

# The Minnesota Scholar

formerly *Practical Thinking*

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## The Company of Plants

By Evelyn D. Klein

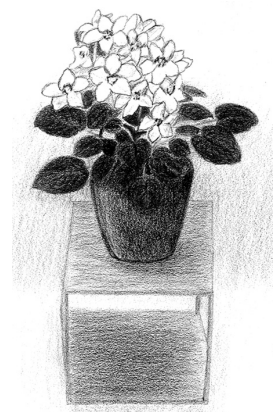
Science and technology constantly change the way we see the world, the way we live and survive. Beginning with Darwin, studies brought new insights into human evolution. Recent studies explain human behaviors and traits in terms of built-in physiological attributes. Moreover, research finds that animals display intelligent behaviors, like chimpanzees using tools, crows planning their actions, elephants grieving, and so on. Further, we have seen how our actions impact the environment, and just as importantly, how the environment affects humans, animals, and plants. Yet, apparently, since the plant world is inanimate, we still regard it as something apart from our selves.

Despite botanical insights we have gained about plants in making genetic modifications or creating variations, plants seem the last vestige of investigation on our list of understanding living things.

As a linguist, I am intrigued by how we reflect plants in culture and language. In fairy tales, it is not out of place for plants like trees or fruit to engage in human-like presence, such as speaking, giving advice, or creating a mood beyond their botanical existence. In the book *Northland Wild Flowers*, the authors state that the Chippewa of Lake Superior referred to changing moons, as Flower Moon in May, Raspberry Moon in July, Wild Rice Moon in September, among others.

Equally interesting are the language terms we interchange with plant descriptions. We ascribe human body parts to delineate plants, such as a head of lettuce or cabbage, an ear of corn, eyes of the potato. The Chippewa name for strawberry is "odanamena," literally, heart berry. In the reverse, we ascribe characteristics of plants to humans. We have a branch of the family or government, consider someone the apple of our eye, and like to find our roots.

As an indoor gardener, I see a kind of mystery surrounding plants. It started with my own house plant collection many years ago. As a beginner, I lost all my earliest collection and discovered plants need the right habitat and proper care in order to thrive, something every



*Jewel by Evelyn D. Klein, 2010*

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experienced horticulturist knows. When, on my first teaching position, my department head graced me with an African violet, it started what became a collection. This plant has been with me for more decades than vanity allows to admit. Keeping in mind that African violets are difficult to keep, this plant survived the conditions of numerous houses in which I lived over the years. This *Saintpaulia*, its botanical name, is shaped like a disc of large, dense, heart-shaped, dark green leaves with serrated edges. It rarely brings forth less than six stems carrying multiples of purple, double petal blossoms throughout the year.

Gifts of more violets from friends grew into a collection. Among the plants are *Ramona*, with looser, serrated leaves and maroon, rosette-like blossoms; Miss Minnesota with pink, rosette-like blossoms; and a nameless violet whose lighter green leaves, instead of heart-shaped, are oval with scalloped edges, and generally carries five to six stems of single to double petal, white blossoms. They have in common many years of accompanying and struggling with me through some of the houses. Yet they always bloomed, in contrast to many plants I bought and that came and went. Amazingly, whenever I leave the house for a few days or am absent from a room housing violets, though growing conditions remain constant, their energy level decreases, as evidenced each instance by a decline of blossoms.

I believe plants give us more than oxygen, color, and beauty. Though silent, they communicate with their stems, leaves, and blossoms in a sort of “body language.” Though stationary, their personality emerges in movements and interaction with elements, environment, and presence of creatures and people. They give off an ambiance, peculiar to their own species or variations. Plants are living company that affect our physical and mental well-being just as we can affect theirs.

Latest research bears out that there, truly, is more to plants than meets the eye. In an article entitled “Smarty Plants,” published in *National Wildlife* magazine, April/May 2015 issue, Janet Marinelli, author of the book *Climate Conscious Gardener*, discusses some of the latest research on plants. She reveals current research finds

“plants live surprisingly sensual lives, communicate with other plants and animals, solve complex problems and not only recognize but act altruistically toward their relatives.” She goes on to state that Stefano Mancuso, University of Florence professor and botanist in the field of neurobiology, concludes that if intelligence is defined as the power to solve problems, plants have such a capacity.

