

Annette Atkins

Style

Comes to Staples



History stalks across our lives in the structure of our politics and the shape of the law, of course, but also in our homes. That's why the perfect chair, a few years later, looks hopelessly out of date. The chair hasn't changed, but the historical context has.

In this essay—a chapter from her new book, Creating Minnesota: A History from the Inside Out—Annette Atkins examines the 1950s, offering a perspective on how history shapes our tastes and our choices.

Like hundreds of other small towns in Minnesota, Staples, in Todd County, limped out of the 1940s battered by war, then depression, then another war. The town and its people had weathered nearly two decades of hard years. Located on the main Northern Pacific Railroad line from St. Paul to Seattle, Staples originally had oriented itself to rail and timber. The land around it was never prime farmland but good enough to yield a living. The town was much like many midwestern towns—main street, at least two good cafes, and a meat market, as well as food and appliance stores, Phil Anderson's Our Own Hardware, Carlson Furniture, and Huff Furniture Store and Funeral Parlor. Nothing too fancy. No one would accuse Staples of being "modern" in 1940. But by 1960, Staples was home to modern furniture, cars, televisions, highchairs. Staples wasn't New York or Minneapolis, but it was a lot closer to those places than it had been. This is the story of the 1950s—how modernism came to Staples.¹

Tight times and the more important business of war had accus-

Sleek, modern coffee table, side tables, and sofa set by Yungbauer Furniture Manufacturers, St. Paul, about 1949

tomed people to worn carpets, walls that long since needed a new coat of paint, a davenport past its ability to give rest. Besides, that old furniture was homey, a refuge from a dangerous world; the heavy draperies kept winter cold out and summer cool in; antimacassars kept sofa arms clean.

Buoyed by the prosperity of the 1940s and the 1950s, people who had not previously dreamed of a grand life began to.

Photos of relatives long gone vied for space with pictures of radiantly dutiful and uniformed men and snapshots of young women frolicking with girlfriends in California or wearing Red Cross hats and handing out doughnuts and coffee to soldiers.²

Todd County men who went away to war included the eager and the reluctant alike. The men who didn't come home included Benedict Nalawaja, a coast artillery corpsman whose fate remained a mystery; Ralph Kliem, an infantryman who was buried in Belgium; Niels Chievitz, buried in Arlington National Cemetery; air corpsman Chester Tucker, the son of a barber, who was lost; Phillip Rydeen, buried at Fort Snelling; Robert Wiebesick, a private first class in the army, buried in Hawaii; Kenneth Tonsager, another private first class who was killed, earned a Purple Heart, and was buried in the Philippines.³

Women who joined the service from Todd County are harder to identify after the war. Magdalene Balcom, for example, joined the Quartermaster Corps of the Women's Army Corps; Inez Campbell left her job as a sewing machine operator and a year of college to enlist in the Women's Army Corps in April 1944. Did they come back? Perhaps with new names, but no one of those

names moved to Todd County in the postwar years. They may have been among the people who accounted for the county's decline in population from 27,000 to 25,000 between 1940 and 1950.⁴

Veterans developed a reputation for being reluctant to talk about their

experiences. Some must have suffered, without being able to name, post-traumatic stress disorder or were tortured by the mix of emotions that always trails soldiers—relief, remorse, survivor's guilt, the exhilarating intensity of war life and friendships. Besides, they were men, and didn't men have a responsibility to not crack or whine, cry or complain? It wasn't their only role, but it was a dominant one.⁵

Women who'd gone away to war work and come back, even those who'd taken over "men's work" in Staples, must also have had to mute some of their feelings. Yes, they could talk about having been lonely, but about reveling in the pleasure of being away, on their own, out from under family supervision and the neighbors' eyes? Not likely. How many of them settled down to lives with fiancés they no longer knew or husbands they didn't recognize? How could they complain about giving up their jobs to returning soldiers who

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so clearly needed (and deserved) them more? Wasn't that another version of their patriotic duty? It was certainly a happy time for many, but it must have been excruciatingly painful for others.

Trucks showed up with diapers, strollers, swing sets, tricycles, highchairs, toys, dolls, train sets, cowboy and Indian costumes—mountains of kid's stuff.

The postwar years brought new fears: of the Soviet Bear, the “loss” of China, the Berlin Wall, the Korean War, mutually assured destruction when the Soviet Union tested its own atomic bomb in 1949. Wisconsin's U.S. senator Joseph McCarthy's accusations of Communists in government service magnified the terror.

A rise in church membership in the late 1940s and into the 1950s reflected gratitude but also, perhaps, those fears and a need for comfort. The baby boom surely expressed a pent-up ache for family and home, for intimacy and connection. All of these factors turned people toward home and family, toward safety, comfort, security, and home decorating.

Yes, home and safety and security, that was all true. So was exuberance and pent-up desire. All those cakes that hadn't been baked because there hadn't been enough sugar; all that abstinence from meat—didn't those sacrifices deserve a reward? Frugality had been the watchword all over America in the 1930s and the 1940s. It wouldn't be the attitude of the 1950s. The war had been fought and won in the name of democracy. “Grand Expectations” is the term contemporary American historian James Patterson uses to describe the theme of the 1950s. Buoyed by the prosperity of the 1940s and the

1950s, people who had not previously dreamed of a grand life began to.⁶

Not all Americans, of course. One-third of Minnesota's rural people still awaited electricity; poor people in Minnesota and the nation

awaited the American Dream (or no longer cared about it, if they ever did); African Americans' service to the war effort had not demolished many barriers to equality (and the consequences of the GI Bill for decades furthered the economic divide between whites and blacks). Native Americans, no matter their contribution to the war effort, continued to be plagued by the “civilization” that was supposed to have saved them. Mexican Americans, despite their enthusiastic enlistment and service,

also continued to be concentrated in jobs and neighborhoods, whether or not they wanted to be.

