

# THE HOUSE THAT BULLARD BUILT



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In 1991 St. Paul resident Arlee Blakey read an article in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* with special interest. The story noted that virtually none of Minnesota's 1,350 listings on the National Register of Historic Places represented the experiences or achievements of the black community. Now, the article continued, four sites in St. Paul, one in Minneapolis, and one in Duluth had joined the prestigious list of the nation's cultural resources. These six sites did not tell the entire story of black history in Minnesota, however. Experts insisted, "There is still much more work that needs to be done."<sup>1</sup>

Blakey agreed. She wrote a letter to the Minnesota Historical Society's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), which administers the National Register program for Minnesota. In it she told about the house built by her father, Casiville Bullard: "My eldest brother said my father began building on our first home in 1902, but 1904 is the first record . . .

of his recording a permit. . . . Please consider this house my father built."<sup>2</sup>

That letter began a six-year process that culminated in early 1997, when the second house Bullard built

at 1282 Folsom Street, four blocks east of St. Paul's Lake Como, was added to the National Register. The house had not been identified in a survey of potential historic sites re-



*Casiville Bullard (at top of page), about 1909, and the brick home he built for his family in St. Paul's then sparsely settled Como neighborhood*

lated to the black experience in Minnesota, and few besides Bullard's descendants remembered his name. Why did this sturdy brick house merit recognition?

Bullard, the son of a slave, left Memphis for St. Paul just before the turn of the twentieth century. Arriving ahead of the great migration of African Americans from the South to northern cities, he built a new life for himself as he helped build many of St. Paul's landmark buildings. A skilled bricklayer and stonemason, he was part of a relatively select group of black artisans across the nation. In addition, he was one of the few African American craftsmen of his era known to have worked in the St. Paul building trades as a member of a union—Local 1 of the Bricklayers, Masons, and Plasterers. An active churchman, he raised ten children alone after his wife, Addison (Addie), died of influenza during the pandemic of 1918. It was for his family that he had purchased land and built the 2½-story, American foursquare-style house on Folsom Street at a time when fewer than 30 percent of St. Paul's black families owned their own homes. This house is material evidence of the presence of African American artisans in early twentieth-century St. Paul, and it is further significant for its "association or linkage to events or persons important in the past," two of the four National Register criteria.<sup>3</sup>

For a variety of reasons—Bullard's race, his occupation as a tradesman,

and the long years between his death and his story coming to public attention—traditional historical evidence to document his life is limited. Bullard did not keep a diary; most of his papers were neither saved nor donated to a library. His activities were not recorded in the black or mainstream press, and his employment records no longer exist, if they ever did. This is not an uncommon challenge for researchers who reconstruct working-class and African American history.

The evidence that survives is a narrative by Blakey, Bullard's youngest child (born in 1917), which she wrote in 1992 with assistance from two brothers, Casiville Jr. (born 1906) and Howard (born 1907). SHPO later engaged a professional historian, Susan Granger, to complete the rigorous documentation required for a National Register nomination. Blakey's narrative, her interview in 1995 with Granger, and Granger's interviews with long-time residents of St. Paul's African American community are the key primary sources.

The "plot" of Bullard's life, as recounted by his descendants, is that of an independent and uncommonly hard-working black man who transcended limitations assigned to him because of his race. The family's memories are generally confirmed by traditional historical sources when they exist—union records, plat maps, and city directories. An examination of African American economic and social history during Bullard's lifetime lends credence to the family's obvious pride in his accomplishments. What is certain—as measured by its acceptance on the National Register—is that Bullard's 1909 house is an important document of the presence and contributions of black artisans in the city of St. Paul.

Casiville (Charlie) Bullard was born on February 24, 1873, in Memphis, Tennessee, the oldest of seven children. "Dad's father was a slave, but he was reluctant to talk about it. . . . He didn't talk about his parents much." As a boy, Bullard joined his parents in the cotton fields, working "from sun up to sun down, carrying his baby brother at the end of every row" and doing chores. At some point the family was evicted from their home and their furniture put out on the street, an incident that deeply affected young Casiville. Only able to attend school through the third grade, he was "a marvel at doing figures," Blakey said. As an adult, Bullard could calculate the quantity of bricks, mortar, sand, or other materials needed for projects such as fireplaces or chimneys by looking at a blueprint and tell the client what it would cost "to the penny."<sup>4</sup>

Following emancipation from slavery, African Americans had high hopes that they would be able to vote, earn a living, and educate their children. Some progress was made, but by the time Bullard was born, conditions for African Americans in the South were deteriorating. As Bullard reached manhood in the 1890s, white supremacy was being reestablished through intimidation, violence, and, eventually, federal law. The U.S. Supreme Court's 1896 ruling that "separate but equal" accommodations were constitutional institutionalized Jim Crow segregation in the South for decades to come. Bullard's Memphis was the site of a particularly notorious lynching of three successful black storekeepers in 1892, after which newspaper publisher Ida B. Wells wrote, "Black men left the city by thousands." There is some evidence, however, that Memphis in the first decade of the century may have