In his book *The Power of Movement in Plants*, Charles Darwin was the first scientist to observe that root tips can avoid obstacles, influence movements of nearby plants, and move toward water. He compared the root tip to the “brain” of lower animals.

## Plants Have Intelligence

Still, most of us are not accustomed to think of plants as having intelligence. But Marinelli states although plants do not have neurons or brains, they do have electrical signaling systems. She reports Mancuso and a group of international scientists of the Society for Plant Neurobiology concluded plant root tips hold electrical signals that are the same as those in human neurons. And since roots can contain large numbers of root tips, there is great potential for action. It makes more sense for a plant to have its “brain” in the roots, since a centralized brain in the growing plant could become subject to animal grazing, causing the plant to die. It is of advantage for plants to have a decentralized intelligence system dispersed in its roots. Ninety percent of a plant’s roots can be lost, and the plant will still survive.

I discovered many plants, particularly vines like philodendrons and ivy, can be perpetuated with a cutting of the stem. African violets can be cut at the base of the leaf stem, and like the vines be rooted in water. Not too long ago I noticed roses in a vase starting to drive roots at the bottom of their stems at the same time they sprouted new leaves higher up on stems below their wilting blossoms. That would seem to place “intelligence” into the stem, in these cases.

Interestingly, scientists find plants see or perceive us through photoreceptors and are aware when we are near. According to Daniel Chamovitz, director of the Manna

Center for Plant Biosciences at Tel Aviv University, author of the book *What a Plant Knows*, plants even perceive colors we wear, such as blue or red.

A while ago, I was recovering from a bad cold. On the coffee table next to the sofa I have a philodendron right below a skylight. I noticed the leaves on the vine growing across the table had turned in my direction. I tried straightening the leaves toward the skylight, but the vine did not budge. After that, the leaves turned about 180 degrees daily away from the sofa, during the hours I was not seated there only to turn gradually again in my direction when I returned. During the night the leaves would return to their upright position or face the opposite way. "It's the sun, the light" my friend, the horticulturist said. But is that really the only reason the leaves turn when the skylight is straight above it or when it is dark? Is it reasonable to ask if human bodies' emissions of heat, electrical signals, and the like affect plants and their reactions?

Interestingly, Marinelli reports that research reveals plants demonstrate "a more complex intelligence," from wildflowers to trees and everything in-between. Plants are not only aware of the environment in which they live, but they actually plan their growth in advance, depending on past conditions, and share water and nutrients with their own and other species. During the night, plants use an internal clock to divide their reserve of starch to last into the morning, when they resume photosynthesizing sunlight to produce their food, namely starch.

Plants communicate in various ways. Through a chemical compound in their roots, plants communicate with other plants. Through fragrance, they attract pollinators. Some have chemicals that protect them from grazing

animals or those likely to cause damage. In another study ecologist Susan Dudley of McMaster University in Ontario, Canada, found in repeated studies that plants recognize their own species. When plants of the same species shared the same container, there was less competition between roots than when two different species shared the container.

Finally, Marinelli reports on a well established study concerning pain, plants, and anesthesia. After a plant is wounded, it releases ethylene, a plant hormone also used as anesthetic for humans. Mancuso and Frantisek Baluska of the University of Bonn concluded that when a plant releases ethylene, it may relieve pain in plants.

The research Marinelli presents shows scientists are taking a new look at plant life. Still, revolutionary ideas usually produce skeptics. Yet as observer, poet, and visual artist, I am encouraged by the new findings, because African violets can have more than nine lives, while the philodendron continues its dance with me.

*Evelyn Klein is an author, educator, and artist as well as an editor and writing judge. She has taught in the public schools, at Century College, and at the Loft. She has a BS in Secondary Education and an MS in the Teaching of English. Her poetry and articles have been published in various newspapers, journals, and anthologies. She is a prize-winning poet with the Family Housing Fund in Minneapolis and author of three books of poetry, prose, and art: From Here Across the Bridge, Once upon a Neighborhood, and her latest book, Seasons of Desire. Her last two books contain her own artwork, and both books are found in the Minnesota Historical Society's permanent library collection.*

## Correction

A book review by Shirley Whiting in the last issue of this journal neglected to name the author of *Jung and Politics: The Political and Social Ideas of C. G. Jung*. The author of this book is Volodymyr Walter Odajnyk. The book was published by Authors Choice Press, Lincoln, Nebraska, in 2007.

