eggs to J. G. Graham's general store in Good Thunder. For this outdoor work she needed sturdy footwear.⁴

Many farm people of her day wore wooden shoes or clogs, the European work shoe for both women and men. Clogs are best for barn work such as shoveling or milking because they're comfortable and they raise the wearer a little above the muck. They were also cheap. With only a little practice, a farmer could make a decent enough clog since they didn't require exact sizing.

A century later clogs are big business. Rarely homemade, they come in dozens of colors. The Sven Clog Company in Chisago City, Minnesota, owned and run by Marie Carlsson, employs two other full-time and six part-time workers (all women), who turn out about 150 pairs per day. Cooks, doctors, and nurses are among the most loyal customers, plus women who like the comfortable peasant look and feel.⁵

Clogs in the nineteenth century also had that peasant look, but it was a look that some immigrants wanted to leave behind. Sarah talked about the Irish as “them” and Americans as “us.” Because she was assimilated, she probably wore boots instead, though perhaps men's boots.⁶

Sarah's brothers and her husband, William, all wore boots most of the time. Men's dress boots came in several styles, but most work boots have looked virtually the same for 150 years. Rural men, factory men, mining men, milling and timbering men all wore five-eye, tie-up black leather boots. They were sturdy, if nothing else.

Many women needed sturdy footwear to work in, too, but there



Farm woman Mrs. Fred Gasow wearing homemade clogs while feeding chickens in Sibley County, about 1900

wasn't much commonly available in Sarah's day. The 1897 Sears and Roebuck catalog, from which you could buy everything from nails to underwear to farm equipment—all the most practical things—did not offer work boots for women. Oh, there were many styles of women's boots, all with pointed (surprisingly pointed) toes and heels. Both impractical and uncomfortable. The flat, slightly wider shoes—what Sears called Ladies' Common Sense Oxfords, for example—were the kind that Sarah would have put on to go into the house from the entryway.

So, Sarah had work shoes and indoor shoes. She also would have had "good" shoes: thin, kid-leather dress-up boots. It would be another decade before most women wore a lower-cut shoe. Boots would have served her for all the seasons—even if they didn't keep her feet warm in winter. When she and Mr. Stevens got dressed up, for

going to the Good Thunder Baptist Church especially, they both put on high-topped boots. He tied his; she either tied or buttoned hers with the aid of a button-hook. Their dress boots, like their work boots, clogs, and house shoes, looked remarkably alike in their styling and detailing, even in their pointed toes. Hers, though, were narrower and had higher heels, slightly more seductive that way.⁷

High heels have not always been the province of women. Until the French Revolution, aristocratic men all over Europe wore heels. Heels didn't denote gender, they denoted class. The republicanism of the French Revolution brought a leveling of shoes. Pointed toes and high heels were originally devised, and quite useful, for men on horseback. Cowboy boots still have them.

High heels have never caught on much among Minnesota men, but for all of the twentieth century the

Four businessmen in typical lace-up boots and James G. Robertson (center) in indoor house shoes, about 1905



state's women have shared the national mania for high heels—not because they were useful, either. Podiatrists inveigh against them, declaring them as damaging to the feet as footbinding in China (where the ideal length for a woman's foot was three inches). Many women happily ignore the warnings.

Sarah, of course, wasn't wearing four-inch stiletto heels; those came 50 years later as part of the return to glamour and, some said, femininity, after World War II. They appeared in the mid-1950s along with Ozzie and Harriet and the Cleaver family (though not *on* Harriet or June). June, the mom in *Leave it to Beaver*, though, wore medium-high heels even to do the laundry. I suspect that Betty Crocker—the feminine personification of General Mills—stood at her kitchen counter in heels, too. She was just like that.

In Sarah's day and among women of her social circumstances, the heels on dress shoes were one-to-two inches high and only just visible beneath the skirts that, even for laboring women, nearly touched the floor. So, you might ask, why bother with pointed, narrow shoes? Perhaps for the same reason that most women today wear shoes that are too narrow, too small, and too often uncomfortable.⁸

If the Stevens's boots had come from Grimsrud Shoe Company in Minneapolis, William might have picked either the expensive boots at \$2.50—black, with patent-leather toes, a “yellow rope edge,” and laces through nine holes—or less expensive ones, at \$1.75, same styling, made out of kangaroo hide. For women, Grimsrud offered 11-hole tie-up boots with a slightly pointed toe and a two-inch heel at \$1.75 or a one-strap shoe with a bow, a more pointed “needle” toe, and the same high heel. The company did sell a “Comfort line” shoe for women, a slip-on with elasticized side gussets, but these were never intended for outdoor wear.⁹

These pairs—work boots, dress boots, and indoor shoes—would have made up Sarah's active shoe wardrobe, except, perhaps, for overshoes. Vulcanized rubber was developed in the late-nineteenth century, and among the thousands of uses to which it was put were various attempts to weatherize shoes. Overshoes were one of the early efforts.¹⁰

SOME PEOPLE MAY NOT be able to throw away their own shoes, but apparently their descendants can. Few examples of everyday shoes have been saved and donated to the Minnesota Historical Society. People do save and donate two other kinds: wedding and baby shoes. Beginning in the 1850s, many women were married

wearing special shoes. Made of white kid leather or satin, they were used only once, then tucked away, soon to be joined by the baby shoes that were outgrown before they were worn out. Shoes are evocative. Like the song that zooms us back to the prom or the smell that recalls a long-forgotten kitchen, shoes summon powerful memories. In the 1940s, not content simply with saving shoes, more and more parents took to the more permanent preservation of baby shoes—bronzing them. My mother-in-law kept her only child's bronzed baby shoes on display with her best china in the corner glass cupboard for all of her life.

Boots barely peak out from traveler

Agnes K. Prichett's long skirt in Minneapolis, 1895



If Sarah had been born 50 years earlier or 50 years later, her shoes would have been completely different. She was standing in the middle of an industrial revolution in the making, selling, and meaning of shoes. It wasn't a revolution like the American Revolution, with a clear beginning, middle, and end. Its effects, however, have been at least as significant and have shaped everything from how and where people live to what they hope for, how many children they have, and what shoes they wear. Industrialization and its results, especially consumerism, have been in the twentieth century the most important shaper of Minnesota and Minnesota life.