They and other people were ignored, rejected, or excluded from full participation in the revolution heralded by the 1950 Oldsmobile that rocketed across America and by the delivery vans full of swivel chairs, turquoise bathroom fixtures, melamine dishes, television sets, and new ideas that began arriving in small towns—including Staples—all over the United States. Small towns—once “island communities” and isolated one from the other—had gotten connected by railroads, highways, and radio. Other trucks showed up with diapers, strollers, swing sets, tricycles, highchairs, toys, dolls, train sets, cowboy and Indian costumes—mountains of kid's stuff. The kids may not have needed it as much as the parents did. Nothing was too good—or apparently too

Thomas Rishworth and son with new toys, about 1955



much—for their kids. Isn't that how we show them love? Isn't that what we fought the war for—to make sure our kids have everything they need?⁷

Patriotism proved a strong glue, and the shared suffering, rationing, and making do of the war years lured Americans out of more local connections into a national identity. The war turned Irish Catholics in St. Paul, Poles in Todd County, Norwegians in Chisago, Swedish Lutherans in Austin, Croatians and Finns on the Iron Range into "Americans." In the 1950s, that shared identity was enhanced and reinforced by Lucy and Desi, by Elvis Presley, by Kraft Macaroni and Cheese, and by that new 1950 Oldsmobile.

American manufacturers, desperate to make sure they survived the transition from war to peace, had put designers to work even before the end of the war dreaming up products that would catch the attention of postwar consumers. Some furniture designers and manufacturers anticipated that returning soldiers would crave comfort and the safety of the familiar, so at war's end they speeded up production of traditionally styled furniture. American colonial living room suites—with their maple color, turned spindle backs, figured upholstery, and pleated skirts—in name, at least, conjured up images of heroes of another time.⁸

Other manufacturers, however, had only been waiting for their chance to unleash upon America the revolution that was called "modernism." To people such as the European architects Marcel Breuer, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and Le Corbusier and Americans Frank Lloyd Wright, Louis Sullivan, and Minneapolis architects William Purcell, George Elmslie, and Lisl and Winston Close, modernism had a



Consumer goods galore await Christmas shoppers at Anderson's Hardware, Staples, 1956.

very specific aesthetic, cultural, even democratic definition. The 1905 Cass Gilbert-designed Minnesota State Capitol building in the Beaux-Arts style represented all that the modernists hated (backward looking, monumental, overly decorated, and pretentious). Louis Sullivan's bank in Owatonna in 1906 and Frank Lloyd Wright's 1912 house for the Francis Little family in Minnetonka—both in the Prairie Style—were very close to what the modernists loved: strong horizontal lines, room to breathe, open spaces, and honest materials—wood, tile, steel, leather, concrete. The Bauhaus modernists wanted to go further—to transform people's tastes from Victorian overstuffed, ornamented, pretentious copies of what rich people bought to good-quality, well-designed, and affordable things for the masses. This wasn't the kind of democracy World War II had been fought for, but it was, the designers believed, profoundly democratic. Some version of this modernism affected American design for the

rest of the century and found a place even in the living rooms of Staples, Minnesota.⁹

Modernism proved to be the light at the end of the depression and war tunnel. Modernism would direct people to look forward and not back, would redirect people's attention from the privations and limitations of the past. Get rid of that overstuffed chair that belonged to the man who wouldn't be coming home; throw away the scuffed table and ratty rug that told of making do for so long. Do something, get something, buy something new; be new. As early as 1949, Yungbauer Furniture Manufacturers in St. Paul turned out what could certainly be called modern furniture: blond and modular tables and crisp and sleek casual sofas.¹⁰

At the end of the war, a few adventuresome buyers in Staples might have ordered furniture from Yungbauer Manufacturers, but more of them likely shopped in town at



Dorothy Sylvestre and children in living room, about 1958. Designed by University of Minnesota architect Carl Graft and built by local builder Ray Sanford with help from the Sylvestres, the Minnetonka house's open plan, wall of windows, and natural materials—not to mention furnishings—marked it as “modern.”

a local architect and helped build their own modern house and, in the spirit of the 1950s, furnished it with, among other things, a butterfly chair. Lisl Close designed furniture out of plywood and rope for a client's home on the St. Croix River. Somehow, in the 1950s, nurses and bank managers, electricians and teachers, clerks and homemakers in the Twin Cities and Rochester and also in International Falls, Jasper, and Staples accepted—indeed, embraced—a new aesthetic, but it wasn't quite what the Bauhaus had had in mind.¹⁴

This is the way of democracy: it goes its own way. Breuer wanted high culture for the masses. What happened instead was that mass-produced came to mean mass—and

Carlson Furniture or at Phil Anderson's Our Own Hardware or at the Huff Furniture Store and Funeral Parlor. These Staples businesses, not certain what their customers would go for, made mostly utilitarian arguments for their goods. Huff's offered good deals on mattresses and box springs. Anderson's advertised beautiful ranges that could “make tastier meals in less time” and had a special “vitamin-saver simmer set.” Carlson's advertised platform rockers that were also beautiful and useful.¹¹

Then something happened. Out of a confluence of prosperity, new babies, televisions, and manufacturers who, according to historian Shelley Nickles, “modified modernism from the avant-garde to the average,” modernism as a mass phenomenon—as popular culture—was born. The modernist philosophy—that speed is good, style is good, change is good, new is good, and more is better—caught on in most of the United States. Not simply an urban phenomenon or a

coastal one, it engaged people even in towns as small and as close to the end of the earth as Staples.¹²

Television helped. A lot. Televisions themselves symbolized the new; they also piped into every owner's living spaces an avalanche of new ideas, images, language, and defini-

It wasn't too long before Staples's stores joined the chorus of advertisers singing the “modern” praises of their offerings.

tion of self. One of the ideas that took stronger and stronger hold was the notion that everyone deserved a refrigerator, a good stove, a new house, their own house, their own car, their own television. These were toys and pleasures not just for the rich but for all Americans.¹³

The Valter family in Minneapolis bought a molded plastic dining room set; state senator J. A. Josefson's family in Minneota ate at a blond dining room set from 1951 through 1958; Eugene and Dorothy Sylvestre hired

eventually pop—culture. The process started with refrigerators, but it spawned cars that looked like rockets, chairs that looked like butterflies, coffee tables that looked like amoebas, lamps that looked like artichokes, and houses that looked like each other.