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been a better-than-average place for black bricklayers and masons. According to historian G. P. Hamilton, they belonged to the same trade union as whites, enjoyed equal privileges, and worked side by side with their white counterparts with “no serious objections.”<sup>5</sup>

It is not known precisely how Bullard made his way to St. Paul, where he had no relatives. According to his children, he had a “call” to work on the Cass Gilbert-designed Minnesota State Capitol, built between 1898 and 1905. It is known that stoneworkers were recruited from Georgia, but Bullard was from Tennessee. He was, however, equipped with the necessary skills in masonry that he learned, Casiville Jr. recalled, from a brother-in-law.

Besides brick, stone, marble, and granite masonry, Bullard also mastered carpentry, stonecutting, and brickmaking. As a skilled black artisan, Bullard was a member of a labor elite. The 1890 census—the first to record occupations—reported that seven out of eight working blacks (male and female) were employed as servants or as fieldworkers.<sup>6</sup>

Bullard’s skills in the “trowel trades” were, ironically, a legacy of slavery. Plantation owners sometimes trained slaves in trades rather than pay cash to white carpenters, masons, shoemakers, or other skilled craftsmen. After emancipation, the estimated 100,000 southern black craftsmen and artisans found it difficult to make a living, even though they far outnumbered their white

counterparts. Ultimately, industrialization and the accompanying displacement by white workers destroyed the privileged position of black artisans, who were the first to leave the region. Bullard’s migration before 1900 put him on the leading edge of 200,000 black Americans moving north between 1890 and 1910. The “great migration” of 1916–30 brought some 1.5 million more African Americans to northern cities. Additional black carpenters, bricklayers, and plasterers were among them, though the number of skilled black building laborers nationally declined overall in the same years.<sup>7</sup>

Minnesota was not a major destination for southern blacks because the area lacked the kind of industrialization that provided jobs. W. E. B. DuBois described the state in 1902 as a place of “few Negroes and fewer artisans.” By 1910 Minnesota’s African American population was 7,084 (3,144 of whom lived in St. Paul), only 0.3 percent of the total state population. Ten years later that number rose very modestly to 8,809, about 0.4 percent of the state total.<sup>8</sup>

In turn-of-the-century St. Paul, “few Blacks made it into the ranks of skilled craftsmen,” wrote David V. Taylor, historian of the city’s community. Most black men worked at unskilled or menial service jobs such as waiters or porters. Small family businesses monopolized trade and crafts industries, and skills were handed down within the family or an ethnic group. Unless a black man already possessed a skill—as Bullard did—there were few opportunities to learn one.<sup>9</sup>

When Bullard arrived in St. Paul, the city was rapidly shedding what




*Southern bricklayers and stonemasons helped build the Minnesota capitol, photo about 1900. John L. Merriam’s Richardsonian Romanesque mansion (demolished 1964) is visible across University Avenue.*

one observer called the “ragged outlines” of its early architecture for a dash of culture. Landmarks that define the city to this day were completed in the first three decades of the century. Brick was the most common building material although stone was preferred for monumental public buildings. Skilled bricklayers and stonemasons like Bullard were in demand. “They liked that he was versatile, because he could work in any medium,” said Blakely, while Bullard Jr. observed that it was rare for any worker to have all three of his father’s skills—bricklayer, stonemason, and stonecutter. Walter Butler, grandson of a founder of the Butler Brothers construction company, said in 1995 that a combination of skills was “the exception, not the rule.” Blakey recalls her father pointing out buildings he worked on during their drives around town; the public buildings gave him particular pride.<sup>10</sup>

Bullard first worked in Minnesota seasonally, according to his family. He appeared in the city directory only once—in 1897, where he is listed as a porter residing at 428 St. Anthony Avenue—before he permanently settled in St. Paul in 1902. In that year he was a bricklayer for the William F. Porten Construction Company, which was building the Great Northern Railway’s Dale Street shops; no address for him is given. Bullard is also said to have worked on the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House (1898–1904), known today as Landmark Center. Later, Bullard worked primarily for himself, alone or in crews.<sup>11</sup>

**B**lack workers from the South helped build the third (and current) Minnesota State Capitol. When architect Cass Gilbert insisted

