



More than a Meal

Menus in the Minnesota Historical Society Collections

Deborah L. Miller

MENUS, FOUND THROUGHOUT many of the Minnesota Historical Society's collections, are a treasure trove for serious scholars and casual browsers alike. Starting before statehood in 1858, Minnesota's restaurants, hotels, cafes, private clubs, and other emporia of eating-out made good use of the state's printing industry, commissioning two types of menus: souvenirs of catered banquets, and what we now think of as menus—lists of foods available at a particular restaurant on a given day, usually including prices.

These often-beautiful objects hold many types of information for many types of viewers. Food historians use menus to investigate, among other things, the popularity



Twenty-fifth Annual Banquet

given by

On Leong Chinese Merchants
Association of America

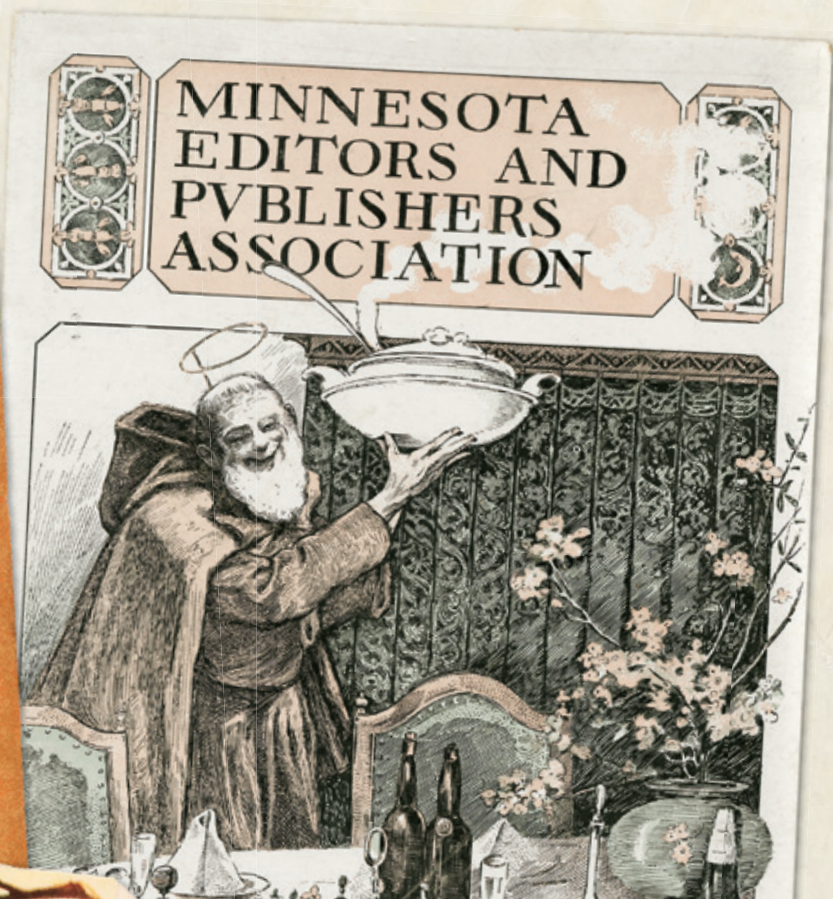
at

New Nicollet Hotel

Saturday, April 20th, 1929

7 o'clock P. M.

Informal



of certain foods at certain times; what kinds of foods were served together, like trout and cucumbers; to what extent seasonal or local foods or ethnic dishes appear on banquet and restaurant menus; preparation methods (roasted, boiled, braised, fried); culinary trends, such as when mock turtle soup began to replace real turtle soup; and so on. Students of social and cultural history may discover that a closer look at menus can reveal which ethnic foods made the leap from home and church-basement kitchens to public eateries. The lists and program notes on some menus can lead to insights into how men, in particular, socialized over food at celebratory events in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Designers and others interested in the history of printing and paper will also find menus enlightening—and a lot of fun. Historic menus preserve typefaces, color combinations, and illustrations that could be adapted for use today.