The modernists had aimed for universal and permanent principles of design. They reached a mass audience, for sure, but permanence did not characterize the consumer goods of the 1950s. Ads promised that con-

sumers were “buying a lifetime of beauty and comfort.” But furniture, like cars, became stylish enough to go out of style before long. One General Motors official is reported to have said that he wanted car owners to stay thrilled with the sleek styling of their cars for the year it took the company to introduce another. “Planned obsolescence” was the term for the corporate strategy to get people to buy what they didn’t need before what they had wore out. It proved enormously successful.¹⁵

Citizens of Staples and New York alike took up the same styles, fads, frivolity, and fun: Kellogg’s Sugar Frosted Flakes, Kraft Cheez Whiz, Holiday Inns, Disneyland, Eveready AA batteries, Certs breath mints, Sports Illustrated, Barbie, Play-Doh, and Davy Crockett hats. The new products encouraged greater informality and promised convenience and efficiency: cake mixes, pantyhose, disposable sanitary napkins,

credit cards, Bic pens, Jiffy Pop, and a sour cream-French onion soup recipe for a dip that, with chips, was perfect for impromptu and casual entertaining.¹⁶

It wasn’t too long before Staples’s stores joined the chorus of advertisers singing the “modern” praises of their offerings. Phil Anderson’s Our Own Hardware had long sold dinette sets, but in 1954, as furniture suppliers competed for buyers, the ads described its “Tru Chrome” sets as “modern.” They were formed out of tubular steel—like the Breuer chair—but with “Lamex” (“the Wonder Plastic”) seats with “locked in color” that could repel all spills and smears. (Something about the “x” seemed in the 1950s to be a code for modern: Xerox, Deluxe, Permalux.) The “Chromecraft” dinettes sold at Huff Furniture were constructed out of tubular steel, too, with other brands of plastic chair covers. Then Anderson offered the sets in decorator colors that would “add sparkle to your home,” and Huff’s countered with dinettes in new styles and sizes. Anderson next advertised new colors, styles, and sizes. The variations among the sets were smaller than the ads might have wanted buyers to realize.¹⁷

Neither furniture stores nor designers imagined that consumers would throw out all of their old furniture, so Anderson, Carlson, and Huff continued to offer sofas and chairs in several styles. The stores and the increasingly popular “ladies” magazines—*Good Housekeeping*, *Ladies’ Home Journal*, *McCall’s*—encouraged people to mix and match, to put a modern table with an Early American sofa, a new lamp with a Provincial chair. The range of styles was broadening; so were the choices of finishes and materials: fabrics,



Modern lawn chair with tubular polished aluminum frame, cushion covers of printed textured vinyl, and decorative motifs including a stylized Sputnik

vinyl and plastic, blond and genuine walnut veneer, platinum mahogany, and “modern limed oak.” Dishes in many new designs appeared about the same time. An International Falls ad described a set of dishes as “utterly modern, strikingly original, yet poised and restrained.” Able to blend with any style furniture or silverware, these dishes also had a “touch of perkiness.”¹⁸

During the war, the manufacture of televisions in the United States had been suspended, but sales ballooned quickly after the war. In 1947 Americans owned 40 million radios and 44,000 television sets. In early April 1950, Americans owned 5.3 million sets; by the time the first *I Love Lucy* program was televised in October 1951, Americans owned 13 million sets. In 1957 that number had increased to 41 million, and by 1960 the ownership of televisions surpassed that of radios.¹⁹

The first really new furnishings that won wide acceptance were those

Staples World, December 9, 1954

MORE VALUE FOR YOUR MONEY!

WITH FAMOUS **THE CHROME**

Flexin Pattern DINETTES!

Now Only **\$79.50**

Free Budget Terms

Recently styled Tru-Chrome Dinettes with Tru-Chrome legs and tips will bring the final decorative touch to your home. Built for extra comfort, a Dinette with modern beauty at the least—designed for years of easy living.

GUARANTEED FEATURES FOR BIGGEST DINETTE VALUE!

- Best construction and finish
- Choice of 12 colors
- Free delivery and installation
- Free 30-day return
- Free 3-year warranty

EASY TERMS — LIBERAL TRADE-IN

Phil Anderson's

OUR OWN HARDWARE

Your kind of Store

Gifted Ideas
Just Arrived! New!

Hassock Assortment

These are the new latest design of hassocks, perfect for sitting and standing. Light enough for a child to lift—covered with durable fabric in any color—guaranteed. You would never believe a hassock could be so light. Come in and see us show you.

TABLES
DESIGNED with you in mind!

STORAGE CHAIRS, TOO
These are the new latest design of storage chairs, perfect for sitting and standing. Light enough for a child to lift—covered with durable fabric in any color—guaranteed. You would never believe a storage chair could be so light. Come in and see us show you.

Carlson Furniture Co.
Use Our Convenient Lay-Away Plan
We Deliver Christmas Eve

Staples World, December 2, 1954

things that accompanied the new television sets. Staples merchants offered swivel chairs that could turn from television to conversation and back to television without requiring the sitter to get up. Long prized as a footrest, the hassock got a new lease on life as a casual TV stool, especially when neighbors (without television sets) turned up to watch the coronation of Queen Elizabeth, the Republican national convention, the Friday night fights from Madison Square Garden.

More and more people invested in recliners—man-sized they were often called, emphasizing the house-as-castle and resting-place-after-a-hard-day-at-work idea that so shaped men's and women's roles in the 1950s. With built in footrests, recliners were just right for relax-

ing into television watching. Tray tables could accommodate eating while watching (and TV dinners after 1954). Moreover, in the 1950s, most televisions resembled furniture more than appliances—big, boxy, enclosed in wood (or veneer), set on sofalike legs (and later on chairlike legs of metal). The televisions didn't accommodate the other furniture; the other furniture was designed to accommodate the televisions.²⁰

Advertisers did a brilliant job of selling products by selling concepts. They described TVs, refrigerators, and bedroom sets as forward-looking, modern, completely new, revolutionary, breathtakingly ahead of their time. In addition, postwar advertisements in Minnesota newspapers emphasized power: "powerful" stoves, dishwashers, freezers, mixers, coffeemakers, and, of course, cars! The idea of cars as powerful is so much a part of American culture that it's difficult to remember that

this was not simply a fact but a concept invented and sold to consumers: power steering, power brakes, and power seats; "frisky powerglide" in the 1956 Chevy, "top-thrust and take off" in the Pontiac, and "deep chested power" in the Plymouth.²¹

Why this emphasis on power? People who are powerful don't need to buy power. People who don't have it (or feel they don't or wish they did) are the ones in the market for it, not intentionally and not consciously, no doubt, but susceptible to its charms and allure. Who would those people have been in the 1950s? Returning soldiers? Women forced home? Employees of big corporations or factory workers? People who felt the shadow of the atomic bomb and the Cold War? People who worried about the communist menace? No wonder people wanted a powerful car. Besides, people who grew up with little and then, in the booming economy of the 1950s, found that they had some-

Staples World, January 13, 1955

THE NEW PONTIAC SEDAN

**Greatest Size, Luxury and Power
Ever Priced So Low!**

Wondering what new car to buy? Stop in the window, watch traffic, and you'll see how others are settling this question. They are buying Pontiac—at a faster rate than ever before in history!