MINNESOTA’S AFRICAN AMERICAN SITES LISTED ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER		
BUILDING	BUILT	LISTED
<b>St. Paul</b>		
S. Edward Hall House, 996 Iglehart Ave.	1906	1991
Harriet Island Pavilion, 75 Water St.	1941	1992
Highland Park Tower, 1570 Highland Pkwy.	1928	1986
Holman Field Admin. Bldg., 644 Bayfield St.	1939	1991
Pilgrim Baptist Church, 732 W. Central Ave.	1928	1991
Casiville Bullard House, 1282 Folsom St.	1909–10	1997
<b>Minneapolis</b>		
Lena O. Smith House, 3905 S. 5th Ave.	1927–40	1991
<b>Duluth</b>		
St. Mark’s AME Church, 530 N. 5th Ave. E.	1900	1991



The congregation at Pilgrim Baptist Church, which served St. Paul’s small black community, December 1928

that the exterior walls be Georgia marble, general contractor Butler-Ryan Construction Company (later Butler Brothers) bought a Georgia quarry to lower the cost. John Butler then recruited southern black laborers, skilled and unskilled, to work on the building because St. Paul had a labor shortage. This recruitment even merited mention in labor historians Lorenzo Greene and Carter Woodson’s 1930 book, *The Negro Wage Earner*.<sup>12</sup>

“My dad did talk about the Butlers. He worked for them,” recalled Blakey. Butler-Ryan was a staunch union company, so Bullard must have joined the St. Paul bricklayers

and masons local, said Walter Butler. (His grandfather Walter had been a founder of the St. Paul bricklayer’s Local 1 in 1882.) Butler Brothers were also contractors on Landmark Center, the St. Paul Public Library/James J. Hill Reference Library, and the Farmer’s Union Grain Terminal Association headquarters at North Snelling and West Larpenteur Avenues, all buildings Bullard said he worked on.<sup>13</sup>

Union records, which are incomplete, show Bullard as a member in 1906, 1919, 1928, and 1931. Blakey said, “He had his books with his union dues, which were filled—he was paid right up . . . into the later years.” Ac-

ording to Butler, Local 1 accepted blacks “from the beginning.”<sup>14</sup>

As a card-carrying union member, Bullard was a rarity, locally and nationally. Although the number of unionized black workers increased tenfold from 1890 to 1910, those 29,246 workers represented less than 1 percent of all African American laborers. In 1865, when the Bricklayers, Masons, and Plasterer’s International Union was founded, black bricklayers and masons were a significant enough segment of the workforce that they were admitted and given “all the rights and privileges of any other member regardless of race, creed, or color.” Locals in other cities would usually honor a member’s “traveling card,” although these rights were not always available to black members.<sup>15</sup>

Casiville Bullard did not appear to have a problem with his union card when he moved from Memphis to St. Paul. Any tradesman—white or black—who was a member of the bricklayer’s union was at the “top of the hierarchy of workers,” according to Butler, who also observed, “It was harder to get into Local 1 Bricklayers than into the Minnesota Club.” To join the union, two members had to vouch for an individual’s skill. Anyone who vouched for someone found incompetent could be fined; incompetence was one of the few valid reasons for expulsion.<sup>16</sup>

Other known African American building craftsmen in St. Paul included Benjamin Stevens, a Georgia stonecutter recruited by Butler Brothers to work on the Minnesota capitol, and Ike Suddeth, Stevens’s cousin. After the capitol was complete, Stevens remained in St. Paul as a stonecutter for C. H. Young and Company, working on many public buildings including the St. Paul Pub-



*The East Como neighborhood remained rural in 1917, when a photographer visited the Buetow family in their backyard at 526 West Arlington Avenue near Dale Street.*

lic Library, presumably with Bullard. Stevens died in 1949. In the early 1990s, an effort failed to save his house at 1031 North Park Street as a memorial to the work of the anonymous laborers who helped build the city’s signature buildings. Another artisan of color was Arthur H. Jeffrey, an independent contractor and member of the carpenter’s union. His daughter later recalled that her father and Bullard knew each other but did not work together.<sup>17</sup>

Bullard told his family that he worked on two structures designed by Clarence “Cap” Wigington, Minnesota’s first African American registered architect: the 1928 Highland Park Water Tower and the 1939 St. Paul Winter Carnival Ice Palace. (It is possible that he also worked on other Wigington ice palaces in that era).<sup>18</sup>

Some of Bullard’s smaller projects included the Zinsmaster Baking Company and Purity Baking Company in St. Paul, a church in Breckenridge, and brick and stone structures in Winona. He also built many chimneys and fireplaces for houses in the Highland Park neighborhood of St. Paul.<sup>19</sup>

