

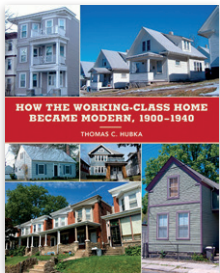


TAKE THREE



Elizabeth Scheu Close: A Life in Modern Architecture by Jane King Hession (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020, 224 p., Cloth, \$39.95). Elizabeth “Lisl” Scheu Close (1912–2011) left an indelible mark on Minnesota’s built landscape during her six decades as an architect. In 1938, with her husband, Winston Close, she founded the state’s first architecture firm dedicated to modernism. In addition to designing the first International Style house in Minneapolis, the firm

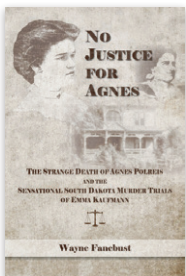
also created more than 250 modern residences and commercial buildings that may be seen throughout the Twin Cities and beyond. One of few women who were practicing architects in the mid-twentieth century, Close blazed a trail for future generations of women in the profession. Architectural historian Jane King Hession provides “Lisl” with the beautifully designed and richly illustrated personal and professional biography an architect of such stature so richly deserves. The trajectory of Close’s architectural career was shaped by the political, economic, and aesthetic upheavals of the twentieth century. Raised in a renowned modern house designed by Adolf Loos, in Vienna, Austria, Close was exposed to revolutionary ideas in art and architecture at a young age. Forced to emigrate to the United States as the Nazis rose to power in Europe, she completed her architectural education at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. During the Depression, she struggled to find work and encountered challenges as a young woman in the field. In her pursuit of and devotion to a singular and successful career as a modern architect, she proved herself to be talented, determined, and adept at negotiating obstacles.



How the Working-Class Home Became Modern, 1900–1940

by Thomas C. Hubka (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020, 320 p., Paper, \$40). Most Americans do not dwell in architect-designed homes. Thomas Hubka, professor emeritus of architecture at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, analyzes common American houses in a period when millions of average Americans saw accelerated improvement in their housing and domestic conditions. These improvements were intertwined with the acquisition of new

mechanical conveniences, new types of rooms, and new patterns of domestic life. Such innovations—from public utilities and kitchen appliances to remodeled and multiunit housing—are at the center of Hubka’s detailed narrative.



No Justice for Agnes: The Strange Death of Agnes Polreis and the Sensational South Dakota Murder Trials of Emma Kaufmann by Wayne Fanebust (Sioux Falls, SD: Center for Western Studies, Augustana University, 2020, 288 p., Paper, \$15). For three years, beginning in 1906, newspapers from San Francisco to Washington, DC, avidly covered the mysterious and gruesome death of 16-year-old immigrant servant girl Agnes Polreis in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and the multiple murder trials of her employer, the wealthy and influential Emma Kaufmann.

Fanebust, an attorney who has mined “the dark side of history” in previous books, writes that Polreis was abandoned by her physicians and exploited by the legal and newspaper professions: “Her death and the subsequent trials caused the downfall of a United States senator but brought no justice for Agnes Polreis.”

NEWS & NOTES

■ **Buck Award winners:** The winner of the Solon J. Buck Award for best article published in *Minnesota History* in 2019 is **Bruce Johansen**, whose article, “Out of Silence: FREE, Minnesota’s First Gay Rights Organization,” appeared in the Spring 2019 issue. Johansen is a Minneapolis-based writer, editor, and historian. He holds a PhD in American studies from the University of Maryland.

Judges Annette Atkins, professor emerita of history at Saint John’s University/College of Saint Benedict, and Wayne Gannaway, executive director of the History Center of Olmsted County (and an honorable mention winner in last year’s Buck Award competition), were impressed with how Johansen’s article transported them to the time and place of the events surrounding FREE’s June 1969 founding. In its brief but influential history, FREE (Fight Repression of Erotic Expression) was instrumental in Minnesota’s LGBTQ community “emerging from the shadows like never before.” The judges were pleased to have this important, heretofore little-known topic so aptly illuminated and cited its engaging writing and deep research, using primary, oral, and secondary sources.