Industrialization involves changes in four key relationships. First, the relationship between producer and consumer. A single worker making a single product for a particular person he knows decides to make an extra on speculation to sell to a stranger. This act breaks the bond between the maker and user and opens the door—and the imagination—to producing more products for more strangers, with the hope of increasing profits. Different industries took this step at different times. Textiles and guns preceded shoes; clothing and cigars followed. The timeline varied, but this basic idea was the same whether the thing was a chair, a hammer, a hat, a house, or a pair of shoes.

Second was a change in the relationship between the maker and the thing made. Where a single shoemaker once made a whole shoe, increasingly one person made one part of a shoe repeatedly, and someone else made another part. The worker's ability to do a task exactly as specified by another—so that all the pieces would fit together—became the most important qualification for the job. Many jobs still required skill—cutting out shoe uppers demanded experience and ability—but no one person was responsible for a particular shoe. This step streamlined the process, made it more efficient and profitable. It also routinized the work and, historian Daniel T. Rodgers argues, the workers and, in so doing, alienated them from their work. They became pieceworkers rather than shoemakers. Shoemakers had been proud and independent tradesmen organized into the Knights of St. Crispin. Workers in shoe factories were quick to organize and unionize, too.¹¹

Third, the use of machines changed the nature of the thing produced. What had once been made by hand, with all of the variations that come from hand work, could be made on a machine more precisely and consistently and, often, better. Things made more efficiently brought greater profit. The sewing machine

and, more recently, the computer have revolutionized the shoemaking industry.

Finally, industrialization brought a change in the relationship between home and workplace. The introduction of machines made work more centralized, made workplaces more permanent, and divided work and home more sharply. The shared economy of most preindustrial households had allocated productive and necessary labor and responsibilities to men and women. When industrialization took most paid labor out of the house—and with it, most men—his job came to be called “work” and hers something else. She did her work in the place increasingly identified in the nineteenth century as a refuge, while he was in the “workplace.” Whatever her productive labor, he made the money in a world where cash was becoming increasingly important and increasingly the measure of a person's value. It was perhaps not coincidental that as this gender division widened, men's and women's shoes came to look less and less alike. By the 1910s, you could tell women from men simply by looking at their shoes.

Minnesota was in the midst of all these changes in 1900. Sarah stood on one side of them, and we stand on the other. These changes have made our worlds different, too.

The shift from home to factory and from hand to machine did not happen smoothly or all at once. In Sarah's day some Minnesotans still made their own shoes out of whatever was at hand: leather, birch bark, wood, old shoes, wool, cloth, yarn. A few itinerant shoemakers still traveled from door to door with their shoe forms and some pieces of leather. Many skilled boot and shoemakers were still at work, carrying out their traditional craft with apprentices and family members. Wherever Sarah had lived in Minnesota, she could have found shoemakers at work.

St. Cloud, for example, like Mankato, had 4 boot and shoemakers in 1900. Minneapolis and St. Paul each had 42. Biwabik had 2. Ely, Eveleth, and Chisholm each had 3. Duluth had 36. Their names are wonderfully suggestive of the cities' and state's ethnic diversity: Santino DeBernardi, P. A. Fredreksen, Adolphus Gamache, J. B. Laframboise, Emmett O'Meara, Herman Olson, and A. J. Tallakson.¹² The shoemaking trade, however, was on the wane.

John Leisen, for example, in 1889–90 was one of St. Cloud's skilled cobblers. He lived and made boots and shoes at 624 St. Germain Street. His three sons lived at home; Frank was a clerk at a bank, Michael and John Jr. both clerked in a dry goods store. Two

other shoemakers plied their trade across the street: Mr. Biggerstaff at 627 and Mr. Schoemacher at 611. Leisen both made and sold shoes, so he was already producing for strangers. He certainly had at least a small sewing machine, but he still made the whole shoe largely by himself. He lived and worked in the same place.¹³

Into the 1890s, the State of Minnesota still held shoemaking to be a valuable skill. The Minnesota School for the Deaf and the Minnesota State Prison in St. Cloud taught students and inmates to make shoes to give them a useful life trade. But change was happening. By 1910 John Leisen was dead. His son Michael ran a shoe store—no shoemaking listed—at his father’s address. His brother John Jr. had opened a “Dry Goods, Millinery and Ladies Garments” shop next door, at 620–622 St. Germain. Neither of them lived above or behind their stores but in nice houses some blocks away. In 1910 the Minnesota Bureau of Labor, Industries and Commerce stopped distinguishing between custom shoe work and shoe repair. By 1920 shoemaking as a category had disappeared entirely from the Minneapolis directory.

Minnesota in 1900 had 16 boot and shoe factories with 13 “proprietors” (owners or managers), 142 superintendents, and just over 2,000 wage earners. Ten years later 18 factories employed 285 proprietors and clerks and 2,664 wage earners.¹⁴

The three smallest factories employed only one to five workers. The custom shops employed, on average, one or two workers. (These types of businesses were different enough that the state and federal government both reported them as separate categories.) Since the



Wooden wardrobe for storing clothing, possibly made by Mathias Welshons of Marine on St. Croix, Minnesota, about 1900

smallest factories and the custom shops were about the same size, the reason for distinguishing between them must have been in the processes employed—in the custom shops one person making one shoe; in the factories, piecework or one person making multiples of one part.

The largest factory, unidentified by name, employed 625 workers in more than 100 different jobs including cutting, outsole; cutting, insole; cementing; stitching; heel building; fastening eye on button stay; sanding; brushing; packing; seam lining; labeling; and trimming. But the census categorized most workers as “shoe makers, unclassified” or “machine operators, unclassified.” Custom shops employed virtually no women; factories had labor forces nearly 40 percent



Carved wooden clog, woven birchbark shoe, and modern Minnesota-made clog

female. Men more often did the cutting (which was higher paid), while women did the sewing (a more “delicate” undertaking), the Minnesota Department of Labor reported.¹⁵

IN 1900 SHOEMAKING was Minnesota’s tenth most important industry in value of output. One hundred years later shoemaking is so small a part of the state’s manufacturing that it doesn’t merit a separate category in the



Women’s stiletto-heeled dress pumps, some four inches high, 1960s

published records. The shift from home to small factory to larger factory to consolidated, even larger factory has characterized manufacturing growth (and farm growth) in Minnesota and in the United States in the twentieth century. The other major trend has been to move manufacturing south and then outside of the country. In 1900 Massachusetts was the largest producer of shoes in the United States; in 1997 it was Texas.¹⁶