Blakey recalled that the only time her father was not steadily employed was during the Great Depression. In 1939, three-fifths of St. Paul’s black community and one-quarter of its white population either were on direct relief or employed in New Deal programs. Bullard worked on a number of Works Progress Administration projects. His last major building was the Farmer’s Union Grain Terminal Association headquarters in 1946. Now 73, Bullard was well past normal retirement age, but he remained on call until an earlier eye injury (a piece of granite he was cutting flew into his right eye) prevented him from working.<sup>20</sup>

**W**hile working on noted public buildings early in his career, Bullard had also attended to his growing family’s need for a home. His wife, Addie, had joined him in St. Paul in 1902, the year that Lillie, the first of ten children, was born. In 1904, when the family lived at 109 West Arch Street, a second child, Janet, was born. Building permits show that in 1904 Bullard was build-

ing on property on Folsom Street in the Como Heights addition. He constructed a wood-frame house there (now razed), but the lot was leased or purchased with a contract not filed at the county courthouse. Records first show a deed in Bullard's name in 1907. He bought the adjoining lot in 1913 and, later, two more lots in an adjacent block. Blakey said her father "never had to worry about work and he was frugal. That's how he bought the land over by Como to build the houses. I never heard of him having any loans or mortgages. My dad wasn't that type."<sup>21</sup>

Bullard's house at 1282 Folsom (like a second house built nearby at 712 West Maryland Avenue in 1920) was not located in an identified black neighborhood. While St. Paul's African American population was distributed throughout five wards during the nineteenth century, by 1900 most blacks had moved north and west from the city core onto the plateau along Rondo and adjacent avenues—St. Anthony, Central, Carroll, and University—between Rice Street and North Lexington Parkway. Two other black neighborhoods developed in the 1920s, one around the capitol building (considered a slum) and the other on the lower West Side river flats.<sup>22</sup>

Bullard Jr. and Blakey said their father bought his lots because Lake Como "drew him." Located about 12 blocks south of the northern city limits, the Como Heights addition was platted in 1887, though the park that gave the neighborhood its name was created in 1873 (the year Bullard was born). The area was still sparsely populated when Bullard settled there in 1904, and it remained so through the 1920s. As late as 1916, only two lots on the east side of Bullard's street (one of them his) contained a

house, and only one lot on the west side had a house. Grotto Street, one block east, had none.<sup>23</sup>

According to family lore, Bullard nevertheless encountered resistance: "The neighborhood gave him a hard time but somehow or another he was able to acquire the land," Blakey said. "He didn't talk about this much because it was too painful." Bullard first lived in a tent on the Folsom Street property, and he worked on the frame house after returning from work. He told his children that their mother helped him at night by holding a kerosene lamp. Again, Blakey alluded to struggle. "Those were difficult days, as the tauntings continued daily, making their efforts almost unbearable," she wrote.<sup>24</sup>

Bullard's growing family kept him busy. In 1906 Casiville Jr. was born, followed by Howard (1907), Benjamin (1909), Addie (1910), and, between 1911 and 1916, Edith, William, and August. Arlee, the youngest, was born in 1917. For 15 years, from 1904 to 1919, the Bullard family lived at 1282 Folsom, first in the wood-frame house and, after 1910, in the brick-

veneered home that is now on the National Register.<sup>25</sup>

In a world where stable work was hard to find, African Americans valued the security of owning a home. According to historian Kathryn Grover, "For blacks . . . owning a home became a more profound signal of 'success' than ascent up the ladder from blue- to white-collar." The importance of home ownership was evident in the local black press, as well. *The Appeal* opined in 1907, "To own a home and pay taxes [means] your boy and girl can tell his schoolmates that he has a right to be in school because his father pays taxes and helps maintain the school." Photos of houses of prominent black citizens were featured in the *Appeal* in 1911 and *Northwestern Bulletin* in 1925 with these words: "Home ownership should be encouraged. It reflects industry, thrift, and stability."<sup>26</sup>

The family lived together in the house until the autumn after Arlee's birth brought the end of World War I—and a worldwide influ-



*The first four of Casiville and Addie's ten children (from left): Casiville Jr., Lillie, Janet, and Howard, about 1909.*

enza epidemic. Some 20-to-40 million people succumbed—600,000 in the United States, more than died in combat in all the wars of the twentieth century. The flu killed mostly young adults aged 20 to 40, and 36-year-old Addie Bullard was among them. Her oldest child was 15, the youngest was 1. “Mr. Bullard had promised his wife, Addie, that he would keep [the children] together,” wrote Blakey. “He fought tooth and nail to keep them and succeeded.”<sup>27</sup>