Menus combine utility with beauty, humor, and/or information on organizations, buildings, or individuals. They reflect the social values of an era, such as patriotism based on connections to the early-American past. Some are nostalgic or even sentimental. Menus are good resources for business history, especially for the hospitality industry

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and other food-related companies, but also for food growers and sellers. Instances of all of these aspects can be seen in the menus from the 1890s to the 1930s that follow.

OFTEN CONSIDERED TO BE minor items—ephemera—menus are rarely saved.¹ Although they are catalogued throughout the MNHS collections, they can be difficult to find (see below). A search on the term “menu” in the library’s online catalog yields results ranging from bills of fare from landmark hotel dining rooms (such as the Leamington’s Norse Room) and a menu from Marc’s Big Boy (in a collection of restaurant papers) to a wide array of books—published by small-town cafes, major Minnesota corporations, ethnic associations, and many entities in between—that include menus along with recipes and bits of local history. Searching the Collections Online database brings up photos of menus posted in bowling alleys or at drive-ins, menus from railroad dining cars, and souvenirs of one-time ceremonial banquets and organizational dinners. The mother lode of menus, though, can be found in the library’s pamphlet files, arranged by decade.

Beyond the state, famous American menu collections include holdings at the New York Public Library (some items have been digitized), Cornell University Library, Los Angeles Public Library, and the Johnson and Wales University menu collection, donated by the National Restaurant Association. For Minnesota menus, though, you can’t beat the Minnesota Historical Society’s library. ▣

Ordering from the Menu

Here’s a list of resources for sampling some excellent menu collections.

At the Minnesota Historical Society

Library catalog: www.mnhs.mnpals.net

Collections Online: www.mnhs.org/collections/ and select “Search Collections”

Pamphlet files: Items must be viewed in the History Center library. For material beginning in the 1870s, request the Collection of Minnesota Menus, TX728: Box 1, 1870–99; Box 2, 1900–19; Box 3, 1920–39, and Box 4, railroad dining-car menus, 1940–80s. Earlier menus, 1856–70, are a Reserve collection; researchers may apply for permission to see them.

Across the nation

New York Public Library digitalcollections.nypl.org/ and search “menu”

Cornell University Library rmc.library.cornell.edu/collections/menus.html

Los Angeles Public Library lapl.org/collections-resources/visual-collections/menu-collection

Johnson and Wales University menu collection, donated by the National Restaurant Association, scholarsarchive.jwu.edu/menus/

Other interesting websites include those of **private collectors**, such as theamericanmenu.com/



◀ Winona's Hot Fish Shop was a very popular eating place in southeastern Minnesota, run for decades by several generations of a local Polish American family, the Kowalewskis. This menu from 1938, not long after the restaurant moved from downtown Winona to Highway 61, displays lively graphics and, inside, considerable information about the food served during the Great Depression—at very low prices by 2014 standards. The variety of fish, greater than in most seafood restaurants today, ranges from Boneless Pike (walleye) and other freshwater species—lake trout, brook trout, Mississippi River catfish, bullheads, perch, smelt, and whitefish—to ocean fish and seafood, including salmon, halibut, cod, shrimp, oysters, and lobster. Clams, herring, crab meat, and tuna were available in soup, salad, or appetizers only.²

Those who did not want fish could order steak, hamburger steak, or sandwiches. For fish lovers with less money than the price of an entrée, there was a whitefish caviar sandwich for 25 cents or olive oil sardines on toast for 20 cents. Drinks included draft and bottled beer, coffee, milk, tea, hot chocolate, and buttermilk. Sodas apparently were not ubiquitous in 1930s Minnesota.

The Kowalewskis also ran a fish market and catered parties on the restaurant's lower level. As an extra incentive to dine out during hard times, the Hot Fish Shop retained an attendant who would check your car's gas and oil while you ate.