In 1877 nearly half of the shoes sold in Mankato were made in Mankato. If Sarah had been born 100 years later and was 55 in the year 2000, she, like us, would probably not wear shoes made in Mankato, or in Minnesota, or even in the United States. My favorite Sister Francita/Hepburn shoes are Rockports. That’s an American company, but the shoes were manufactured in Brazil. All Red Wing brand shoes—headquartered in Minnesota—are made in the United States (mostly in this state, with smaller plants

in Missouri and North Carolina), but Red Wing is an exception. Most U.S. shoe companies like Minneapolis-based Minnetonka Moccasins Co., Inc., manufacture their shoes “off-shore” in order to reduce costs.¹⁷

In the 1950s, U. S. shoe manufacturers exported more shoes than they imported—4 million out and 3 million in. In the last 20 years domestic production of shoes has dropped from 500 million pairs to 188 million. In 1998 we imported seven times more shoes than we exported—36 million out and 1.4 billion in.¹⁸

In the mid-1990s more than 50 percent of the shoes in the United States were imported from China, 11 percent from Brazil, 8 percent from Indonesia. A growing new production area has been Vietnam, where wages average \$.24 an hour, about \$500 a year for a laborer. (American shoe workers earn about \$9.40 per hour and their managers more than that.) A midlevel manager in Vietnam takes in about \$150 per month. The chief executive and administrative staff salaries, however, continue to be paid on a U. S. scale. The CEO of Nike recently received about \$3 million annually.¹⁹

Manufacturers in many industries have been squeezed by competition and lower labor costs outside of the United States. Until the 1970s, Minnesota’s Iron Range thrived because of American steel production; mining there has nearly ceased, however, because, like my shoes, more and more steel is produced more cheaply in Brazil.

In 1900 about 6.5 percent of Minnesota’s population was employed in manufacturing. A century later, the percentage is almost 20 percent and the nature of the manufacturing has changed radically.²⁰

Driven by water power at the now unlikely looking St. Anthony Falls in the Mississippi River at Minneapo-

Keepsake shoes from the turn-of-the-century: leather wedding pumps and baby’s buttoned, scalloped-top leather boots



lis, flour milling dominated the state's economy in 1900 and was Minnesota's most important contribution to the national economy. Flour milling went through essentially the same industrializing process as did shoe-making, only slightly earlier and propelled by improved technology that increased the quantity of wheat milled and the quality of flour produced. Minnesota's two largest and most successful mills were Pillsbury and Washburn-Crosby (the latter renamed General Mills in 1928). These two mills produced world-famous wheat (Gold Medal and Pillsbury's Best) that served an international market. They then diversified into dozens of foods (Bisquick, cake mixes, Burger King, Wheaties), then into dozens of nonfood industries, including WCCO radio, whose call letters come from Washburn-Crosby Company, still the best station in the state for announcing farm commodities prices and winter school closings.

In 1900, after flour milling, the state's ten largest manufacturing industries included lumber and timber products; slaughtering and meat packing; butter, cheese, and condensed milk; printing and publishing; foundry and machine-shop products; steam railroad car construction and repair; linseed oil; malt liquor; and, tenth in value of products produced, shoes and boots.²¹

In 1900 Minnesota was clearly an agricultural state—its people, its economy, and most of its major industries depended heavily on farming. The federal census reported that 40 percent of the state's gainfully occupied worked in agriculture. Nearly 70 percent of the population was rural, and about 20 percent lived in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area.²²

One hundred years later only about 1 percent of the population is employed in agriculture and nearly 60 percent of all Minnesotans live in or near the Twin Cities. Agriculture still plays an important role in the state's economy—we're the nation's largest producer of sugar beets, sweet corn, and green peas and the second-largest producer of turkeys. (Jennie-O Foods in Willmar is currently the world's largest turkey processor, in 1999 producing 860 million pounds of turkey worth \$500 million.) We're seventh nationally in wheat pro-



Strap-on ice-skating blades made by Strauss Skates in the 1900s, men's tennis shoes from the 1920s, women's cleated golf shoes from the 1930s, and modern Rollerblades

duction. But Sarah's kind of farm is long gone. If Sarah and William were alive now, they could not have survived on their farm; it was too small, too diversified, too local.²³

But new industries have emerged, especially since World War II. The fastest growing in the 1990s has been what the state calls "Instruments and Related Products," a category that includes precision scientific, technological, and health-related devices manufactured by, for example, Medtronic, Johnson Controls, and Control Data.²⁴

Fifteen Fortune 500 companies are headquartered in Minnesota. Four are food related: producers General Mills and Hormel and distributors Supervalu and Nash Finch. The list also includes Dayton-Hudson and Best Buy (retail); 3M; Northwest Airlines; U. S. Bank; Lutheran Brotherhood and the St. Paul Companies (insurance); and United Healthcare Corporation. Honeywell, founded in 1888 as a maker of automatic thermostat controls and one of the state's largest industrial corporations, has merged with a New Jersey firm and is moving its corporate headquarters.



Traditional Ojibwe beaded moccasin and 1990 manufactured version with faux jewels for children

These changes have transformed not only the economic but also the social and cultural landscape from Sarah's time to ours. Sarah would hardly recognize her Minnesota in 2000. It's not just that the buildings are taller or that there are so many more of them or that they're made more often out of steel and glass than brick and wood, but that their businesses function differently and by different principles. Fewer than one-fifth of Minnesotans in 1900 were involved in transportation and trade. Today, that many are employed in retail trade alone. Sarah's experience of buying shoes, already in the process of transformation, was far different from how we buy ours today.

IN 1900 WILLIAM'S AND SARAH'S account books show that they spent \$15.05 total on three new pairs of shoes and three pairs of overshoes (plus an additional \$.40 on laces and polish), one each for William, Sarah, and a daughter. They didn't spend so little because they were poor. They weren't, and they would have taken offense at being thought hard up. They lived much as their neighbors and friends did, and it wasn't bad.²⁵

If each of us spent as little as the Stevenses, American shoe manufacturers would long ago have gone out of business. Their success has depended on our willingness to buy. And we have. In the early 1990s we spent about \$130 per person, and by the late 1990s more than \$200 (in a period of low inflation). Americans

spend about \$24 per pair, but that's an average.