## Book Review

### *Who Owns History? Rethinking the Past in a Changing World*

by Eric Foner. Hill and Wang, 2002, 231 pp.

Who owns history? Hmm...you didn't think anyone "owned" it? Well, think again, according to this distinguished historian, Columbia professor, and protégé of legendary historian Richard Hofstadter. History has been the political tool of many an exploitative government, three of which are subjects in this collection of lectures and essays spanning the years from 1989-2002. The people of the Soviet Union, South Africa, and (lo and behold) the United States, have each been victimized by historical narratives that served the political purposes of a power elite. As the Soviet Union crumbled, and apartheid ended, those narratives had to be rewritten, it being a hallmark of political liberty for a people to have access to the true history of their country.

But US history? What has been fabricated about that? Take for example the events and meaning of the Civil War and the subsequent period of southern Reconstruction, the latter of which happens to be this author's historical specialty. D.W. Griffith's early-1900s film, *Birth of a Nation*, is one of the more familiar artifacts of the Reconstruction myth, but it was also "the complicity of scholars" that legitimized the mythical and nostalgic perspective of the war and Reconstruction. They constructed a narrative that popularized the notion that the war was one fought between "brothers," for the purpose of *preserving* the Union, rather than of *transforming* it, i.e. that it was to heal a conflict within the national "family," rather than to enfranchise the one-fifth of the population that had no place in that family.

However, it is as transformative that the events of war and reconstruction are best understood. The effect of the mythical narrative continues to be felt in our own day, as, since the 1980s, the US Supreme Court has consistently retreated from the enforcement of civil rights, leapfrogging the 14th Amendment to take its bearings by the pre-war version of the Constitution. In doing so, it has taken an "ahistorical" approach to interpreting the Constitution. This charge may strike the reader as debatable, but the author supports it with compelling evidence.

So, historical truth matters. It matters a great deal. "We can forget the past, but the past, most assuredly, will not forget us." To be sure, every historical narrative is a selection, and ordering, of facts; and every selection and ordering of facts constitutes an interpretation. So how do you get to the truth if there are as many different interpretations as there are historians? Can any recorded history be expected to have captured the past as it actually happened and for what it means? This historian-author answers that it is difficult for laymen to comprehend "that there often exists more than one legitimate way of recounting past events," and it is "the constant search for new perspectives" that is "the lifeblood of historical understanding." For this reason, "There is nothing unusual or sinister in the fact that each generation rewrites history to suit its own needs..." In fact, it "must" rewrite history, as society changes—a seemingly hard-to-digest hypothesis, but not so much when you think about it. *Approximation* to historical truth is the best we can hope for, and that is an effect best achieved by constant reevaluation and reordering of the known facts from fresh perspectives.

Thus may be understood the author's answer to his titled question, "Who owns history," or rather, who *rightfully* owns history? "Everyone and no one..." he writes. It's "everyone" in that each one of us is the inevitable product of the past, and "no one" in that "study of the past is a constantly evolving, never ending journey of discovery."

These brief remarks highlight only the more salient themes of this set of lectures and essays, omitting others of equal profundity (another selection of facts!). In its entirety, the book is a great read for any serious student of history and historical scholarship.

*Mike Woolsey*

*Mike Woolsey is the president of the Scholars Board.*

## **To Bear the Mark: Unwed Motherhood at the Salvation Army Booth Home**

**K**im Heikkila, MISF's first Legacy Grant scholar, gave an expanded account of her research project to a regular Saturday meeting, January 24, 2015. The title of her presentation was "To Bear the Mark: Unwed Motherhood at the Salvation Army Booth Home."

Heikkila began her presentation with some personal information about her mother, who had given birth to a girl at the Booth Home in 1961. After Heikkila learned about the existence of her earlier sister, she wanted to know more about the Booth Home and its history. So began her research project.

Heikkila, who teaches women's history at St. Cate's, had done a considerable amount of research on her own before she was awarded the Legacy Grant, but the grant money permitted her to visit the Salvation Army archives in Arlington, Virginia.

The Booth Memorial Hospital, on Como Avenue just north of the fairgrounds, was built in 1913 on land donated by William and Joseph Arlington. The building, which still stands, was designed by Clarence Johnston, the state architect. (Johnston also designed Northrup Auditorium and Stillwater Prison, among other buildings.)