Three menus from the early 1900s document St. Paul's popular Como Park Pavilion Restaurant and Ice Cream Parlor. This one from 1906 lists the operator as Jacob Barnett, lessee. The menu offered many different types of food to attract Como's many different types of visitors and also advertised the park's "Do Not Fail to See" attractions. Barnett bragged that he and his staff made their own popcorn, brittle, taffy, and "fairy floss cotton candy," none of which appear on the menu, implying a separate counter for take-away foods. For beverages, "Table Waters" included restaurant-made root beer, Malted Grape Juice (Malto-Grapo), lemonade, phosphate, ginger ale—domestic and imported—and many other intriguing drinks. ▶



Water
From
Our
Artesian
Wells

We Do
All
Our
Own
Baking

Thursday, October 16, 1919

RELISHES

Celery Hearts 10	Radishes 5	Olives 5
Green Onions 5	Sliced Tomatoes 10	Sweet Pickles 5
Head Lettuce, Cream Dressing 10	Dill Pickles 5	Head Lettuce & Tomato 15

SOUPS

Sootch Broth, a la Jardiniere 5 & 10	
Chicken Broth au Rice 10	Cream of Tomato 10 and 15
Special Oyster Stew 25	Scarboro Beach Clam Chowder 15

FISH

Fried Wall-Eyed Pike, Tartar Sauce 30
Baked Salmon, en Creme, Au Gratin 25
Fried Oysters on Toast, Cabbage Salad 30

ROASTS and ENTREES

Boiled Country Dinner, aux Vegetables, Corn Bread 30	
Turkey Croquettes, Cranberries 25	Sweet Potatoes 30
Scrambled Eggs, with Oyster, on Toast 25	
Spaghetti Italiane 20	Rasher of Bacon 25
Old Fashioned Beef Stew, aux Vegetables 25	Corn Fritters 30
Creamed Chicken, Mushrooms, en Patty, Sweet Potatoes 36	
Roast Leg of Milk Veal, Peanut Dressing, Stewed Prunes 30	
Club Hash, Chili Sauce 20	Poached Egg 25
Roast Ribs of Prime Beef, Dish Gravy 30	
Baked Pork and Beans, Brown Bread 25	
Hot Weiners, Creme Potato Salad 25	
Hot Corn Bread, Butter, Maple Syrup 10	Bacon 25
Bread, Butter and Potatoes with Meat Orders.	

VEGETABLES

Spaghetti 5	Buttered Beans 5	Kidney Beans 5	Peas en Creme 5
Tomatoes 5	Boiled or Mashed Potatoes 5	Potatoes en Creme 5	
Spinach 5 with Egg 10	June Peas 5	Sugar Corn 5	Lima Beans 5
Corn Fritters 5	Butter Cabbage 5	Fried Sweet Potatoes 10	

SANDWICHES and SALADS

Cold Boiled Ham and Potato Salad 30	Vegetable Salad 10
Potato Salad 10 with Whole Egg 15	Combination Salad 20
Bowl of Half and Half Crackers or Bread 15	Cabbage Salad 10
Bowl of Rice with Half and Half 15	Graham Crackers 20
Hot Ham, a la King 20	Sweet Potatoes 25
Hot Roast Beef 15	Mashed Potatoes 20
Hot Roast Ham 15	with Potatoes 20
Baked Beans 10	with Mashed Potatoes 15
Roast Veal Leaf 10	with Potatoes 15
Chicken 25	Salmon 10
Head Lettuce with Egg 10	Ham Dill 10
	1000 Lbs 10
	Egg 10
	Peanut Butter 5

DESSERTS

Meringue Pudding, Boston Style 5 & 10	Assorted Pies, per cut 5 & 10
Baked Apple Dumpling, Sweet Cream 15	Strawberry Parfait 20
Cup Custard 10	Sliced Orange 10
Sliced Bananas and Cream 10	Green Apple Sauce 10 with Cake 15
Angel Food, Whipped Cream 10	Sweet Rolls 5
Peach Short Cake, Whipped Cream 15	Fresh Peach Parfait 20
Half Crape Fruit 15	Stewed Prunes 5
	Chocolate Eclair 10
	Assorted Cakes 10