Bullard was 45 years old when he was widowed. Two years later he built a new house nearby, another two-story brick-veneer house at 712 West Maryland Avenue (extant). He moved there because the property came with five or six acres, on which the Bullards now operated a small farm complete with dairy cows. He planted fruit trees and raised vegetables, rabbits, and chickens. Bullard’s love of hunting and fishing meant “the table was often laden with fried fish and baked squirrels.” The resourceful Bullard also combined chores with family fun. Blakey recalled, “He would take the children for rides in the handmade wooden wagon into the woods, cutting our own wood to burn, taking a picnic basket with all sorts of goodies. It was fun, yet practical too.”<sup>28</sup>

Burt Shannon, a lifelong St. Paul resident who lived at 1021 Colne Street (just south of Como Park) as a young boy, recalled, “The Bullards lived out where it was farming at that time. My relatives had farms up there. In fact, there was an airfield out there on Hoyt and Hamline. There were no restrictions for African Americans at that time.”<sup>29</sup>

As late as 1920, black homeowners still lived in several different city wards. James Griffin, a contemporary of Blakey, said that when black

people moved into a white area, they were eventually accepted, and so they lived in many parts of St. Paul. As African Americans became more numerous after 1910, however, discrimination in housing and employment intensified, leading to the “ghettoization” of the black community by 1930. Beginning around 1915 and into the 1930s, explicitly restrictive covenants barred blacks from buying houses in certain St. Paul neighborhoods, including some blocks west of Como Park. (Bullard lived east of the park.) These covenants were banned in the 1930s.<sup>30</sup>

It appears that by the time Blakey

was growing up in the Maryland Avenue house, the Bullard family had been accepted in the all-white neighborhood. Blakey claimed, “It worked out fine. We got along beautifully with all the neighbors. There were no racial problems.” Casiville Jr. recalled that the family did not socialize with others and instead spent time as a family fishing, hunting, and skating, though his father was friendly with fellow stonemasons and church members.<sup>31</sup>

Blakey remembers fondly: “Dad had a wonderful personality. We respected him, he spoke with authority. . . . He was a very attentive

## A BOY REMEMBERS

The only African-American on the construction site of the Ober Boys Club (1941), 67-year-old Bullard made a strong impression on 9-year-old James Milsap, who later operated his own construction company for more than 30 years.

“I went down every day during the summer to watch him work. He inspired me. I was interested in laying brick. . . .

“He was a corner mason [whose skill and accuracy were key to whether a building would be “off” or not]. He could lay block, brick, and cement. Mr. Bullard was an artisan who could do all of it . . . Today, bricklayers use tools like brick saws to cut and fit the brick. Not Mr. Bullard. He took a brick hammer and knocked the corners off the brick, and laid them. He’d measure where he wanted the brick to fit [and, using a chisel or brick hammer], ‘bing,’ just knock the corner right off. That alone, shows his skill. When he finished, it was impeccable.

“I was glad to see the Ober Boys Club completed because I could play basketball in there. But I had mixed emotions because that meant I couldn’t watch Mr. Bullard anymore. . . . Mr. Bullard’s whole point in talking to me was to make me reach as high as I could possibly reach. What he undoubtedly was thinking was that there were no African American superintendents or foremen, and he encouraged me to strive for those positions rather than being a bricklayer. Mind you, he didn’t tell me not to be a bricklayer, he told me what I want to do is become a superintendent. . . . Of course, at that time I heard everything he said, but I was more fascinated with him getting the mortar off his trowel and watching the dexterity with which he worked.

“My father often wondered what all the commotion was about, my excitement about Mr. Bullard. In fact, when I learned that Mr. Bullard was working on the Gates Ajar at Como Park, I made my dad drive me out there because I was anxious to see Mr. Bullard’s work. Mr. Bullard was not only a skilled artisan, but he was nice to all the little kids.”

Source: James Milsap, interview with Susan Granger, Jan. 1996, transcript, Bullard House file.

father. . . . Since he had no relatives here, he counted on himself . . . and gave his children the good things of life, including school and church.” The children attended Como Park School, close to both the Folsom and Maryland houses. Built in 1916, the school was the first city project that can be strongly attributed to architect Wigington.<sup>32</sup>

Blakey recalls that her father “took the family faithfully to church every Sunday” and helped serve communion as an elder at Zion Presbyterian Church. Zion, a mission congregation founded in 1907 by white Presbyterian congregations, was the only black Presbyterian church in St. Paul. After Zion disbanded in 1938, many members, including the Bullards, moved to Camphor Methodist Church, founded in 1919, which had purchased a building in 1931 at 585 Fuller Avenue from an Episcopal congregation.<sup>33</sup>

James Milsap remembers Bullard as a “community stabilizer” who befriended young boys from Camphor Methodist, taking them to church functions. “Mr. Bullard was a special person,” Milsap said. “He’d take us to other white outlying churches. The best part was riding in the rumble seat in Mr. Bullard’s car.”<sup>34</sup>