The Salvation Army had operated two previous maternity hospitals in St. Paul, but the new facility had the capacity to serve almost twice as many women (50) and four times the number of infants (35) as either of the previous facilities. The focus of the hospital when it opened was to reinforce the mother-child bond. New mothers were taught home-running skills and were allowed a three-month residency with their babies.

Gradually, due to power struggles involving outside funding and state regulation, the home shifted away from trying to reinforce the bond between mother and child to a concentration on the welfare of the child. By 1940, the Booth Home was required to have a social worker on the staff.

In 1957, the illegitimacy rate in this country was three times what it had been in the 1940s; the illegitimacy rate actually increased faster than the birth rate. Booth Hospital's busiest decade was the 1960s when an average of 38 women lived in the home very day in the year. In 1950 about half of the mothers left with their babies, by 1961, however, 72% of the mothers were giving away their babies. Where being a single parent had previously been seen as a problem that could be addressed by teaching work, home, and nurturing skills, by the 1960s, it seemed better to break the mother-child bond and give the child up for adoption. Bearing the mark of illegitimacy was regarded as unfair to the child, however hard it might be for the mother. Seventy percent of the mothers who gave up their children had not wanted to do so, according to Gisela Konopka, a social work professor at the University of Minnesota, who conducted interviews with 33 Booth residents in 1963.

The Booth Memorial Hospital closed in 1971 due mostly to state regulations regarding hospital deliveries. However, the Salvation Army converted the building into a treatment center for teenage girls with emotional behavioral disorders. It also functions as an emergency shelter. In 1984, services for boys were added.



The Booth Home, now called the Booth Brown House, is located on Como Avenue just east of Snelling in Saint Paul.

## Rock 'n' Read

Bill Jones of the Rock 'n' Read project addressed the Independent Scholars Saturday February 28. Jones, the executive director of Rock 'n' Read, is a former attorney, who is following through on a project first tested by the University of South Florida, which showed that students who sing with TUNEin to READING (TiR) three times a week for thirty minutes for nine weeks (13.5 hours) gain one year on average in reading achievement.

Based on this research, in 2014 Jones and Ann Kay, co-founders of R'n'R, purchased a retired city bus and retrofitted it as a computer lab with 32 used computers running TiR. The bus served 200 students at a Minneapolis Public School summer camp and the YMCA in North Minneapolis in 2014. The students who participated in the initial summer program advanced a half-year in reading skill in 10 weeks.

The program functions like a singing coach, telling students whether they are on pitch and rewarding them for listening carefully and replicating the tune. Since many students in poor neighborhoods do not have music lessons, they do not learn the skills of singing. Furthermore, the program teaches vocabulary words which are then repeated at least five times as the student is singing. In this case repetition is absolutely the key to learning. Finally by learning the intonations involved in singing a line, the student learns something about the intonations involved in reading aloud.

Also, as Jones pointed out, "It is hard to be angry when you are singing."

The program was used at the Lucy Craft Laney school in Minneapolis this past year and Jones was hopeful that he would see results that would encourage him to increase the number of buses and the number of schools involved. Although he said that it is important to have one project done really well, he said that he hoped to have another summer program this summer and to have six to eight schools involved this coming year.

Luther Automotive and Tech Dump have been very supportive in retrofitting the busses and in supplying recycled computers.

Jones is motivated by the fact that Minneapolis has one of the largest achievement gaps between white students and students of color in the nation and the lowest graduation rate for Hispanic students and the second lowest for black and native American students in the nation. Reading is the most important factor in closing this gap since 60% of Minneapolis and St. Paul students are not reading at grade level by third grade. Tutoring is not efficient with these numbers and Jones is hopeful that his program will make a difference. Eventually, he would like to see more choirs and daily singing in the classroom.

March 27, 2015

## Ginny Hansen Poetry Meeting

The annual poetry meeting of the Minnesota Independent Scholars Forum took place March 27 at Washburn Library. The meeting, the annual Ginny Hansen Poetry meeting, remembers one of our longtime members who was herself a poet.

David Juncker, the leader of the meeting, began with an introduction to the work of Eugene Field, one of his personal favorites. Eugene Field (1850-1895) was the city editor of the *St. Joseph Gazette*, but became known for his light humorous articles, which were sometimes reprinted in other newspapers. In 1883, he moved to Chicago where he wrote a humorous newspaper column, "The Sharps and Flats." In posterity, he is best known for his lighthearted poems for children, some of which were inspired by the fact that so many children in the late nineteenth century were lost to childhood diseases.