BEVERAGES

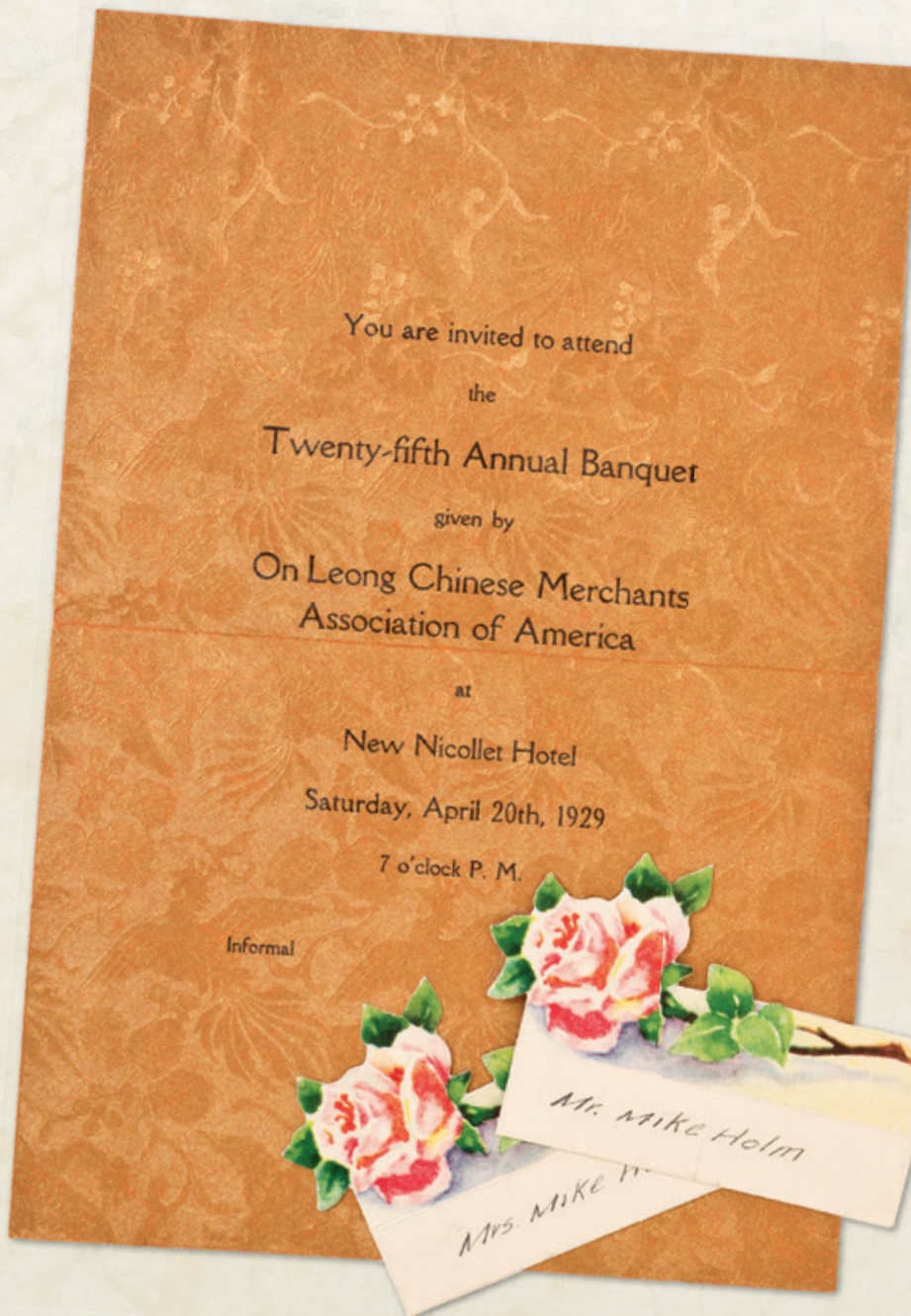
Milk 5	Hot Chocolate 5, Whipped Cream 10	Buttermilk 5
Postum 5	Coffee 5	Iced Tea 5
		Iced Coffee 5
Tea 5		
Toast 10	Bread and Butter 5	Milk Toast 15

See Other Side for Ice Cream

These prices are reasonable - about half the prices at the restaurant.