William and Sarah could have bought their shoes from the Sears and Roebuck catalog beginning in 1895. This wish book made available, especially to farm people, a broader range of goods than they could buy locally and often at slightly cheaper prices. The company worked hard to sever buyers' relationships with their

local sellers. The friendly, folksy, and not slightly preachy language of the catalog belied the competitive edge that Richard Sears was so good at sharpening.²⁶

The Stevenses could also have used one of the itinerant cobblers who still hauled his lasts from one farm to the next. He more often repaired shoes but could still make the occasional pair. Or, they could travel to one of the custom shoemakers in Mankato.

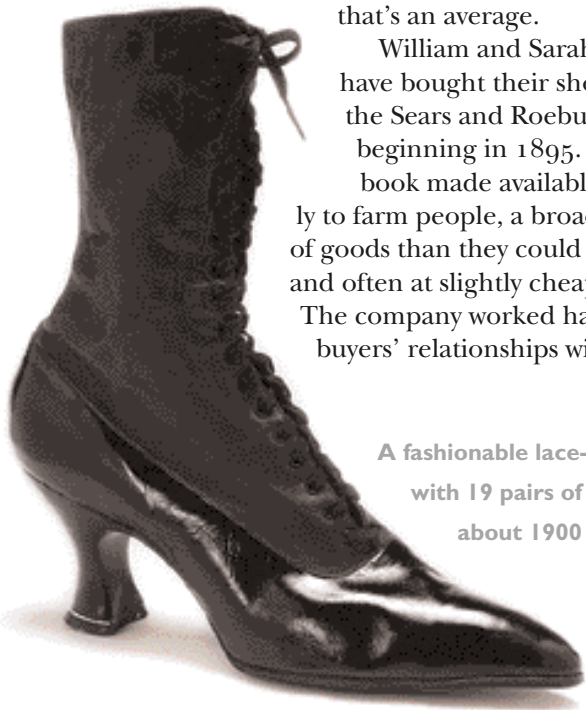
Or, they could go to a store that sold ready-made shoes. In Good Thunder four stores advertised shoes: J. G. Graham's General Mercantile, August T. Graft's, Henry Wiedenheft's General Store, or Albert Ziegler's shoe store. All four were family owned and run, and three of them were local general stores offering a little bit of everything.²⁷

William and Sarah dealt at Graham's Mercantile for many of their needs. Among other things, the Stevenses in 1900 bought a wash tin, ribbon, gingham, linen, serge, percale, soap, crackers, pins, tea, pickles, oranges, cheese and butter, hairpins, a corset, starch, canning jars, a union suit, coffee, raisins, a jacket, a coat, a man's shirt, and gingersnaps. While at Graham's, they also sold eggs, potatoes, strawberries, and apples. They bought \$128.51 in goods and collected \$58.50 for those they sold.²⁸

The Graham family was a fixture in Good Thunder. John and Loretta Graham were the town's first settlers in 1870, when they moved in upstairs over the store that they built. He was also the first postmaster and she the deputy postmaster. (I imagine that the post office was in the store, as well.) In 1878 the Grahams added a hotel and a dance hall. When the Bank of Good Thunder opened in 1893, John was one of its directors. Frank, their son, clerked in the store. Bertha and Louis, daughter and son, taught in the Good Thunder schools.²⁹

All four of the town's general stores, however, were experiencing a revolution in retailing that mirrored the revolution in manufacturing. Competition, specialization, and standardization knocked at their doors and could not be ignored. The world of individual, personal service in a community was giving way to more specialized merchandising in a regional market. Graham's responded by getting out of the business. By 1908 it had closed its doors. John had become president of the bank. Loretta had been promoted to postmaster, and Bertha and Louis continued to teach. Frank had left town.

The Wiedenhefts dealt with the competition by going in the other direction. Henry's two sons took over and expanded the store. When Graham's closed, Sarah



A fashionable lace-up boot with 19 pairs of eyelets, about 1900



Piecework employees in the shaping department of Minneapolis's Robertson Shoe Company, 1621 Hennepin Avenue, 1922

shifted her business to Wiedenheft Brothers. The store survived for at least another 30 years.³⁰

By the end of the twentieth century all of those businesses were gone, and Good Thunder had dwindled in population from 650 to 500. There's no passenger railroad service, but it's quick work to drive to either Mankato or Minneapolis. The retail market is quite different than in Sarah's days. Local merchants have mostly been replaced by local branches of national stores—and in

any case there aren't many shops at all. Good Thunder people have fewer choices locally but many, many more regionally and nationally.

Now, the people in Good Thunder, Minneapolis, and St. Cloud, as well as in Toledo, Ohio, and Sacramento, California, shop in one big market, and we all have hundreds of options for buying shoes. In any one of these places—or in dozens of others—we could look at the same range at Payless Shoes or K-Mart or

J. C. Penney. I happened to buy my favorite shoes at Dayton's in St. Cloud, but I could as well have bought them at Nordstrom's, which has the biggest shoe selection in the state, or at the Rockport store, both in the Mall of America; or off the internet. When I decided that these were great shoes and I had to have a second pair for when my first pair wore out, I went back to the St. Cloud Dayton's. They were sold out, but the saleswoman checked her computer and found pairs in Des Moines, Fargo, and Sioux Falls—did I want a pair mailed to me? I did.

I didn't go to Dayton's in the first place because of any personal connection. We don't have a reciprocal relationship where they buy my books and I buy their shoes. Nor did I expect to know the sales clerk or for her to remember me if she happened to be the person I'd dealt with before. Open about 70 hours a week, the store needs lots of full- and part-time staff to cover the shoe department alone. And that's what I want—convenient hours, efficient service, little or no waiting in line. Like many Minnesotans and Americans, I buy in an impersonal way that makes the clerk and me interchangeable parts.

Places like Dayton's sell only about 12 percent of the shoes that Americans buy. More—15 percent—are bought in shoe stores, Foot Locker or Kinney's, for example. About 30 percent are bought in discount stores; in Minnesota, that's often a Target.³¹

So, for Sarah, buying shoes was a relational act. For me it's a consumer act.