Churchgoing family men such as Bullard were in the minority within the community. A 1918 statistical portrait of the black community estimated that only one in three blacks in St. Paul were members of a Christian denomination, some 1,775 out of about 5,000 total.<sup>35</sup>

Bullard Jr. (known in the family as “Cas”) sometimes worked alongside his father in those days, as did brothers Benny and Howard. The four oldest children (Janet, Lilly, Howard, and Cas), like many black St. Paulites, also worked at the Ar-

mour meatpacking plant, established in 1919 in South St. Paul. Blakey recalled, “It was a long ways to go to South St. Paul to work, so they’d leave in the dark and come home in the dark. They had to get home to take care of us younger ones. . . . Dad wasn’t always here. He’d be called away to work, even out of town, and the older ones would take care of us.”<sup>36</sup>

Blakey remembered that her father was not home much in the winter except on weekends. Bullard evidently traveled south, including back to Memphis, to work in year-around building climates. Blakey recounted cozy evenings spent around the pot-bellied stove, lying on the floor eating homegrown popcorn and roasted hazelnuts. “His homecoming was a festival after an out-of-state contract. He would play a harmonica that was attached to a wire bent to fit his mouth while playing a guitar at the same time, or he might play the drums or two bones, together, rattling them, keeping time. How he could play some good tunes. . . . Huge pans of macaroni and cheese and a big pan of apple dumpling were on the menu,” Blakey wrote.<sup>37</sup>

On one of these trips to Memphis, Bullard met or became reacquainted with 42-year-old Fannie Josephine Russell, whom he married in 1927. Arlee said Fannie “was very well educated. . . . I lived with [her] from when I was 10 years old to 19 years old.” Blakey’s stepmother had a heart condition, prompting a move in 1937 from the two-story house on Maryland to a one-story dwelling at 453 West Central Avenue in the



*Bullard with his second wife, Fannie Russell, whom he married in 1927*

Rondo area. She died the same year at age 52.<sup>38</sup>

By this time, Arlee and William were the only Bullard children left in Minnesota. The others had moved to California. William lived with his father at the Central address “for a long time” after Fannie died in 1937, Arlee said. Casville Bullard moved in with Blakey and her family in 1948 after he stopped working. “The reason I know so much about his work is [that] I was with him more than the other brothers and sisters,” Blakey said. “I took care of him.”<sup>39</sup>

Casville Bullard died on June 2, 1959, at age 86, leaving behind 9 of his 10 children, 34 grandchildren, and 8 great-grandchildren.<sup>40</sup> A century after he arrived in Minnesota and almost 40 years after his death, the story behind Bullard’s 92-year-old brick house at 1282 Folsom Street is now part of the historical record. Both his house and his life are testament to the accomplishments and perseverance of an African American union craftsman in early twentieth-century St. Paul and, by extension, to the contributions of other black artisans to the look of the city. □



## BUILDER BULLARD

In his long career Casiville Bullard worked as a bricklayer or stonemason on these buildings and structures (unless otherwise noted, in St. Paul).

	Built	Listed on National Register
Minnesota State Capitol	1898–1905	1972
Quadriga installation	1906	
Federal Courts Building (Landmark Center)	1898–1904	1969
Great Northern Railway's Dale St. shops	1902	
St. Paul Cathedral	1906–15	1974
Bullard House, 1282 Folsom St.	1909–10	1997
Horace Irvine House (governor's residence)	1910–11	1974
St. Paul Hotel	1910	
Lowry Office Building addition	1910	
St. Paul Public Library & Hill Library	1916	1975
Union Depot	1917–20	1974
Bullard House, 712 W. Maryland	1920	
Foshay Tower (Minneapolis)	1926–29	1978
Highland Water Tower	1927–28	1986
Pilgrim Baptist Church	1928	1991
Women's City Club (Jemne Building)	1931	1982
St. Paul City Hall/Ramsey Co. Courthouse	1931–32	1983
"Vision of Peace" statue installation	1936	
Works Progress Administration projects:	1932–1940s	
Masonry manholes & tunnel, Capitol complex		
Resurfaced brick, Kellogg Blvd. & W. 7th St.		
Housing at CCC camp (unknown)		
Como Park (Gates Ajar, Monkey Island, masonry gates, bridges)		
Winter Carnival Ice Palace	1939	
Twin Cities Ordnance Plant (New Brighton)	1941–45	
Ober Boys Club	1941	
First Baptist Church alterations	ca. 1945	1983
Farmer's Union Grain Terminal Association	1946	

Source: National Register nomination, Bullard House file.