An example is "Seein' Things"(1894):

I ain't afraid uv snakes or toads, or bugs or worms or mice,

An' things 'at girls are skeered uv I think are awful nice!

I'm pretty brave I guess; an' yet I hate to go to bed,  
For, when I'm tucked up warm an' snug an' when my prayers are said,

Mother tells me "Happy Dreams" an' takes away the light,

An' leaves me lyin' all alone an' seein' things at night!

Field also wrote a little book of nonsense for children and parents (1881) which contained the Bugaboo Stories. Although the Bugaboo Stories were ostensibly for children, they were in fact also commentaries on Illinois politics of the late nineteenth century.

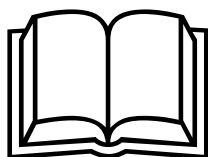
After Juncker's introduction, Joe Amato read few poems from his book *Buoyancies*. He explained that he finds that poetry is a concise way to talk about the world. He also finds that poetry allows him to express nostalgia for his childhood: "My relatives were a bigger universe than current politics," says Amato. He feels that the job of the poet-historian is to keep things afloat through words, though he also sees his poetry as subversive. Later in the discussion Amato reflected that words "drag you into subjects." He says he finds that "poetry gets him into things where he doesn't know what he is saying."

Other participants contributed poetry that they had learned as students. Jim Hart recited Sonnet 30 by William Shakespeare, "When to the sessions of sweet silent thought..." He was especially attracted to this poem because he is descended from the line of the family of Shakespeare's mother.

Although all the participants agreed that the main motives for poetry were love and death, it came to Bill McTeer to end the session by reciting the light-hearted refrain:

Yesterday, upon the stair,  
I met a man who wasn't there.  
He wasn't there again today,  
I wish, I wish he'd go away...

¶ Subsequent research by the editor reveals that this quatrain too is a poem about death, even though it seems to be nonsense. The verse is the chorus of a longer (1899) poem written by Hughes Mearns, originally part of a play called *The Psycho-ed* about a haunted house in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. The verse became a popular song in 1939.



April 25, 2015

## David Megarry: The Shedding Phenomena

David Megarry addressed the Scholars' meeting April 25. His topic was an exploration of the turbulence of fluids and gases flowing around a barrier. It is a work-in-progress and embodies an observational approach. To this end, he likes to bring the fields of physics and mechanics to a common purpose. Although he has a B.S. from the University of Minnesota, he has most recently been a software tester and been engaged in mathematical endeavors for the last 25 years.

In his studies, Megarry has found that vortex shedding occurs when a fluid, like water, flows around a barrier, where it comes around in different directions. He points out, for example, that vortices in the Mississippi River cause the water to spin in different ways in different parts of the water.

Vortices can be used as a measurement tool in a vortex flow meter. It can then be determined how fast water flows around a vortex. Furthermore, there are various equations that compute the phenomena of vortex shedding, such as the Strouhal Equation which is a governing equation. The Reynolds Number Equation shows mechanical relationships and predicts different flows in different situations.

The ability to predict turbulence and drag figures is particularly important in designs for ships, planes, cars, and trains. All of these shed water or air. Vortex streak causes building or smokestack wires to vibrate which can cause destruction of the smokestack. The fins around smoke stacks disrupt the shedding effect.

Megarry reported on a double slit experiment involving light. Light goes through a single slit, then through a double slit, each with a different effect. He pointed out four equations for light waves. When electrons pass through a double slit, a differentiated distribution is the effect. This supports the theory of light. Electrons, Megarry explains, have mass and thus have viscosity, though it may be minuscule. He then poses the questions: Can the behavior of electrons in the double slit experiment be explained in terms of vortex shedding? Does vortex shedding extend into the micro-universe?

*continued on next page*

*Megarry, continued from page 7*

Vortex shedding is scalable in the macro-universe as slowly as clouds or river.

If that is the case, the Strouhal and Reynolds Equations would have to be modified. The remaining question would be: Could these modifications be abstracted for particles without mass? Another question for further study would be: How does the electron exist in the world, relate to the universe? The electron takes up a sort of area where it bounces around.