IF WE COULD MAKE NO other generalization about the twentieth century, we could safely say that it has seen the proliferation of “stuff” and the rise of consumerism: good dishes and everyday, five sets of sheets, 10 sets of towels, several televisions, telephones everywhere. More than just having all those things, we believe that we *need* them. I can't serve wine in a plastic milk glass, can I? Certainly not to guests. And, I can't serve milk to my nephew Jeffrey in a wine glass. New housing developments offer bigger and bigger houses—starter castles I've heard them called—just to hold all the stuff. People say all the time that they need more room; really, most of us need more storage space. The trend was evident in a 1930s house plan in the *Good Thunder News Herald* that showed a Dutch Colonial house with a special design feature: two more closets. Closet chaos—not enough room for everything, especially for shoes—drives people these days to professional closet organizers. Many businesswomen without closet space in their



offices have transformed desk drawers or file cabinets into shoe-storage bins.³²

Manufacturers make more and more things, and we, somehow, buy them. The Red Wing Shoe Company provides an excellent case in point. Founded in 1905, Red Wing Shoes started with big dreams and a modest factory building. From the beginning the owners applied modern industrial principles to their operation. They developed a combination of piecework and line work, mechanized when possible and hand worked as necessary, and initially produced 150 pairs of shoes in a 10-hour work day. With six work days a week, that's about 50,000 pairs annually. Red Wing did well, grew rapidly, and found its niche making primarily men's work boots. When the 1905 building reached capacity—500 pairs a day—the company expanded and in 1923 posted its first year of sales over \$1 million. In



A family visiting the Reinhart Michels shoe store, 969 East Seventh Street, St. Paul, about 1912

more than children. African Americans and Hispanics more than whites. Wealthy people have more shoes—and more of most other kinds of stuff—than do other people, but a broader and broader range of the population also has more of everything than they once had. With industrialization, owning and the possibility of owning things has become more democratized.³⁵

By some magic of averaging, one industry analyst determined that we have an annual consumption rate of about 6 pairs of shoes per person in the United States. That's a half-dozen pairs per year for every man, woman, and child. Linda O'Keefe, in *Shoes: A Celebration of Pumps, Sandals, Slippers, and More*, reports that the average American woman owns 30 pairs of shoes; the average man, 16.³⁶

It's not as many as Imelda Marcos, whose 3,000 pairs became a metaphor for the misuse of the resources of the Philippine people. While writing this essay I've

Goods advertised in Sarah Stevens's local paper, the *Good Thunder Herald*, May 10, 1900

1999 sales reached about \$300 million, and the company turned out about 9,000 pairs of shoes a day (nearly 3 million a year). Today Red Wing produces more shoes than all Minnesota shoe manufacturers combined did in 1900.³³

And Red Wing is a small manufacturer. To put it into perspective, Nike, maker of athletic shoes, had sales in the neighborhood of \$9.5 billion. Nike and all other athletic-shoe manufacturers make up only one-quarter of the shoe market. In the United States we consume about 1.6 billion pairs of shoes per year. In every year of the twentieth century, Americans have had a higher per-capita consumption of shoes than residents of any other country.³⁴

Minnesotans spend more on shoes than do people from the West but less than people in New England and the South. Women buy more shoes than men. Adults

asked many people how many shoes they own. A few admitted right off that they owned a lot. “I kind of have a thing for shoes,” they’ll say. My hairdresser’s brother-in-law has at least 400 pairs of shoes; several others admitted to having more than 100. In my family we’ve teased my sister Linda for years about how many pairs she owns—sling backs, thin-soled, platform, no toes, no backs, flats, heels, high heels, square toes, pointed (not many rounded, though), spangled, plain, black, tan, gold, white, eight shades of blue—you get the message. She keeps in her closet the shoes she’s willing for her husband to know about. He was quite surprised that time he moved the bed and found 28 other pairs.

Most of us, however, answer modestly. Oh, I have two pairs or three, implying that only an idiot could own 30 pairs. A few people really do own only one or two, some by necessity, some out of principle, but most of us own more and don’t quite want to admit it, partly because some people really do own only one pair. We don’t want others to know how often we’ve succumbed to the temptation of shoes. Is our ambivalence about our excess a Minnesota or Scandinavian American phenomenon, this having a lot of things but being embarrassed about it? I certainly feel it as I contemplate my own shoe collection. So, how many do I have?

Fashion, of course, existed before the twentieth century, but industrialization, while increasing the supply, also brought down the prices of many goods, thus making more fashions and styles available to more people. Moreover, as shoe designer Manolo Blahnik declared, the shoe was born in the twentieth century as a fashion accessory. “Dress designers know that the right shoes are a crucial ingredient to a successful look.”³⁷

Having the right shoes—like having the right drinking glass—seems so important, somehow. I have five pairs of black heels: one quite low and new; one quite low, two years old, and uncomfortable, so I don’t wear them much; one higher and also uncomfortable, but I love them and they’re just right if I’m going to be sitting (concert or play or church shoes); plus one pair to wear with pants. There’s also the pair I bought in the airport last year when the ones I had on suddenly looked a little too dowdy even for me. But I only wore them once—they didn’t quite fit.

Fashions change, too. Shoe manufacturers spend millions of dollars every year on advertising designed to convince us to take off perfectly good, perhaps even hardly worn shoes and buy new ones. Even those of us who don’t consider ourselves especially stylish are pulled along. I do have one pair of brown heels, in style two

Window display of Florsheim men’s shoes, about 1940





Employee making boots at the Red Wing Shoe Company, Red Wing, 1952

years ago, but they seem a little clunky now. They're not worn out, but I don't wear them either. (That's six pairs.)

Casual shoes. Comfort was not necessarily a characteristic of nineteenth-century handmade shoes. Making a shoe to measure often meant determining which of the shoemaker's several lasts, or forms, came the closest to the person's foot size. In addition, the shoemaker made no distinction between right and left shoes or feet. These "straights," as they were called, weren't replaced with "crookeds," that is, left and right shoes, until the midnineteenth century. Finally, as design historian Witold Rybczynski argues, comfort as a concept is a twentieth-century invention. Look at furniture, he urges us. Who would have sat in most pretwentieth-century chairs seeking comfort? No one; it wasn't an option. Nineteenth-century shoes, similarly, were not made for comfort, particularly, and people didn't expect it.³⁸

My dress shoes are certainly more comfortable than Sarah's, but I still wouldn't wear them except for dress. Instead, I have my flat black tie shoes (and their replacement safely stored on the top shelf of my closet). Rockport even calls its product "The Comfort Shoe." I have two pairs of clogs, the four-year-old synthetic ones that I slip on to run to get the newspaper and my

newer Eddie Bauer wooden-soled ones (harder to run anywhere in). Since I'm not much of an athlete I also include in this category my so-called running shoes (the newer ones, for use in the gym, and the older ones, good for a walk around the lake), my Keds (what used to be called a tennis shoe), and my hiking boots. (That's 14 pairs.) Instead of an array of casual shoes, my husband, like many other men, has simply opted for rubber-soled boat shoes.