WPA stonecutters working at a Mendota quarry, about 1940

## Notes

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1. Larry Millett, "6 sites with black ties nominated for historic register," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Feb. 17, 1991, p. B1, in Casiville Bullard House file, National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Minnesota Historical Society (MHS), St. Paul; Laura Weber, "Wins and Losses: The National Register of Historic Places in Minnesota," *Minnesota History* 55 (Fall 1997): 304.
2. Arlee Bullard Blakey to SHPO, Mar. 18, 1991, Bullard House file, SHPO.
3. David V. Taylor, "The Blacks," in *They Chose Minnesota: A Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups*, ed. June D. Holmquist (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1981), 77; U. S. Department of Interior, *National Register Bulletin #15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1991), 11.
4. Arlee Blakey, assisted by Casiville Bullard Jr. and Howard Bullard, Bullard House NRHP nomination form, draft [Mar. 1992], 2, 3, Bullard House file; Arlee Blakey, interview with Susan Granger, Dec. 15, 1995, p. 1–2, 5, 7, transcript in Bullard House file.
5. Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 11, 155; Ida B. Wells, *United States Atrocities* (London: Lux Newspaper and Pub. Co., 1892), 13–18, in William B. Wheeler and Susan D. Becker, *Discovering the American Past: A Look at the Evidence* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1998), 2:38; "A Study in Memphis, Tenn., by Henry N. Lee of LeMoyn Institute," in W. E. B. DuBois, *The Negro Artisan* (Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1902), 94; G. P. Hamilton, "Skilled Labor in Memphis, Tenn., 1908," in *The Bright Side of Memphis* (Memphis: the author, 1908), 11–17, in Philip S. Foner and Ronald L. Lewis, eds., *The Black Worker: A Documentary History from Colonial Times to the Present*, vol. 5, *The Black Worker from 1900 to 1919* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 45, 60–61.
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7. Greene and Woodson, *Negro Wage Earner*, 4–5, 7, 14, 320–22, 326, 327; DuBois, *Negro Artisan*, 14; Sterling D. Spero and Abram L. Harris, *The Black Worker: The Negro and the Labor Movement* (1931; reprint, Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1966), 3–10, 16–17; Litwack, *Trouble*

in *Mind*, 142; Carol Marks, *Farewell—We're Good and Gone* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 15, 50; Northrop, *Organized Labor*, 20. For example, in 1911, 75 percent of all masons in Atlanta were black, compared to less than 1 percent in New York City (94 out of 12,913); Mary Ovington, *Half A Man: The Status of the Negro in New York* (1911; reprint, New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 15. In 1920 Chicago had 5,303 masons, only 126 of them black; Spero and Harris, *Black Worker*, 161.

8. DuBois, *Negro Artisan*, 25, 130, 152; David V. Taylor, "Pilgrim's Progress: Black St. Paul and the Making of an Urban Ghetto, 1870–1930" (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1977), 213; Earl Spangler, *The Negro in Minnesota* (Minneapolis: T. S. Denison, 1961), 63–65.

9. Taylor, "Pilgrim's Progress," 57, 62, 77; Spangler, *Negro in Minnesota*, 56.

10. Quotes from Kenyon Cox, "An Artist's Impression of the Minnesota State Capitol," *Western Architect*, Oct. 1905; Larry Millett, *Lost Twin Cities* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1992), 130, 131, 237; NRHP nomination form, 7; Blakey interview, 4; Blakey et al., NRHP draft, 2, 8; Walter Butler, interview with Susan Granger, Dec. 21, 1995, transcript, 1—all in Bullard House file.

11. NRHP nomination form, 1996, p. 3; *St. Paul City Directories*, 1892–1902; Blakey et al., NRHP draft, 2; Arlee Blakey to Susan Roth, Dec. 17, 1991—all in Bullard House file.

12. Neil B. Thompson, *Minnesota's State Capitol: The Art and Politics of a Public Building* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1974), 27–28, 38; Walter Butler, interview with Susan Granger, Dec. 6, 1995, transcript, 1, Bullard House file; Greene and Woodson, *Negro Wage Earner*, 322.

13. Blakey interview, 2, 4, 5, 14; Butler interviews, Dec. 6, 1995, p. 1, Dec. 21, 1995, p. 1; Al Wittek, interview with Susan Granger, Dec. 1995, transcript, 3—all in Bullard House file.