Ask why and you'll hear many reasons, but the basic reason is this: The '55 Pontiac possesses everyone's dream of what a modern car should be.

There's Pontiac's unique combination of beautiful long, low lines, Vogue Two-Tone styling, and Twin-Stroke distinction. There's Pontiac's long wheelbase—the secret of the wonderfully soft, smooth ride that makes you and your passengers the happiest people on wheels.

There's Pontiac's enormous and luxury . . . living-room comfort and modern-tomorrow design . . . along with picture-window vision all around.

And there's Pontiac's instant control and Strato-Steer V-8 performance—but these must be enjoyed to be believed.

Take a total of the foregoing and here's the result—more of everything than a like amount of money has ever bought before!

How much money? You can actually buy a Strato-Steer powered Pontiac for just a few dollars more than the very lowest-priced cars! Come in and find out how little it costs to switch to modern motoring.

'55 Pontiac

SEE HIGHER—SEE PONTIAC! THESE GREAT CARS WITH STRATO-STEER V-8 POWER!

BOOTH MOTOR COMPANY
Staples, Minnesota

Becoming a Legacy Member

The Society's Planned Giving web page provides helpful information on opportunities to create a planned gift. To learn more about the Minnesota Legacy and the benefits of becoming a member, visit www.mnhs-legacy.org or call 651-259-3121. You will be able to view significant information about planned giving, including weekly articles on personal finance, tax references, trends in philanthropy, donor stories, a Washington Hotline and up-to-the-minute stock market quotations.

The Minnesota Historical Society Endowment enables the Society to fulfill its mission in perpetuity, and to provide individuals and families opportunities to extend their values, passions and beliefs beyond their lifetimes. The Society thanks everyone who supports this mission.



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An Invitation to Minnesota Legacy



Minnesota Historical Society



The opportunities of endowment

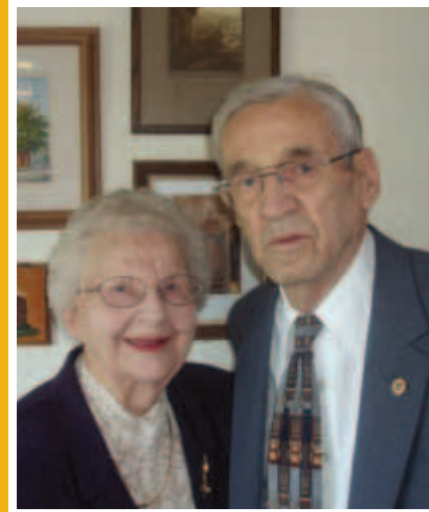
The Minnesota Historical Society carries out its mission through the generosity of the people of our state both through the legislature and through private donations. Privately funded endowments are an essential source of program funds and have a growing importance in the strengthening of the Society.

Many people, such as John, Bernice and Judy Schwartau, have found that establishing an endowment or contributing to an endowment is a deeply satisfying experience providing a lasting expression of their most important values and representing the capstone of their philanthropy.

An endowment, such as that established by the Schwartau family, can be created through a:

- Will or trust provision
- Current gift of \$10,000 or more
- Charitable Gift Annuity
- Life insurance policy
- Charitable Remainder Trust
- Retirement account designation

Your gift can provide unrestricted support or can be designated to benefit a program or historic site having special meaning for you.



As an expression of their life-long interest and commitment to Minnesota history, and the importance of preserving and telling the story for the future, John and Bernice (Gustafson) Schwartau of Red Wing have entered into a charitable gift annuity contract with the Minnesota Historical Society. They have created the John, Bernice and Judy Schwartau Fund for Agriculture and Rural Life. Included in the pooled named endowment fund, the

Schwartau Fund will support programs and projects of the Minnesota Historical Society focusing on agriculture and rural life. These projects may include oral histories, women's history, exhibitions, conservation, education, public affairs, publications and statewide outreach.

While farming for more than 50 years in Featherstone Township, Goodhue County, and since their move to Red Wing, John and Bernice devoted their lives to the wider community giving leadership and service to health care, agriculture and history. John, Bernice and Judy, through this charitable gift annuity, have deepened their life's roots in Minnesota's rural experience. At the same time, they are now helping ensure the culture of Minnesota's rural heritage is brought forward to the future. "This is important to us," John says. "We know the Minnesota Historical Society is the best in the country, and we feel good about this gift which furthers that which is meaningful to us."

In recognition of their gift, the Schwartaus have membership in the Minnesota Legacy. This membership defines their enduring value in Minnesota history and the award-winning work of the Minnesota Historical Society.

thing bought cars and refrigerators and bedroom suites. The Great Depression, World War II, and the Cold War each contributed to the expansion of buying in the 1950s.²²

Since the 1920s, at least, one aspect of American consumerism has been the identification of things with ideas and identity, so an object increasingly carried the weight not only of performing its function—being a shoe, for example—but also of identifying the values and aspirations, indeed, even the “self,” of the wearer. The Mall of America, in Bloomington, the second-largest shopping mall in the world, in 2005 ran an advertising campaign that made this point explicitly: “MOA: more ways to be yourself.” But the 1950s ads used the values and the image to sell the objects: the 1956 Dodge promised “the Look of Success.” Carlson offered sofas that said “young at heart” and a bedroom dresser that “says so eloquently that our married life grows richer each year.”²³

The rocket fuel that propelled many of these changes was the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act of 1944—the GI Bill, as it was commonly called. As a result of this government program and the shortage of homes, modernism pulled into Coon Rapids in the 1950s on the beds of trucks piled high with sacks of concrete, boxes of nails, stacks of cedar shakes, spools of wire, and miles of copper piping. The GI Bill provided funding for the education of returning veterans, for medical care, and for low-interest mortgages on new homes. Between 1944 and 1949, the government underwrote nearly \$50 billion in loans to returning servicemen.²⁴

The demand for new housing far



Thompson Park, Coon Rapids’ new housing development, near Northdale Boulevard and Foley Road, 1957

outran the supply, and individual contractors could not keep up. They needed a new way; a few of them—William Levitt in New Jersey and New York and Orrin Thompson in Minnesota—understood that if production of consumer goods could be speeded up—and made more affordable—by mass production, why not houses? A lot of houses built to

over for the Red River carts on their trek in the early-nineteenth century between Pembina and St. Paul. In the early-twentieth century, Northern States Power had built a dam at Coon Rapids. The residents incorporated as a village in 1952.