Specialization has invaded the athletic-shoe industry—and many people's closets. Depending on how they spend their leisure time, even amateurs might have running, walking, and aerobic shoes as well as cross trainers. Other people have climbing shoes, swimming shoes, golf or bowling shoes, track shoes, biking shoes, cleats, ballet slippers, etc. You can't play baseball in ballet slippers, after all. Athletic shoes are also subject to fashion trends—new soles, lighter-weight synthetics, some special feature that makes us run faster, jump higher, or protects our feet better. Americans buy more athletic shoes than any other kind, and a majority of Americans wear them almost every day.³⁹

Then there are seasonal shoes: boots and sandals. When looking back on the nineteenth century, it's striking to think about Sarah's and other Minnesotans' willingness to be hot in the summer and cold in the winter. Not just that they had, by my standards, inadequate heating—a central stove in a Minnesota house leaves most of the rooms frigid, windows and floors frosted—and no air conditioning, but they also didn't much adapt their clothing to the seasons. Civil War soldiers, both North and South, fought year 'round in woolen uniforms. British soldiers in the Boer War in South Africa at the turn of the century wore lighter-weight khaki uniforms for the first time. Sarah and William wore some lighter fabrics in 1900, but many days she wore a long-sleeved, high-necked, to-the-floor dress and underneath it a camisole, corset, pantaloons, several petticoats, and long stockings. Sarah and William wore their boots winter and summer, except when they went barefoot, which was much more often than most of us do today. Farm kids at the turn of the century and later spent a lot of time without shoes. My dad remembers a day in about 1925 when his dad brought the wagon to fetch his barefoot kids home from school because it had snowed. Few parents today would consider sending their children to school shoeless, and most schools would not let them come in, either. Adults, too, rarely go without shoes except at home on the carpet.



Men's boots from a turn-of-the-century Sears, Roebuck and Co. catalog, including the popular Dom Pedro model with dirt-proof bellows tongue

Today, we change our clothes and our shoes with the weather. Boots for winter and sandals for summer (and more than one pair of each, dress and casual). And there's that one pair of orange (!) slinky, sexy sandals that I bought in 1974 and wore on the one day in my life that I pretended to be slinky and sexy. (Add another four.)

Most Minnesotans also own seasonal play shoes: ski boots (cross country or downhill or both) and ice skates and, increasingly, in-line skates. If Sarah Christie Stevens ice skated or skied or roller-skated, she attached runners or blades or wheels to her boots. If we're lucky, our ice skates are made by Reidell, the specialists just across the street from Red Wing Shoes, and our in-line skates by Rollerblade—the brand name—in Minneapolis.

Then there are the miscellaneous ones: the old pair that I garden in, the too-small penny loafers, now ten years old, that I leave in my office in case I wear boots to

work but forget to bring shoes. I have a pair of Wellingtons somewhere (lost?). (How many does that add up to? More than I want to count.)

So, this is part of how we end up buying—and believing that we need—more than Sarah's three pairs of shoes: wanting the right shoe for the right occasion and segmenting our lives into more occasions.

SHOES, LIKE GOODS generally, don't just serve a practical purpose; they have a meaning. If shoes were just shoes, pollsters wouldn't ask women what was their "favorite item of clothing to buy," and 6 out of 10 wouldn't answer "shoes." Nor would 6 out of 10 women tell another pollster that there's no such thing as too many shoes.⁴⁰

Shoes cover our feet, but which shoes we choose express and convey something about ourselves. Because we can choose from such a huge range (shoe superstore Just for Feet stocks 5,000 different styles in each store and offers a free thirteenth pair to anyone who buys 12), our choices mean something. Manufacturers—and their ad agencies—understand this dynamic and sell us something more than shoes, too. Facing a mid-1990s slump in shoe sales, one shoemaking executive told his colleagues, "You have to give [consumers] an emotional reason to buy a product." Reebok told its shareholders in 1999, "We are not just a sneaker company," and its charter declares that the company has a "fun, energetic culture" that is "relentlessly committed" to its customers' success. Nike declares that it wants to "establish and nurture relevant emotional ties with consumer segments." Rockport asserts that "freedom begins with comfort." "When you're comfortable with yourself, you can do anything. Rockport shoes are part of this movement. Insist on comfort in every aspect of your life."⁴¹

I've selected these at random. Other shoe manufacturers are also selling values in addition to shoes, just different values: beautiful, stylish, rebellious, sexy, responsible, economical, artistic, rugged, individualistic, manly, feminine. In the industrial revolution, things acquired meaning and came to represent and convey people's values, politics, and identity. We may not intend to demonstrate who we are by what we buy, but our things do have political, social, and emotional meanings.

In *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) Thorstein Veblen critiqued the Gilded Age's extraordinary displays of what he called "conspicuous consumption." Veblen excoriated people for their flagrant use of "stuff" to demonstrate their class. Perhaps his response

wasn't rooted in a particularly Minnesota consciousness, but *New Yorker* writer Adam Gopnik found it both "odd and apt that the three most eloquent satirists of American display in the first half of the twentieth century—Veblen, [F. Scott] Fitzgerald, and [Sinclair] Lewis—were all Minnesota boys abroad."⁴²

Some people have long known about the relationship between things and identity, perhaps because they were forced into consciousness about it. From the 1750s to the 1830s, certainly, and as late as the 1840s, Dakota, Ojibwe, Euro-Americans, and mixed-blood people—women and men—in our region all wore moccasins most of the time. European fur traders may have arrived in European shoes but did not stay in them for long. The greater suitability of moccasins was immediately evident, and whites adapted. Moccasins were practical, comfortable, warm, dry, quiet, simple to make but possible to make beautiful.