14. Blakey interview, 2, 4; NRHP nomination form, 11; Butler interview, Dec. 6, 1995, p. 1—all in Bullard House file.

15. Ovington, *Half A Man*, 95; Spero and Harris, *Black Worker*, 17, 18, 33, 68, 70; Greene and Woodson, *Negro Wage Earner*,

346–47, 352; "Handicaps of Negro Mechanics," in Foner and Lewis, *Black Worker*, 351; Harry Bates, *Bricklayers' Century of Craftsmanship: A History of the Bricklayers, Masons, and Plasterers' International Union of America* (Washington, D.C.: the union, 1955), 52, 59, 60, 122–23; Northrop, *Organized Labor*, 22, 40. The number of newly unionized black workers in the decade 1890–1900 was 29,246, while in the next 30 years, the figure dropped to 28,263. By the mid-1920s, only 82,000 blacks out of a workforce of 2.5 million were union members. In the 1930s, 1 out of every 10 white workers (except agricultural laborers and farmers) was unionized, while the comparable figure for blacks was 1 in 50. Bricklayers represented fewer than 13 percent of all black craftsmen.

16. Butler interview, Dec. 6, 1995, p. 1–2, Dec. 21, 1995, p. 1; Bates, *Bricklayers' Century of Craftsmanship*, 1.

17. "Stevens, Benjamin, biography file," May 1969, photocopy of notes; Dave Riehle, "St. Paul working class deserves to be remembered too," *St. Paul Union Advocate*, Dec. 21, 1992; Laura Jeffrey, interview with Susan Granger, Dec. 20, 1995, transcript, 2—all in Bullard House file.

18. Jane K. Hession, *Clarence 'Cap' Wigington: An Architectural Legacy in Ice and Stone*, exhibit catalog, Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis, Nov. 12, 2000–Feb. 25, 2001; David V. Taylor, "Clarence Wigington," *Architecture Minnesota*, Jan.–Feb. 1999, p. 30; "Of Ice and Stone," *Preservation Matters*, May 1988, p. 1–2; David Taylor, conversation with author, July 2001. Wigington may have been the country's first black municipal architect.

19. NRHP nomination form, 9.

20. *Minneapolis Messenger*, Dec. 17, 1921, p. 1; Taylor, "The Blacks," 83, 84; *St. Paul City Directories*, 1918, 1919, 1920; Blakey interview, 5, 6; Blakey et al., NRHP draft, 4; NRHP nomination form, 9.

21. Blakey et al., NRHP draft, 2; NRHP nomination form, 11; Blakey interview.

22. Taylor, "Pilgrim's Progress," 32; Taylor, "The Blacks," 77.

23. Virginia B. Kunz, *St. Paul: Saga of an American City* (Woodland Hills, CA: Windsor, 1977), 65, 83; *Plat Book of St. Paul, Minn. and Suburbs* (Philadelphia:

G. M. Hopkins Co., 1916); NRHP nomination form, 11.

24. Blakey to Roth, Sept. 28, 1992; Blakey et al., NRHP draft, 2.

25. NRHP nomination form, 11, 12.

26. Kathryn Grover, *Make A Way Somehow: A Life in a Northern Community, 1790–1965* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 59; *Appeal* (St. Paul), Sept. 28, 1907; *Northwestern Bulletin* (St. Paul), Jan. 10, 17, 24, Feb. 7, 14, Mar. 21, and Apr. 25, 1925.

27. Blakey et al., NRHP draft, 3.

28. Blakey interview, 12, 14; Blakey et al., NRHP draft, 3.

29. Burt Shannon, interview with Susan Granger, Dec. 20, 1995, transcript, 2, Bullard House file.

30. Taylor, "Pilgrim's Progress," 222, 258; James Griffin, interview with Susan Granger, Dec. 15, 1995, transcript, 1, Bullard House file; NRHP nomination form, 12.

31. Blakey interview, 10, 11, 13; Blakey et al., NRHP draft, 3.

32. Blakey interview, 10–11; David V. Taylor with Paul Clifford Larson, *Cap Wigington: An Architectural Legacy in Ice and Stone* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2001), 75.

33. Blakey et al., NRHP draft, 6; Jeffrey interview, 1–2; *Twin Cities Star*, May 11, 1918, p. 1; Taylor, "Pilgrim's Progress," 184; Shannon interview, 2; *Northwestern Bulletin*, Jan. 24, 1925, p. 1; "Celebrating Churches in the African American Community," Preservation Alliance of Minnesota, 2001; "Camphor 2000: A Case For Your Support," 3–4, brochure in author's possession.

34. James Milsap, interview with Susan Granger, Jan. 1996, transcript, 2, Bullard House file.

35. Taylor, "Pilgrim's Progress," 157, 176, 177; "Detailed statistical portrait," *Twin Cities Star*, May 11, 1918.

36. Blakey interview, 11; Spangler, *Negro in Minnesota*, 67.

37. Blakey et al., NRHP draft, 3; Blakey interview, 14.

38. Blakey interview, 12, 13.

39. Shannon interview, 1; Blakey interview, 6; NRHP nomination form, 14.

40. *St. Paul Recorder*, June 5, 1959, p. 4; *Twin City Observer*, June 14, 1959, p. 12.

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