On another topic and as a member of the Independent Scholars Forum Board, Megarry approached the topic of Albert Einstein. He thought Einstein was a good example of independent scholarship. He pointed out that Einstein was very good at physics when he attended school, but he was not so good in other subjects. For a while he worked at a Swiss patent office. At night he would write and work on his doctorate for the University of Zürich.

This brought Megarry to ponder the idea of how does an independent scholar get a revolutionary idea out to the world? He is now considering the next avenues of his work.

*Evelyn Klein*

*May 23, 2015*

## **Navigating the New Medical Landscape: A work-in-progress**

**D**r. David Juncker gave the Scholars a preview on May 23 of a talk he is preparing for doctors and patients at Methodist Hospital: “Navigating the New and Rapidly Changing Medical Landscape.” He tried to cover three points: 1) changes in the way doctors relate to patients; 2) discussion of how things work today; 3) trends he sees coming in medicine. Dr. Juncker is a physiologist with experience in industry and education.

Under the first point, Juncker pointed out that in agrarian communities the patients would have a close relationship (in time and space) to the local doctor, but in all probability a long trip to a hospital (if they went at all). In our present era, we have a choice of personal

doctors and specialists, but the doctors have a huge patient load. Effectively, the patient must take on a fair amount of responsibility for keeping track of his own medical history.

Computers and computerized records (such as My Chart) can be a great help in this task, but it is also important for the patient to learn to present accurate data to his or her physician. Juncker suggested that all patients need to learn basic body facts, that they need to keep track of anatomical changes, and that they “resist the urge” to self-diagnose or to wait to long to report.

Juncker then gave a brief overview of the physiology of the human body from cells to organs. Among the interesting points that Juncker outlined, we learned that the skin is the largest human organ and that the lymph system is more extensive than the veins and the arteries.

Among the medical trends that Juncker is watching, he listed:

1. Device customization including not only 3D printing, but also customized drugs for allergic reactions and low-glucose conditions.
2. Increased use of mobile devices to test reactions for doctors to track.
3. Regulatory approval of medical procedures that will broaden reimbursement.
4. A great increase in cyber security for medical devices, which can be hacked.
5. Global transparency for clinical data trials, which will make it hard to fudge the data.

In the wider world of break-through tech, Juncker pointed out that in the last two weeks, there had been large advances in technology for liquid biopsy, growing human brain cells, and the internet of DNA.

In closing Juncker reminded us that the Affordable Care Act was an important step forward in reducing the difference between the have’s and the have not’s in terms of medical care. He pointed out that newspapers that have a vested interest in the support of the have’s are likely to criticize the ACA more harshly than some other commentators. The BBC, for example, is quite supportive of the ACA, unlike some American media.



## Wikipedia: The Inside Story (Well, a little of it...)

Tom Trites, a software engineer and a Wikipedia editor, addressed the MISF annual meeting June 27, 2015. This meeting is designated the Rhoda Lewin memorial meeting, in honor of one of our founding members. The annual meeting and election of new board members preceded the talk and are reported elsewhere on this page.

Trites began by defining Wikipedia as an online encyclopedia that anyone and everyone can edit. (“Wiki” is a Hawaiian word meaning “speedy” implying that Wikipedia is a speedy encyclopedia.) According to Trites, users of Wikipedia expect factual information and “sometimes you get information. The scientific articles are generally quite accurate.” However, articles about controversial subjects—such as George Bush or abortion—are really a current snapshot of many “wars” among the article editors because “truth” is inseparable from point of view.

Wikipedia supports multiple languages. Ninety-four languages are represented on Wikipedia; English is the most used language. Articles are written and edited by people in their native languages; Wikipedia does not translate anything. As a result, on a given topic, the article in French may be some editor's translation of the article on the same topic in English, or it may be completely different.

Wikipedia asks editors to “eliminate statements that purport to be truth” because “truth” is often a matter of opinion. Wikipedia articles are supposed to be neutral. However, since everyone edits, opinions creep in. Then re-edits may change the article back. Every change is recorded and can be seen under the “View History” tab at the top of a Wikipedia page. There is also a tab called “Talk” where anyone can give an editorial opinion or even nominate an article for deletion. (Actual deletion is handled by administrators.) Talk pages can sometimes be ten to a hundred times the length of the article.

Anyone can post a Wikipedia article, though Wikipedia is not for self-promotion; you cannot post a page about yourself. In so far as possible, pages making threats and posting pornography are taken down very quickly.