The common footwear hints at a time when these people lived in overlapping and intersecting, sometimes even congenial, worlds. As the relationships changed with statehood and a string of disregarded promises, so did the shoes. First whites took off their moccasins, then pushed Indians to abandon them as well; they represented what increasingly came to be identified by whites—even those whites who had been part of it—as a less civilized time. When whites next set about "civilizing" Minnesota Indians in boarding schools, they cut the boys' hair, forbid the use of native languages, and took away their moccasins. School officials issued instead hard-soled, ill-fitting, leather boots that cut and blistered the feet. The students had to make do. Sometimes they were quite enterprising. A few cut off the soles and threw them away, then turned the leather uppers into quite crude, but entirely better and more comfortable, moccasins. Doing so was an act of both self-preservation and self-assertion. Whites and Indians both knew that shoes

conveyed values. Many Native Americans continue to make and wear traditional moccasins, which continue to be items of comfort, beauty, and identity.⁴³

Most of the rest of us have learned less harshly that our identity is implied by our choice of shoes. In her wonderful little book on shoes, O'Keefe argues that "shoes are the gateway to the psyche." Some people may never think about it consciously, but that doesn't negate the revealing power of the choices. A 16-year-old sets a different path for himself (and a different social circle) if he wears Doc Martens or Birkenstocks or wingtips. My friends would faint dead away if I showed up in three-inch heels or a pair of feathery mules. Obviously, shoes don't tell everything, but they can suggest a lot about a person.⁴⁴

Similarly, shoes don't tell us everything about a state, but they're one way to its heart, to understanding it over this last 100 years, to thinking about industrialization and consumerism in our own lives—to thinking about changes over time. Industrialization has altered so much about us—how we live and where, with what expectations and desires, how we make our livings and with what sense of ourselves, and, even, what shoes we buy, where and how they were made, where we buy them, and what we want from them.

Sarah's Minnesota was rural, agricultural, and on its way to being the Minnesota that it has become. We do her an injustice if we romanticize her times (the good old days) or her (how could she have done all that work?). She was not essentially different from us. If she'd been given the choice, she probably would have owned more than three pairs of shoes. But she lived in a different world that offered her different choices. She couldn't have anticipated that we would one day live as we do now.

If Sarah had been born a hundred years later she would now be about my age. My memory bank holds Hubert Humphrey, Rudy

Man making a pair of moccasins, about 1918



Boschwitz, Walter Mondale, Dave Durenberger, Gene McCarthy, and Jessie Ventura; Edo De Waart and Kirby Puckett and Bud Grant and Curt Carlson, Meridel LeSueur, John Hassler, Patricia Hampl, and Phillip Brunelle.

I've watched the coming of snowmobiles and the internet, of cable television, video-cassette recorders, and answering machines. I've been a beneficiary and a promoter of the breakdown of rigid gender roles and of a greater appreciation of many kinds of differences. I've witnessed turbulent controversies about taconite dumping into Lake Superior, abortion, motorized vehicles in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness,



Author Annette Atkins,
wearing her favorite shoes

Indian spear fishing on Mille Lacs, the Vietnam War.

My Minnesota is urban, industrial, and on its way to being yet again another Minnesota whose contours we can see no more clearly than Sarah could predict the century ahead of her. The industrial revolution is over, and we're standing in the early stages of another economic adjustment—post-industrialism—that will provoke other cultural earthquakes.

Our shoes don't tell us everything we need to know about those changes—or about the others that swirl around us. They do, however, walk us across the divide between Sarah's time and our own. □

NOTES

1. Sarah Christie Stevens's papers form a significant portion of the James Christie and Family Papers at the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS), St. Paul. See also Jean Christie, "An Earnest Enthusiasm for Education": Sarah Christie Stevens, Schoolwoman," *Minnesota History* 48 (Summer 1983): 245–54.

2. United States, *Census, 1900, Population*, pt. 1, p. xx, cxx, 483, 544–45; *Mankato City Directory, 1899–1900*.

3. Here and below, see Christie Family papers.

4. See especially Barbara Welter, "Cult of True Womanhood, 1820–1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (1966): 151–74; Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Women's Sphere" in New England, 1780–1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Carroll Smith Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," in Carroll Smith Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 53–76. See also Mary C. Neth, *Preserving the Family Farm: Women, Community, and the Foundations of Agribusiness in the Midwest, 1900–1940* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Joan Jensen, *Promise to the Land: Essays on Rural Women* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991); Nancy Grey Osterud, *Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

5. Marie Carlsson, telephone interview with author, July 8, 1999; *American Shoemaking Directory* (Cambridge, MA: Shoe Trades Publishing Co., 1995), 64–65. See also www.clog-place.com.

6. Patricia Williams, "From Folk to Fashion: Dress Adaptations of Norwegian Immigrant Women in the Midwest," in *Dress in American Culture*, ed. Patricia A. Cunningham and Susan

Voso Lab (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University, 1993), 95–108.

7. Minnesota apparently had no button manufacturers; Iowa, however, was the largest producer of buttons in the United States in 1890, with 53 companies that employed almost 2,000 people (one-quarter women). Wisconsin had nine. See U.S., *Census, 1900, Manufactures*, pt. 1, p. 90–98, 520.

8. *Washington Post*, May 12, 1998, p. Z12.

9. Grimsrud Shoe Co., *The Assistant* (Minneapolis [1890]), pamphlet, MHS Library.

10. Rubber also made the athletic-shoe industry possible. By 1920 records about shoes were divided into leather and rubber. By the 1990s people were buying more rubber-soled shoes than leather. Bureau of the Census, *Current Industrial Reports, Footwear Production—1997*, table 1, www.census.gov/ftp/pub/industry/ma31a97.

11. Don D. Lescochier, *The Knights of St. Crispin, 1867–1874: A Study in the Industrial Causes of Trade Unionism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Bulletin, May 1910), 25–37.

12. *St. Cloud City Directory, 1888–89, 1899–1900; Watson & Co.'s Classified Business Directory of Minneapolis, St. Paul and Other Enterprising Cities of Minnesota and Wisconsin, 1899–1900; Davison's Minneapolis City Directory, 1920*. By 1908 the number of shoemakers in Duluth had decreased slightly to 34, but only 12 from 1900 reappeared in the 1908 list. *R. L. Polk & Co.'s Duluth Directory, 1900; R. L. Polk & Co.'s Range Towns Directory, 1907–08*.