See Other Side for Ice Cream
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◀ Department stores like St. Paul's Golden Rule, "the store that lives up to its name," offered customers full meals and light refreshments. This 1919 menu lists a great variety of choices, from relishes and soups to roasts, sandwiches, desserts, and beverages. Some of the homey dishes of the era include Bowl of Half and Half [with] Crackers or Bread and Bowl of Rice with Half and Half and 15 Graham Crackers. The water came from "our own artesian wells," and all the baked goods were from the store's own bakery. The other side of the menu offers soda fountain treats: ice cream sodas, plain sundaes, and fancy sundaes, increasingly popular under Prohibition, like the Havana Cream Puff, the Chop Suey, and the Roman Beauty; egg drinks, lemonades, grape juice, and sodas; and punches, freezes, frappes, and parfaits. The handwriting at bottom reads: "These prices are remarkable—about half the price at other restaurants."³



In 1929 the On Leong Chinese Merchants' Association of America held its twenty-fifth annual convention banquet at the New Nicollet Hotel in Minneapolis, announced on one of the most elegant invitations and matching menus in the collection. (Setting type on brocade paper must have been a challenge for the printer.) The banquet served an expensive array of dishes, from Baked Lobster Thermidor to Mignon of Tenderloin Heart with Béarnaise Sauce and Breast of Long Island Duck. Perhaps to please the hoped-for guests—leading Twin Cities businessmen—no Chinese food was served. Revealing as that choice may be, it was disappointing to this researcher. The menu also lists the organization's national officers and the event's toastmaster: the executive secretary of the Minneapolis Civic and Commerce Association.⁴ ▶



1873

1923



ANNIVERSARY DINNER
OF
THE NORTHWESTERN MILLER
CELEBRATING ITS
FIFTIETH YEAR OF PUBLICATION
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA, U.S.A.
NOVEMBER 23RD 1923

▲ *Northwestern Miller*, the important trade paper for the flour millers of Minneapolis and the Upper Midwest, celebrated 50 years of publication with a banquet at the Minneapolis Athletic Club in 1923. The elegant menu's cover emphasizes wheat—the industry's backbone—and an elaborate insignia ("Forward, Always Forward; Circulates Around the World"). Given the flour millers' strong connection to the region where the wheat grew and the waterfall powered the mills, it's not surprising that the menu emphasizes local foods, especially Wisconsin brook trout, roast Minnesota guinea hen, and Indian wild rice.



◀ The City of St. Paul hosted an 1899 banquet for the Minnesota Editors and Publishers Association at the Windsor Hotel on a cold February evening. The event was important to the city, judging from the list of men who presented the toasts: Gov. John Lind, Mayor A. R. Kiefer, Sen. John A. Johnson, and representatives of the Jobbers Union, Commercial Club, Northwestern Manufacturers Association, Chamber of Commerce, and Editorial Association. The elaborately drawn menu's front cover promotes the food, while the back features the post-banquet "Smoke Social" at Elks Hall, making clearer the gendered nature of the event. As on many of the collection's banquet menus from the turn of the twentieth century, Tenderloin of Beef Larded (with mushrooms) was a featured entrée. Oysters, planked white fish, and quail on toast rounded out the proteins.

While businessmen and civic leaders were often feted, several twentieth-century menus show that businesses also celebrated their male workers. The menu for the Veterans Association of the Great Northern Railway's 1916 annual meeting in St. Paul includes an unusual announcement: President Louis W. Hill's letter notifying employees that the GN had instituted a pension plan. "The Company hopes that this voluntary establishment . . . will confirm to them this Company's appreciation of faithful service, and its interest in their welfare." The program features beautiful color photos of scenes in Glacier National Park, where the 1917 meeting was scheduled to take place. The menu offers entrées of lake trout and fried chicken. ▶



VETERANS
ASSOCIATION
OF THE
GREAT NORTHERN
RAILWAY
ANNUAL MEETING

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA
SEPTEMBER 16
1916

MENU and PROGRAM

Minnesota Holstein Breeders Association Banquet

Hotel Blake, Alexandria
May 28, 6:30 P. M.