Between 1950 and 1960, the state’s population increased by 17 percent, from 2.8 million to 3.2 mil-

Modernism also meant new ways of life centered on the car.

the same design, in close proximity to each other, could go up quickly, cheaply, and profitably.²⁵

Orrin Thompson’s plan for building communities of good-quality, affordable houses took him out of the cities and even beyond the first ring of suburbs to Coon Rapids, Cottage Grove, and Apple Valley. The Anoka County village of Coon Rapids—about half an hour north of Minneapolis and St. Paul—on the Mississippi River had been a stop-

lion. In those same years, Anoka County’s population increased from 36,000 to 86,000 (150 percent) and new households increased by 30 percent. Coon Rapids turned itself from a village into an incorporated city in 1959 as 2,000 new people moved in between 1958 and 1960. The people may have moved out to Coon Rapids and Anoka, but the jobs didn’t. The men of these households were coughed up every morning to climb into their cars and head into Min-

neapolis or St. Paul or someplace else for work. Children, though, would go to school nearby. The absence of sidewalks didn't encourage walking, but that was why mom had a car, too.

In the mid-to-late 1950s, Orrin Thompson built more than 2,000 homes in Thompson Park in Coon Rapids. In the 1960s he also built Thompson Heights and Riverview Development, also in Coon Rapids. His homes boasted picture windows, cedar-shake siding, three bedrooms, one bath, a living/dining room combination, and kitchen. Each house had its own front lawn, small backyard, and driveway (no garage) and looked much like the houses on either side. These houses were arrayed on streets named Ilex, Juniper, Kumquat, Larch, Magnolia, Norway, and Olive, though only the occasional real tree found a home on the landscape. Thompson's idea of a community did not include shops or stores, only houses. The community did hint, however, of California and its "easygoing lifestyle," so reminiscent of the West and Southwest in those ranch houses.²⁶

It's easy to disparage their sameness, but similarly styled houses were nothing new—Americans had long called them brownstones or row houses in city settings. For the Coon Rapids buyer, these houses had many advantages that those city homes didn't: space, of course, and privacy and affordability. Moreover, they had the advantage of being new and as good as Thompson could build while still keeping them affordable.

Couples could—and certainly did—bring family furniture into these new homes—a sofa from her mother, a chair from his grandfather, lamps that were leftover from somewhere—but these homes invited new and modern furniture. The photos of the display house feature a sectional sofa, two Scandinavian-style step tables (with a light, perhaps limed oak finish), and fashionable table lamps. The pattern of the curtains is a staple of 1950s design. The white walls and the bright room are just the right setting for the Scandinavian look as well as for the new colors that promised to liven up the living

room. To assist people in furnishing their own houses, the developers made suggestions and the furniture stores increasingly offered suites: entire sets of living-room furnishings that included sofa, chairs, tables, lamps, sometimes even matching TV trays and just the right serving bowls and dishes. Couples could purchase these new things close to home, or they could climb into their cars and explore.

Modernism in Coon Rapids meant new houses, new furniture, new appliances. It also meant new ways of life centered on the car. Already in 1957, Coon Rapids was too big to walk across. Children could not usually walk from the Northdale Addition to school. Families did not walk to church or to buy groceries. Cars in the early 1950s had been designed for men; by the late 1950s, Ford and other automakers were offering cars for women and cars for men. The Ford Fairlane station wagon was "femengineered" so that women could get themselves and their children where they needed to go. The Ford Thunderbird had men in its sights. He could drive his car to work; she could have the family car.

The kids? They, too, would be raised by new and modern standards, described by Dr. Benjamin Spock. Give children more attention, give them what they want, organize the household around them—wasn't that what the postwar years were about anyway? So much the better to have a doctor's affirmation of these practices. Spock's advice book sold a million copies in the months after it appeared in 1946. Like the house and the car, this book put women at the center of the family life with the children, but the postwar years did hint at the change in gender roles that was knocking at the door. Men were

Living room in a Thompson model house, complete with all the modern touches, 1955



supposed to be parents; they were to spend time with their children, even if it was only cooking on the barbeque in the backyard or taking the wife and kids for a ride.²⁷

On the weekend they could go shopping together—perhaps even at Southdale, just southwest of Minneapolis in the slightly older suburb of Edina. American shopping malls had been around since the opening of Country Club Plaza in Kansas City in 1923. Dayton's had a better idea, certainly a better one for Minnesota and, it turned out, a popular one in hot as well as cold climates: an enclosed, indoor mall. Designed by Victor Gruen and Associates in 1952, Southdale Mall opened its doors in 1956. It housed Dayton's, of course, and 71 other stores on two floors around a central courtyard with long sightlines, open staircases, lots of light (artificial, not sunlight)—all surrounded by 5,200 parking spaces. No one walked to Southdale.²⁸

In the early Southdale years, the new interstate and defense highways were still in the planning stages, so getting to Edina from Coon Rapids would have been a long and tedious drive. In 1919, Captain Dwight D. Eisenhower had taken part in a cross-country automobile trip that took 62 days because the army vehicles averaged about five miles an hour. When he was elected president in 1952, Eisenhower set as one of his goals a streamlining of the American road system. Congress passed the Federal Aid Highway Act in 1956. It provided funds to build about 42,000 miles of “limited access” four-lane (at least) roads, ostensibly for defense (but more often used to get to and from shopping, relatives, vacations, jobs). An eight-



Mom and the boys settle in for the afternoon, Minneapolis, 1954.

mile stretch from Owatonna to Medford, completed in 1958, was the first bit of interstate—I-35—in the state.²⁹

Minnesota acted quickly to build these roads because it had a well-developed state highway department and system, widespread popular support, and the belief that freeways would lead directly to progress. Nine years after those first eight miles, another 352 miles were added to the state's interstate highway system.³⁰

Give children more attention, give them what they want, organize the household around them.