The judges also selected an honorable mention winner for the Buck Award due to the overall strength of the 2019 field of articles—**Eric Boime**, for his article “Homecroft City: The ‘Duluth Idea’ in the Progressive Conservation Movement,” also in the Spring 2019 issue. Boime is associate professor of environmental history and borderlands studies at San Diego State University, Imperial Valley.

Awards were presented by MNHS CEO Kent Whitworth at the virtual 2020 annual meeting on November 5. The Theodore Blegen Award was not awarded for 2019.



■ Three new members of the MNHS Executive Council were also welcomed at the annual meeting. They are **Joanell M. Dyrstad**, Red Wing, a former lieutenant governor of Minnesota (1991-1995); **Linda Brekke Mona**, Edina, retired founder of Creative Environments Design Group; and **Dr. Gwen N. Westerman**, Good Thunder, professor in English at

Minnesota State University, Mankato, award-winning author, and fiber artist. They will serve three-year terms.

■ By the end of the fall 2020 growing season, staff at the **Oliver Kelley Farm** in Elk River were able to donate some 9,070 pounds of fresh produce to local food shelf CAER (Community Aid of Elk

River). In March, farm staff transformed an interpretive garden into a victory garden, growing fruits and vegetables that would be the most useful for community members served by the food shelf. They plan to continue the donations and will grow lettuce indoors over the winter of 2020–21.

■ MNHS announced the newest recipients of 38 historical and cultural heritage large grants (over \$10,000) in 25 counties, totaling \$3,578,731 in FY2021. The grants, awarded once each fiscal year, are made possible by the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment. Grant applications were recommended for funding by the Historic Resources Advisory Committee (HRAC), a volunteer panel made up of citizens from around the state. The MNHS Executive Council approved the recommendations on October 22, 2020.

Forty-two organizations were recipients of small grants (\$10,000 and less), totaling \$361,234 in 29 counties. Small grants are awarded quarterly to help nonprofits, educational organizations, government units, and federally recognized tribes preserve and share Minnesota history. This cycle of awards was approved by the MNHS Executive Council on December 10, 2020. Names of recipients may be found at mnhs.org/media.

LETTERS

Minnesota and woman suffrage special issue

What a great cross-section of various aspects of the long-running struggle for women's suffrage in Minnesota! I do have a comment on one of the Newspaper snapshots included in the issue. Tyler Taylor discusses the apparent lack of interest passage of the Nineteenth Amendment elicited on the part of the *Tomahawk's* editors (and presumably readers). One thing she failed to note is that prior to passage of the Indian Citizenship Act in 1924, much of its readership, both male and female, were not considered citizens and therefore were not eligible to vote. In addition, a Minnesota constitutional prohibition on voting by Indians living on reservations—regardless of citizenship status—had been reaffirmed in *Opsahl v. Johnson* just three years earlier. Even after Indian citizenship was granted in 1924, it wouldn't be until 1960 . . . that these restrictions were removed from the Minnesota constitution. Universal suffrage lay in the distant future for most *Tomahawk* readers in 1920.

—Phil Larson, Hibbing

What a magnificent piece! I usually read *Minnesota History* with great interest, but I hung on every word in this issue. Of course, like many of us, I learned very little about women's suffrage in school—certainly not about the battle in Minnesota; never knew until a few years ago the vote was given to only white women in 1919; never heard of Julia Nelson or Nellie Francis. This should be taught in our schools and this issue would be the perfect primer.

—Carol Allis, Minnetonka

"Minneapolis Fire: Irwin Klein and the Decisive Moment"

I was recently reading through the Winter 2019–20 issue. I noted on the [Contents page] and on page 338 the same photo of two women and a man protesting the Vietnam war with signs. I can identify my great-aunt, Mary Prochaska, as the woman on the left of the photo. In 1968 she would have been 69 years of age and was known as quite a firebrand.

Mary Prochaska never married, but she spent time during World War II as a codebreaker for what would later become the National Security Agency. We understand that she was involved in the Enigma project at Bletchley Park during the war. Of course, she never told us anything of her past, but in her documents after her passing were several mentions of service from the NSA and of course her official retirement papers from the same.