13. Here and below, *St. Cloud City Directory, 1899–1900; John H. Ley's St. Cloud, Sauk Rapids, Waite Park, and Sartell City Directory, 1910; R. L. Polk & Co.'s Duluth Directory, 1920*.

14. Here and below, U.S., *Census, 1900, Manufactures*, pt. 1,

U.S. by Industries, p. 92–97, and pt. 2, States and Territories, Minnesota, 441–61; U.S., *Thirteenth Census of the United States, Abstract . . . with Supplement for Minnesota*, 1910, p. 687; State of Minnesota, *Twelfth Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor, Industries and Commerce of the State of Minnesota, 1909–1910*, p. 90.

15. *Twelfth Biennial Report*, 90, 420–21, 593–95. The factories followed a strict gender-role division of jobs, even when both women and men worked on machines.

16. Census, *Current Industrial Reports—Footwear*, table 1.

17. Minnetonka Moccasins introduced me to one characteristic of modern competitive industry—secrecy. A privately owned company, Minnetonka Moccasins does not publish much information about its internal life. The answers to basic questions—how many pairs of shoes do you produce, how many styles do you manufacture, how many employees do you have—can reveal information that could be damaging in the hands of competitors. Telephone interview with staff person, July 10, 1999.

18. *Market Direction Report 7.3: Footwear* (Chicago: Euro-monitor International, 1996).

19. See <http://adage.com/dataplace/archives/dp183.html>.

20. U.S., *Census, 1900, Manufactures*, pt. 2, States and Territories, 441.

21. There are various ways to determine such a list; see U.S., *Thirteenth Census, Supplement*, 678, for the value of manufactured products. In 1910 the value of all flour products was about \$140 million; of boots and shoes, almost \$8 million.

22. U.S., *Census, 1900, Population*, pt. 1, p. xc.

23. *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis), July 18, 1999, D1.

24. Here and below, Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development, *Compare Minnesota: An Economic and Statistical Fact Book, 1998/1999* (St. Paul, 1998), tables 3.6, 3.10.

25. Here and below, Graham's account, 1900, Correspondence and Papers, box 20, Christie Family papers; Laurence Kieran, "Footwear Retailing in the USA," *Footwear Business International*, Dec. 1998, p. 30; *Market Direction Report 7.3: Footwear*, 7.

26. Boris Emmet and John E. Jeuck, *Catalogues and Counters: A History of Sears, Roebuck and Company* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950).

27. See miscellaneous 1900 issues of *Good Thunder Herald*. In 1900 most stores and businesses, including Sears and Roebuck, were known by the proprietor's name. A century later, some stores still carry a family name, either explicitly, such as Herberger's, or embedded, as in Walmart. But, signaling the shift from personal to corporate, more store names are not people's names: Payless Shoes, Timbuktu, Land's End. In Minnesota, for example, Washburn Crosby Milling Company became General Mills.

28. Graham's account, 1900, Christie Family papers.

29. Thomas Hughes, *History of Blue Earth County and Biographies of Its Leading Citizens* (Chicago: Middle West Publishing Co., [1909]), 263–65.

30. Sarah Stevens, Account Book, vol. 16, Christie Family papers. Wiedenheft Brothers was still running ads in the *Good Thunder Herald* in 1930.

31. *Market Direction Report 7.3: Footwear*.

32. *Good Thunder Herald*, Sept. 10, 1930; Norma Koetter, Anne Kaplan, Lori Jane Brandt Anderson, interviews with author, 1999.

33. Sara M. Schouweiler, *Fifty Years of Red Wing Shoes, 1905-1955* (Red Wing: Ray Johnson Printing Co. [1956]); U.S., *Thirteenth Census, Supplement*, 687, 691; *Shoemaking Directory*, 65. Shirley Perkins, Red Wing Shoes, kindly provided production and earnings figures.

34. See www.oregonlive.com/business/99/top50; Kieran, "Footwear Retailing," p. 30; U.S., *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1997*, p. 754; National Shoe Manufacturers Association, "Facts and Figures on Footwear," pamphlet (New York, 1958), 54.

35. Marcia Mogelonsky, "Meet the Inner-City Shopper," *American Demographics* 20 (Dec. 1998): 38–41; Joan C. Courtless, "Trends in Apparel and Textiles," *Family Economics Review* 8 (1995): 23; *Market Direction Report 7.3*, 5.

36. Kieran, "Footwear Retailing," p. 30; U.S., *Statistical Abstract, 1997*, 754; Linda O'Keefe, *Shoes: A Celebration of Pumps, Sandals, Slippers, and More* (New York: Workman Publishers, 1996), 13.

37. Colin McDowell, *Shoes: Fashion and Fantasy* (London: Hudson and Thames, 1989), 7.

38. Witold Rybczynski, *Home: A Short History of an Idea* (New York: Viking, 1986).

39. Marcia Mogelonsky, "Best Foot Forward," *American Demographics* 18 (Mar. 1996): 10.

40. Karlyn Bowman, "American Fashion Embraces the Casual and the Comfortable," *Public Perspective* 8 (Aug.-Sept. 1997): 58–60.

41. "Industry Executives Call It as They See It," *Footwear News*, Jan. 1, 1996, p. 2–3; www.Reebok.com/annualreport/; ceo.nikepark.simplenet.com; www.rockport.com/comfort/main.

42. Adam Gopnik, "Display Cases," *The New Yorker*, Apr. 26–May 3, 1999, p. 176. Sarah Stevens may have known Thorstein Veblen, who was a decade younger, because she knew his older brother A. A. Veblen; "Description," Christie Family papers. See also Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899; reprint, New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 170–71. Nearly a century after Veblen, social critic Lewis Hyde offered an equally provocative analysis of Americans' attachment to things; see *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (New York: Random House, 1983).

43. Moccasins, like clogs, are also now big business in the United States, and in Minnesota particularly. Minnetonka Moccasins turns out dozens of styles for wearers throughout the world. Most have rubber soles and are often called boat shoes, but they share with traditional moccasins a comfortable fit and feel.

44. O'Keefe, *Shoes*, 13.

All the objects and photos are from the MHS Collections. Shoe and wardrobe photographs by Peter Latner/MHS; shoe consultation and selection by Linda McShannock, museum collections curator; author photograph by Eric Mortenson/MHS.



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