It was the “limited access” that distinguished these roads from other highways, of which there were many by the mid-1950s. (A drive across the country in 1956 would not have taken 62 days.) Cars could enter or leave the system only at specified and designated places, usually no less than two miles apart (sometimes a little closer in cities) and often with much longer stretches between entrances and exits. This idea of the 1950s—speed, efficiency, stream-

lined, forward leaning—was wonderful for the people on the highways but sometimes a little (or a lot) less wonderful for the neighborhoods the highways serrated or the towns they bypassed.³¹

St. Mark's Catholic Parish in St. Paul, for example, was split by Interstate 94. After the building of the freeway in 1961, parishioners who had previously been able to walk to church (and school) had to walk

miles instead, and most didn't. They changed to other schools and parishes. That same stretch of freeway had an even more dramatic effect on the Rondo neighborhood, home to many African Americans in the 1950s. Families that had lived in Minnesota for decades and others more recently arrived from the South made up a vibrant, vital community that was in many ways independent of the white society around it. Many black middle-class people lived



Shoppers in Rondo's Credjafawn Co-op Store, about 1950

there, as well as many who aspired to the middle-class but hadn't yet achieved it. It certainly was home to urban poverty, too, and to what city and road planners, no doubt, called urban blight.

Some planners in the 1950s and 1960s tried to eradicate urban poverty by tearing down the buildings in which the urban poor lived. In Minneapolis, for example, city and federal authorities invoked eminent domain to clear out blocks and blocks of low-income housing, businesses, bars, rooming houses,

households—121 white and 312 “non-white,” almost entirely African American—and erased the Rondo neighborhood. A study of those who were displaced followed up on 328 of the households and found that 10 percent of the whites and 85 percent of the African Americans moved to another “non-white” neighborhood. The freeway clearances had the effect of increasing the density of the black population and of further reducing the neighborhoods in which whites and blacks both lived. Some Rondo residents had no interest in leaving

The GI bill-funded suburbs further divided Minnesotans by class; the interstate highways divided people by race.

pawnshops, and transient hotels, replacing them eventually with parking lots (other plans had been dreamed but never materialized). The decision to cut through Rondo certainly had racial motives; it also had economic motives. It seemed a way to do at least two things at once: to make way for the freeway, yes, but also to “improve” the neighborhood.³²

The St. Anthony–Rondo freeway clearances eliminated 433

a black community and mourned its destruction in the interests of faster traffic. Some of the residents who looked for housing elsewhere met discrimination and red-lined neighborhoods closed to them. Some did not try to move, usually out of fear of discrimination.³³

The 1940s had opened the path for more egalitarian gender, social, and racial roles and relations. The 1950s shoveled the path clearer, but

only for some. The GI bill-funded suburbs further divided Minnesotans by class; the interstate highways divided people by race. The emphasis on home and homemaking pushed women off the career path. The Civil Rights tide had not turned in the late 1940s and early 1950s, but it was on its way. The *Brown v. Board of Education* case was moving through the federal courts system, and in 1954 the Supreme Court would strike down the “separate, but equal” decision of the 1896 *Plessey v. Ferguson* case. Prejudice and discrimination against Jewish, Native American, African American, and Mexican American Minnesotans did not diminish suddenly in 1948 or 1954 or 1964, but Minneapolis mayor Hubert Humphrey in 1948 put the state's and the nation's Democrats on alert for changes that were to come. Not soon enough and still not enough, but rumbles of change were on the horizon.³⁴

The consumerism of the 1920s had sent novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald out of the state and away from the “stuff” he felt strangled his creativity. Many artists have fled Minnesota specifically and the Midwest generally to find something better, bigger, more charged and electric elsewhere. In the 1950s, too, artists had to decide where they could work. By the decade's end, Robert Zimmerman knew Minnesota was not the place for him and fled to New York, where he reinvented himself as Bob Dylan. The potter Warren MacKenzie, by contrast, fled only to his studio in Stillwater. That was far enough away to allow him to stand against the tide of plastics and disposables that rolled across the United States after the war. Like the

modernists, he wanted people to be able to surround themselves with well-designed things but not mass-produced things. After studying and, with his first wife, Alixandra Kolesky MacKenzie, living with the English potter Peter Leach and working in the tradition of the Japanese potter Shoji Hamada, he and Alix settled into their Stillwater place and stayed. “There is something about living in Minnesota, or living in the Midwest,” MacKenzie said in 2002. “My pots are really most at home in the Midwest . . . [this area is] sympathetic to hand pottery. And it doesn’t have to be fancy hand pottery, such as you’re likely to find in the big galleries in New York or San Francisco and so on, the latest thing. They want pots they can use in their home.” That’s what the couple did and he continued to do after her death: make everyday pots at reasonable prices.³⁵

might say homogenous—culture and brought Americans into the same time period. With televisions, people in New York and Staples got their news at the same time. In 1957 they all heard about the Soviets’ launching of Sputnik and Dwight Eisenhower’s use of federal troops to desegregate the public schools in Little Rock, Arkansas, and the death of Joe McCarthy. They also got other kinds of “news”: Elvis Presley’s debut on the Ed Sullivan Show; Lucy, Ricky and little Ricky’s move from their New York apartment to their Connecticut house. People who watched television had limited choices: at most three networks of programs. This sameness—as well as the sameness, then, of the advertising on the three networks—encouraged a kind of homogenization among viewers.³⁶

Moreover, the same cars and refrigerators, television sets and card

tables showed up in all of these—and other—places at virtually the same time. Car makers in the mid-1950s made a fetish of ceremonially unveiling the new year’s model everywhere, all at once. Stoves came in new models, too; so did lamps and chairs. In the nineteenth century, new things, new ideas, even new news came slowly up the river or across country by wagon, wire, or rail, up to Pembina, out from Duluth. Slowly. New Yorkers might think of Minnesota as a backwater and people in Edina might consider Staples the end of the world, but modernism and mass production and mass consumption—and televisions—joined people in time and across space. This was how Staples and International Falls and Jasper—even Minnesota itself, considered by many outsiders to be the middle of nowhere—became part of everywhere in the 1950s. □

The 1950s were for many people domestic years—making their homes, raising children, earning enough money to buy furniture and cars, settling into a post-depression and postwar life. The Minneapolis Lakers played professional basketball from 1947 to 1960, when they moved to Los Angeles (more fans, more money, bigger arena). Metropolitan Stadium was built in Bloomington in 1956; the Twins played their first game there in 1961.

In the 1950s, a landslide of modern ideas, images, language, and things swept into Minnesota—on the hoods of cars, on the television airwaves, in delivery trucks of stuff. All of these new things had the effect, in part, of democratizing America, as Breuer and other designers had hoped. It also took America down the road toward a more common—some



Los Angeles station KLAC advertising Minnesota-made Cootie game, part of a larger toy promotion to early 1950s consumers

Notes

1. Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003). She looks especially at how citizens in the 1920s had caught the consumerism virus but could not act on it until after the war and at how emphasis on consumption—and increasing the goods to be consumed—kept the focus off the redistribution of wealth or even economic equality.