Generally vandalism is taken down quickly as well, although a few hoax pages have survived for several years. If you want to be a Wikipedia editor, go to the community portal. Some people just sign up for projects and concentrate on a particular topic. Trites cautioned that being an editor is fun, but that it can be addictive. In general, edits by registered users are taken more seriously than anonymous edits. However, because editor wars can sometimes become very personal, Trites suggested that if one registers as a Wikipedia editor, it may be best to use a screen identity that is not your real name. Contentious articles can be put in “protection” which means they can only be edited by registered users.

Wikipedia articles may not contain copyrighted material. Any images used in a Wiki article must be of your own creation and will be published as open source.

Trites also pointed out that Wikipedia is entirely supported by donations.

*Bill McTeer*

### *MISF Annual Meeting*

The annual meeting of the Minnesota Independent Scholars Forum took place at the beginning of the June 27 meeting. President Mike Woolsey highlighted the accomplishments of the year, which include work on the website, renaming the journal, administering two grant projects, and moving our monthly meetings to Washburn Library.

The membership elected Gus Fenton to the board and approved the creation of an advisory council, which will serve at the invitation of the current president, with voice but not vote at board meetings.

The treasurer's report showed that we have received most of our income in donations and that we have mostly spent it on honoraria. The annual dues remain at \$25.

## Editor's Note: What's in a name?

What's in a name? Observant readers will notice that the name of this publication has changed from *Practical Thinking* to *The Minnesota Scholar*. After several months of discussion and many suggestions, the board voted to make this change in the belief that *The Minnesota Scholar* better reflects what MISF sees as its mission: the fostering of independent scholarship. (Our older name came from a period of time when we published a joint journal with MACAE. We wanted to emphasize the practical aspects of education and scholarship.) Because I consider us to be in a continuous line with the previous journal I decided not to begin a new numbering system, so this is volume 10, no.1, of the MISF journal, whatever its name...



The new name prods me to a consideration of naming. A few weeks ago we attended the "Ice Palace Murders" at Park Square Theater with a friend, a longtime resident of Saint Paul, who was sure he had been a movie usher in that building sometime in the 1960s. To verify his memory he did some research about the theaters in Saint Paul and sent me 13 pages from a website <[cinematreasures.org/theaters](http://cinematreasures.org/theaters)> describing the appearance and history of movie theaters in downtown Saint Paul.

These theaters were the *Shubert* (10 East Exchange), built in 1910, which became the World Theater and is now The Fitzgerald Theater. In 1912, the *Starland* was built at 450 Wabasha North; in 1931 it became the Strand. It was demolished in 1976. In 1916, the *New Palace* was built at 19-21 West Seventh Street; it became the Palace-Orpheum in 1922, is still standing and is a candidate for renovation. In 1920, the *Capitol* was built at 22 West Seventh; it became the Paramount, then the Norstar, and finally Park Square. Also in 1920, the *Astor* was built at 449 Wabasha North; it became the Riviera in 1928.

The first thing that struck me was the pretentious names of these theaters—the Starland, the Palace, the Capitol, the Paramount, the Astor. The names evoke splendor, riches, power, even opulence. The names are meant to conjure up The American Dream and to convince the moviegoer that he or she is not far from living it. Try saying "I am going to the Palace" or "I'll be at the Capitol" and see if you don't feel it.

Secondly, I was struck by the descriptions of these old theaters. The interiors of the theaters lived up to their names. The first to be built, the Shubert in 1910, had an interior whose elegance rivaled the "opera houses of the turn of the century." In 1916, the Starland boasted uniformed "usherettes" and a "discretely illuminated wall-clock in the auditorium, before wrist watches became commonplace." The two theaters built after the first World War ascended even further into the realm of fantasy. In 1920, when the Capitol theater opened, its lobby contained several kinds of colored marble, a Renaissance-era fountain, and a Baroque style fresco on the lobby ceiling.

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*The Minnesota Scholar* welcomes submissions from members and non-members. We are especially interested in topical issues, but will also welcome essays, reviews, and memoirs. Generally articles should not be longer than 1800 words. Please submit articles electronically, as Word or RTF files. Use as little formatting as possible. All submissions will be acknowledged, although the editor reserves the right to decline to publish an article.

