



MHS COLLECTIONS

King Family Photos Murray County



TO SOME, history is a discipline of memory, of accumulating important names, dates, and events. To me, a social historian focused on how people lived in the past, history is a discipline of imagination. Not one of the creative arts, exactly, but one that requires pieces of information to be imagined into life. About two dozen photographs taken (mostly) by Emil King, the local doctor in Fulda, Minnesota, invite us to imagine Marie Madison King's life.

In July 1904 Marie Madison sat for this photo—probably a wedding

picture—with her new husband, Emil King, and his two sons, Luther and Teddy, outside of his house in Fulda. Marie married a man already established and in place—in his household, family, community, and career. The house is his, the children are his, the relatives are his.

Perhaps she brought to her marriage her own set of interests and commitments that he respected and regarded. When she moved to his house, perhaps she changed the curtains, rearranged the furniture, put up different wallpaper. She must have taken a deciding hand in some issues regarding the raising of his children. He, no doubt, needed a helpmeet and a mother for his boys, who couldn't have been more than

two and five when their mother died. Who knows the ways of love?


Marie and Emil had their own son, Frederick, in 1905, about a year after their marriage. They “blended” their children into one family, and the three boys look like brothers in later family photos.

Photos in themselves don't tell the stories; they don't speak for themselves. We give them voice and life. In reading them, we often read ourselves as well. Then the real work of the historian begins.

—ANNETTE ATKINS

Annette Atkins is a professor of history and Michael Blecker Professor in Humanities at Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota.

Minnesota State Sanatorium for Consumptives, Cass County

 EDGAR ALLEN POE'S wife, Virginia, was singing at the piano when she coughed. Crimson droplets appeared on her lips, the first sign of tuberculosis, or consumption, as it was called. Her illness inspired "The Mask of the Red Death," a gothic tale whose protagonist refuses to recognize death's inevitability. Poe himself was devastated when Virginia died in January 1847.

A half-century later, tuberculosis was still a scourge. In Minnesota more than 20,000 people died of the disease between 1887 and 1899. At the time, the only widely accepted treatment was fresh air and a healthy environment, which stimulated the body's immune system. The therapy did not always work but, lacking a suitable alternative, officials across the country erected sanatoriums to quarantine and treat patients.

In 1906 construction began for the Minnesota State Sanatorium for Consumptives, or Ah-Gwah-Ching, about three miles south of Walker in Cass County. Overlooking Shingobee Bay on the south shore of Leech Lake, the hospital evolved into a massive complex of distinctive buildings exhibiting Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, and Spanish Colonial Revival styles.

The sanatorium adopted new procedures as they arose. Artificial pneumothorax, for example, involved collapsing a diseased lung, which inhibited the growth of tubercle bacilli. Patients survived on one lung while the damaged

one healed. Then, in the 1940s came antibiotics, which were so successful at killing the bacterium that tuberculosis was almost eradicated in America by the 1960s.

As cases plummeted, tuberculosis hospitals began closing. After serving nearly 14,000 patients, the Minnesota sanatorium was shuttered in 1962, eventually reopening as a nursing home. The facility was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2001.

—DENIS GARDNER

Denis Gardner, who has documented properties for the National Register of Historic Places and the Historic American Engineering Record, is the author of Minnesota Treasures: Stories Behind the State's Historic Places (2004).

Sources: Rolf T. Anderson, "Minnesota State Sanatorium for Consumptives," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Sept. 1996, State Historic Preservation Office, MHS; Kenneth Silverman, *Edgar A. Poe: Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 179–181, 326.



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ABOVE: *The Little Boys Ward, 1915* BELOW: *Early buildings and construction at the sanatorium, about 1910*