2. Shirley Wajda, “Be It Ever So Humble: A Review Article,” *American Quarterly* 41 (Sept. 1989): 568–76; Katherine C. Grier, *Culture and Comfort: Parlor Making and Middle-Class Identity, 1880–1930* (1988; repr., Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997); James Madison, *Slinging Donuts for the Boys: An American Woman in World War II* (New York: Knopf, 2007).

3. See www.accessgenealogy.com/worldwar/minnesota/todd1/htm (subscription); U.S. World War II Army Enlistment Records, 1938–46, at www.ancestrylibrary.com—both accessed May 2, 2007.

4. Army Enlistment Records, 1938–46. For population throughout this article, see www.census.gov/population/cencounts/mn190090.txt (accessed Apr. 26, 2007).

5. See James Gilbert, *Men in the Middle: Searching for Masculinity in the 1950s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

6. James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States 1945–1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). Or more people dreamed about it, anyway. See Brian Horrigan, “The Home of Tomorrow, 1927–1945,” in *Imagining Tomorrow: History, Technology, and the American Future*, ed. Joseph J. Corn (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), 137–63, which shows how the thread of futurism passed through the fabric of the 1930s and 1940s, despite depression and war.

7. See Cohen, *Consumer's Republic*, and Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (1988; repr., New York: Basic Books, 1999).

8. At the end of the war, people such as William Norris, who had been part of navy intelligence operations, on their own (Norris with navy support) designed computers. Their work pioneered the transistor, the Honeywell thermostat control, and, eventually, the home computer. In the 1950s these innovations had their most important impact on government and business, but their effects trickled down to even greater public impact after the 1950s. Jeffrey L. Meikle, *Design in the USA* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 133.

9. In 1934 Wright designed a very modest “Usonian” house for Nancy Willey of Minneapolis, which moved closer to the more popular version of the “modern” style—the

rambler. See www.thewillyhouse.com (accessed Apr. 26, 2007); Penny Sparke, *An Introduction to Design and Culture: 1900 to the Present* (1986; repr., New York: Routledge, 2004); Thomas Hine, *Populuxe* (New York: Knopf, 1986); Meikle, *Design in the USA*; author's interview with Sanya Poleschuk, Sanya Poleschuk Architecture, Inc., Feb. 7, 2006, notes in author's possession. According to Sparke, designers' rejection of what they saw as Victorian excess and artifice can also be read as a stringently male movement whose intent and effect was to identify Victorianism with women (draperies, pillows, tablecloths, and knickknacks) and modernism with a male aesthetic; see Penny Sparke, *As Long as It's Pink: The Sexual Politics of Taste* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995).

Breuer got the idea for his tubular steel chair from his bicycle handlebars. By “honest,” he meant that material should not look like something else. For 50 years designers had objected to clocks that looked more like lamps, painted surfaces that imitated carved wood. Until there were suitable replacements, the fakes continued to appeal to many buyers and manufacturers. In the 1920s, one model of Alcoa chair had the shiny, satiny surface of aluminum, but most were painted walnut, mahogany, or oak. Clive Edwards, “Aluminum Furniture, 1886–1986: The Changing Applications and Reception of a Modern Material,” *Journal of Design History* 14(2001): 207–25.

10. See www.mnfiji.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=25&Itemid=73 (accessed Apr. 26, 2007); *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, July 1, 1935, p. 1. Born in Bohemia in 1861, William Yungbauer learned woodcarving as a boy. In 1888 he was hired to work on the interior and furnishing of James J. Hill's Summit Avenue house. He later opened his own furniture and interior decoration business in St. Paul; by the time he died in 1935, his son William had taken over. While at the University of Chicago, William Jr. was certainly exposed to the work and, no doubt, the spirit of Frank Lloyd Wright.

11. *Staples World*, June 3, 1948. The combined furniture/funeral operation was common all over the Midwest well into the middle of the century. The overlap of woodworking for furniture and coffins made sense. Besides, a wagon big enough to deliver furniture could certainly carry a coffin to the cemetery. These commercial marriages broke down as furniture came to be objects of style and fashion.

12. Shelley Nickles, “Preserving Women: Refrigerator Design as Social Process in the 1930s,” *Technology and Culture* 43(2002): 693, 727. The modernist philosophy is still a powerful force but one now with competing voices. The VW Beetle, introduced in 1938, was the first real counter to the “big” movement, but for most of the

1950s, modernism went largely unchallenged. The environmental movement—small is beautiful, reduce, reuse, and recycle—was an invention of the 1960s.

13. Design historian Nigel Whiteley distinguishes between “modernist” and “consumerist” design: “Consumerist society shifted the balance in design from a concern with solutions to utilitarian needs, to an emphasis on an object's emotional, psychological, and social role. Whereas modernist design had sought to unify people, consumerist design sought (and continues to seek) to differentiate individuals or groups”; “Pop, Consumerism, and the Design Shift,” *Design Issues* 2(Autumn 1985): 31–45; quote, p. 36.

14. Marcel Breuer himself undertook two commissions in Minnesota in the 1950s, neither of them modest. Incorporating the principles of modernism that he had long heralded, he designed a house of glass and steel with stunning views of Lake Superior. And, for St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, he not only built a church (1955–61) but also made a hundred-year plan for the grounds of the abbey and university. This Catholic church looked like no other in the state; it anticipated many of the liturgical changes that the Second Vatican Council effected. When Pope John XXIII called on the church to open the windows to change, he both reflected and promoted the principles of modernism. See Victoria Young, “Design and Construction of Saint John's Abbey Church,” in *This Place Called Collegeville: St. John's at 150* (Collegeville, MN: St. John's University Press, 2006).

15. Annette Atkins, “Walk a Century in My Shoes: Minnesota 1900–2000,” *Minnesota History* 56(Winter 2000): 410–29.

16. The art community helped, too. In 1941 and again in 1947, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis presented an exhibit that had at its center a completely furnished single-family home, intended to demonstrate what a well-designed house could and should look like. Furnished entirely with materials and items available locally, the exhibit garnered much attention locally and nationally. More than 90,000 visitors walked through the door of Idea House I or Idea House II. A surprisingly large number of the items in Idea House II are still being manufactured by Knoll, Herman Miller, and Eva Zeisel. See Alexandra Griffith Winton, “‘A Man's House is His Art’: The Walker Art Center's Idea House Project and the Marketing of Domestic Design, 1941–1947,” *Journal of Design History* 17(2004): 377–96.