The editor has the right to make minor adjustments in the manuscript. *TMS* assumes no responsibility for contributors' errors. Opinions expressed by contributors may or may not reflect the opinions of the editor.

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The Riviera Theater, formerly the Astor Theater, was rebuilt in 1928 in a Moorish-Oriental style with “live palm trees in the lobby” and “ultra-plush women’s lounges.”

Furthermore, these theaters were large; they expected to draw audiences from all over the city. The Capitol Theater had a capacity for 3000 people, as did the Orpheum. (Remember that these two theaters were across the street from each other on West Seventh). The Astor could seat 1400 and the Shubert, 1000. These numbers remind us how fascinating movies were at a time when there was no television and when transportation brought one easily to the center of the city. It is significant that all of the theaters, except the Fitzgerald, closed in the middle 1970s. This date marks the general acceptance of television throughout the country and the rise of the shopping center and suburban movie theaters.



*The Capitol Theater was built in 1920 and boasted a Wurlitzer organ with 90 stops.*

What conclusions can we draw from this very brief excursion through the stories of the theaters of downtown Saint Paul? In the histories of the buildings, we can see the arc of the entertainment industry from large spectacles to private viewing (first on television and now on our iPads). In the names of the theaters, we can see how names change to reflect the times. All of these theaters changed their names several times—presumably to demonstrate how relevant they were to the changing world.



And now we circle back to our opening question: What’s in a name? Certainly the board members of the Scholars hope that the new name of our journal will make it more obvious what we are about, just as *Starland* (my favorite theater name) telegraphed what it was selling. Our reason for being is to publish scholarly articles and reflections from our members and others. We also hope that the new name will draw people's attention and interest.



*The Astor was also built in 1920 and had its own house orchestra.*

Nevertheless, I don't think the name change will bring us 3000 members or palms in the lobby, but it will be good if we can keep the name of independent scholarship visible and clear.



I thank Terry Nadler for inspiring my reflection on names. I also thank Evelyn Klein for writing the lead article and Mike Woolsey for providing a timely book review. Joe Amato and Chuck Eldridge provided behind-the-scenes assistance with this issue and I am grateful to them for their help.

The next issue of *The Minnesota Scholar (TMS)* will come out in late November. The deadline for submissions is mid-October. I would particularly welcome articles about why you pursue your particular field of scholarship, as in Why Science? or Why History? Please write to me if these questions intrigue you or if you have another article in mind. I look forward to hearing from you.



*The Starland opened in 1912 and became the Strand in 1921. A curving marquee was added when the theater was rebuilt in 1931.*

Lucy Brusic  
lucy@brusic.net

*Photos from cinema treasures.org.*

## ***Save the dates for these Upcoming Programs***

### **Thursday, July 30, 7PM.**

Minneapolis Art Institute tour with Bob Brusica. “The Four Elements in Art: Fire, Water, Air, and Earth.” Look at a dozen works that reflect the four classical elements, as understood by thinkers such as Aristotle and Leonardo.

Meet in the information area on the first floor of the MIA at 7:00 PM for a one-hour tour. Admission to the museum is free and guests are welcome.

**August 22, 10:30-2** Annual picnic at the shelter in Cherokee Park in St. Paul. Gather at 10:30. We’ll eat around noon. Bring a dish to pass.

**Note:** The following regular meetings will take place in the lower meeting room at Washburn Library. We will meet at 9:30, with the speaker at 10. We are moving the meeting time up in order to take advantage of the earlier opening time at this library. As always our meetings are free and guests are welcome.

### **September 26, 10 AM**

“Indians in Public Art: Myths and Misrepresentation”

Jim Bear Jacobs will take us on a virtual tour of art in the Minnesota State Capitol and other public places in the metro area. He wants to create a dialogue around the images of Native Americans and early Minnesota history – and the power of art to create a story.

### **October 24, 10 AM**

“Regrowing Democracy”

Harry Boyte will argue that we’ve seen the disastrous shrinking of democracy to mean simply “elections,” a shrinkage that both communicates and embodies the devaluation of the talents and capacities of everyday citizens across the whole social landscape.

### **November 21, 10 AM**

“Arts and Parks: Culture and Beauty on the Frontier”

David C. Smith, a freelance writer for 30 years, will explore the connections between arts and parks in Minneapolis history in surprising detail. Smith is the author of *City of Parks: The Story of Minneapolis Parks* and writes about local history.

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