It was an amazing experience to see my great-aunt yet again in your magazine, in a photo I was completely unaware of. Thank you!

—Bob Monson, Roseville

Corrections to the Fall 2020 issue

The photo on p. 121 was incorrectly attributed. It was used with the permission of the Pipestone County Historical Society. We apologize for the error.

The statement on page 162 in the *American Jewish World* Newspaper snapshot by Laura Weber noted there are no extant copies of the *Der Shobbosdige Post*. It should have read "no known copies." Turns out, under its English title, the *Saturday Post: The Northwestern Jewish Weekly*, the newspaper is held in the collections of MNHS!

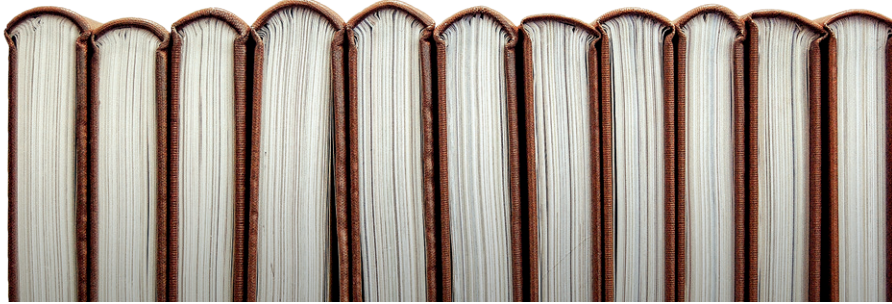
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EXPLORE MNOPEDIA

OUR BACK PAGES

From the Bound Volumes of *Minnesota History*



1921 • 100 Years Ago

Two important positions on the staff became vacant in May as the results of the resignations of Miss Dorothy A. Heinemann, editorial assistant, and Miss Ilona B. Schmidt, head cataloguer. The editorial position has been filled by the appointment of Miss Mary E. Wheelhouse, of the staff of the Illinois State Historical Library, who took up the work July 1; but so far no competent person has been found who will accept the position of head cataloguer at the salary available. —“*Minnesota Historical Society Notes*,” Vol. 3, No. 7, September 1920, p. 456–57

1946 • 75 Years Ago

If you are a poet, you will wonder how it was possible for Miss [Meridel] Le Sueur to have woven so much history into her account; and if you are a historian, you will wonder how she was able with so few facts (highly selective, by the way) to make so alive the story of the white man’s subjugation of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and the adjacent country. . . . —Review by Feike Feikema [Frederick Manfred] of *North Star Country*, by Meridel Le Sueur, Vol. 27, No. 1, March 1946, p. 41–42

1971 • 50 Years Ago

A challenge to Solon J. Buck’s *The Granger Movement: A Study of Agricultural Organization and Its Political, Economic and Social Manifestations, 1870–1880*, is raised in the August, 1970, issue of *The Historian*. . . . Dennis L. Nordin dismisses Buck’s long-standing interpretation of the movement as a unilateral effort by midwestern farmers to liberate themselves from oppression by abusive politicians and businessmen. . . . Nordin suggests . . . that Grange leaders who insisted that their order was primarily a social and educational fraternity knew its nature better than historians. . . . —“*News and Notes*,” Vol. 42, No. 5, Spring 1971, p. 198

1996 • 25 Years Ago

Warning—start this book early in the day, for once you begin, you will not be able to put it down. This autobiography traces the life of Rachel Calof from her childhood in Russia through her marriage and the first decade of her life as the wife of a homesteader farming near Devils Lake, North Dakota. . . . Her description of the first decade of marriage is riveting, containing accounts of frequent childbirth, near madness, childhood illnesses and intolerable crowding. —Review by Linda Schloff of *Rachel Calof’s Story: Jewish Homesteader on the Northern Plains*, edited by J. Sanford Rikoon, Vol. 55, No. 4, Winter 1996–97, p. 179

Find these and all articles published in *Minnesota History* since 1915 at mnhs.org/mnhistory.



Curler striking defensive position, about 1925. MNHS collections.

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