17. See *Staples World*, December 1954. Traditional furniture manufacturers and retailers were slower to convert to new materials than to newer styles. Other manufacturers were, therefore, the first who “appreciated and exploited” metal's role in furniture. Alcoa, for example, had a vested interest in expanding the market for alumi-

num, especially in the immediate postwar years when demand was dropping; Edwards, "Aluminum Furniture," 209.

18. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Dec. 17, 1950; *International Falls Journal*, Dec. 4, 1950.

19. See "Television History: The First 75 Years," www.tvhistory.tv/1950-1959.htm (accessed Apr. 26, 2007).

20. "At 50, TV Dinner Is Still Cookin'," *Christian Science Monitor*, Nov. 20, 2004.

21. All phrases from ads in *Staples World*, 1950–56. The ads were provided by the manufacturers; virtually—sometimes exactly—the same ones also appeared in Rochester, Jasper, International Falls, St. Paul, New York City, and Los Angeles. No one "needed" the tail fins that car designers added in the 1950s. But people did, apparently, need what the fins stood for: a big, luxuriant, powerful, forward-leaning, extravagant car. Many men wanted to show that they could afford an Oldsmobile and that they belonged in one, too. Fins also conjured up missiles and rockets and said "speed" and "up-to-date." Both Ford and Chevy described their cars for women (and their drivers) as "sweet." Chevy's phrase: "sweet, smooth, sassy." Obviously, women's power looked different from men's.

22. See May, *Homeward Bound*, for a compelling argument about the relationship between domesticity and the Cold War.

23. *Rochester Post Bulletin*, Dec. 6, 1950, Nov. 29, 1959; Atkins, "Walk a Century"; May, *Homeward Bound*. Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev both understood the transcendent meaning of material goods when they debated in Moscow in 1959 about the merits of their political and economic systems by arguing about kitchen appliances.

24. Except black veterans who were, more often than not, unable to get VA loans and assistance for their housing dreams, forced as they were by red-lined real estate to specific and ineligible places. This constitutes one of the long-term effects of racism in the United States, where the major form of individual wealth—and increase in wealth—has been the family home. Those who bought homes in the 1950s usually moved up the economic ladder by virtue of the increasing value of their homes. Black veterans were confined to housing that did not increase in value or that lost value. Many were forced to rent and so never accumulated the nest egg that would have edged them into the American middle class.

25. Peter Bacon Hales, "Levittown: Documents of an Ideal American Suburb," at tiger.uic.edu/~pbhales/Levittown.html (accessed Apr. 5, 2007).

26. Clifford E. Clark Jr., "Ranch-House Suburbia: Ideals and Realities," in Lary May, *Recasting America: Culture and Politics in the Age of Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), esp. p. 157. See also Barbara Berglund, "Western Living

Sunset Style in the 1920s and 1930s: The Middlebrow, the Civilized, and the Modern," Western Historical Quarterly 37(Summer 2006): 133–58.

27. Benjamin Spock, *Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946); Jane F. Levey, "Imagining the Family in Postwar Popular Culture: The Case of *The Egg and I* and *Cheaper by the Dozen*," *Journal of Women's History* 13(2001): 125–50.

28. Malcolm Gladwell, "The Terrazzo Jungle," *New Yorker*, Mar. 15, 2004, p. 120–27, concludes, "Victor Gruen invented the shopping mall in order to make America more like Vienna. He ended up making Vienna more like America." Frank Lloyd Wright hated Southdale: it had "all the evils of the village street and none of its charms." But to millions of Minnesotans—and others—shopping malls have provided just the evils and charms we've wanted. In 1992, the Mall of America opened with its 13,000 parking spaces; it has become one of the state's major tourist destinations. James Farrell, *One Nation Under Goods: Malls and the Seductions of American Shopping* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2003); Margaret Marsh, *Suburban Lives* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Kenneth T. Jackson, "All the World's a Mall: Reflections on the Social and Economic Consequences of the American Shopping Center," *American Historical Review* 101(Oct. 1996): 1111–21.

29. See www.dot.state.mn.us/interstate50/ (accessed Apr. 5, 2007).

30. Patricia Cavanaugh, "Politics and Freeways: Building the Twin Cities Interstate System" (prepared for the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs and the Center for Transportation Studies, University of Minnesota, 2006), 13.

31. Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (New York: Viking, 1997).

32. Annette Atkins, "At Home in the Heart of the City," *Minnesota History* 58(Spring/Summer 2003): 299–303.

33. F. James Davis, "The Effects of Freeway Displacement on Racial Housing Segregation in a Northern City," *Phylon* 26 (Fall 1965): 209–15. In 1982, a small group of former Rondo residents conceived the idea to bring back a sense of community, stability, and neighborhood values, things they felt were lost when the old neighborhood was destroyed. Rondo Days Festival, founded in 1983, is held annually in July. It offers a multicultural celebration of art, music, and food and is attended by a diverse audience. Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, "Preliminary List of Nationally and Exceptionally Significant Features of the Federal Interstate Highway System," mentions the Rondo neighborhood:

fhwa.dot.gov/histpres/final_task4List.pdf (accessed Apr. 26, 2007). See also Evelyn Fairbanks, *Days of Rondo* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1990); Brendan Henahan, "St. Paul's Past: River, Railroads, and Rondo" (video, St. Paul: Twin Cities Public Television, 1991).

34. Albert Eisele, *Almost to the Presidency: A Biography of Two American Politicians* (Blue Earth, MN: Piper Co., 1972); Robert A. Caro, *Master of the Senate: The Years of Lyndon Johnson* (New York: Knopf, 2002).

35. Robert Silberman, interview with Warren MacKenzie, Oct. 29, 2002, Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America, Smithsonian Archives of American Art, www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/mackenz02.htm (accessed Apr. 5, 2007).

36. Much has been written on the rise of popular culture in the 1950s. See, for example Joanne Meyerowitz, *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945–1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Joel Foreman, ed., *The Other Fifties: Interrogating Midcentury American Icons* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Peter J. Kuznick and James Gilbert, eds., *Rethinking Cold War Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001); May, *Recasting America*; Douglas T. Miller and Marion Nowak, *The Fifties: The Way We Really Were* (New York: Doubleday, 1977); Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

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