The Mankato House, which opened in 1855 (three years after the city was founded), announced its Dinner Bill of Fare for a Saturday in March 1890 on a card on the back of which, it appears, diners placed their orders. No prices are listed; perhaps the menu was standard and the charges fluctuated. The restaurant offered items seen on other Minnesota menus of the era, among them roasted beef, pork loin, and chicken with dressing. But there were unique dishes, too, such as corned beef with turnips. Entrées included some puzzlers: hot Boston brown bread as a stand-alone? Bell fritters with wine sauce? Cold offerings ranged from roast beef to ox tongue, while vegetables included "sour krout" and marrow fat squash. Among the desserts was Corn Starch Blanc-Mange, and tea drinkers could choose black or green. ▶

◀ Agriculture is also represented among the banquet menus. The modestly printed program for the Minnesota Holstein Breeders Association Banquet, held at Alexandria's Hotel Blake in an unspecified year, features a distinctive logo: a Holstein standing on the state of Minnesota. The menu was modest, too: baked ham, potatoes, peas, rolls, and salad, but the coffee served with dessert came with Holstein cream. The program, arranged by the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce and the Douglas County Holstein Breeders Association, included music, songs, dancing, impersonations, presentation of trophies, and an address by the publisher of the *Minneapolis Tribune*. The event ended with banqueters singing two songs honoring the cow; the words were printed on the back of the menu. To the tune of "Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here": Hail! Hail! The Holstein cow/She's a thing of beauty/ Always does her duty/Hail! Hail! The Holstein cow/ She's the dairy cow for me.

MANKATO HOUSE.

G. C. BURT, Proprietor.

Dinner Bill of Fare.

SATURDAY, MARCH 22, 1890.

SOUP.

Cream of Barley

FISH.

Baked Lake Superior Trout, Tomato Sauce

Tomato Catsup	Horse Radish	Halford Sauce
Mixed Pickles	Holland Onions	Queen Olives
		Chow-Chow

ROAST.

Prime Roast Beef, Pan Gravy
Rib Ends of Beef with Browned Potatoes
Loin of Pork, Apple Sauce
Chicken with Dressing

BOILED.

Corned Beef with Turnips

Ham

ENTREES.

Baked Pork and Beans	Hot Boston Brown Bread
Bell Fritters with Wine Sauce	
Stewed Veal with Dumplings	Irish Stew
Lobster Salad	

COLD.

Roast Beef	Corned Beef	Ox Tongue	Ham
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VEGETABLES.

Boiled Potatoes	Mashed Potatoes	Marrow Fat Squash
String Beans		Sour Krout

DESSERT.

Pumpkin Pie	Corn Starch Blanc-Mange	Apple Pie
Vanilla Ice Cream		Wine Jelly
Assorted Cake	Fruit	Mixed Nuts
Black and Green Tea		French Coffee
		Cheese

AMERICANIZATION DINNER

Central School Fri. Evening
April 9, 1921 5:30 to 8 P. M.

Meats and Fish

Baked white fish with dressing.... 15 cents
Salmon Loaf..... 10 cents
2 Wienerwurst..... 5 cents
Then there will be two Barbecued pigs
- chicken - turkey - tenderloin and ham at
reasonable prices.

Salads

Fruit, vegetables, salmon, shrimp 10 cents
Potato salad..... 5 cents
Buttered Buns..... 2 cents
Homemade cakes-piece..... 5 cents
Homemade pies-per cut..... 5 cents
Coffee-cocoa-tea-per cup..... 5 cents

Specialties

Flat Bread, Leftse, Scones,
Struddle, Chop Suey, Spanish
Rice, Spaghetti Italieene,
Fattigmand, Cheese all kinds,
and other delicacies of for-
eign countries at reasonable
prices.

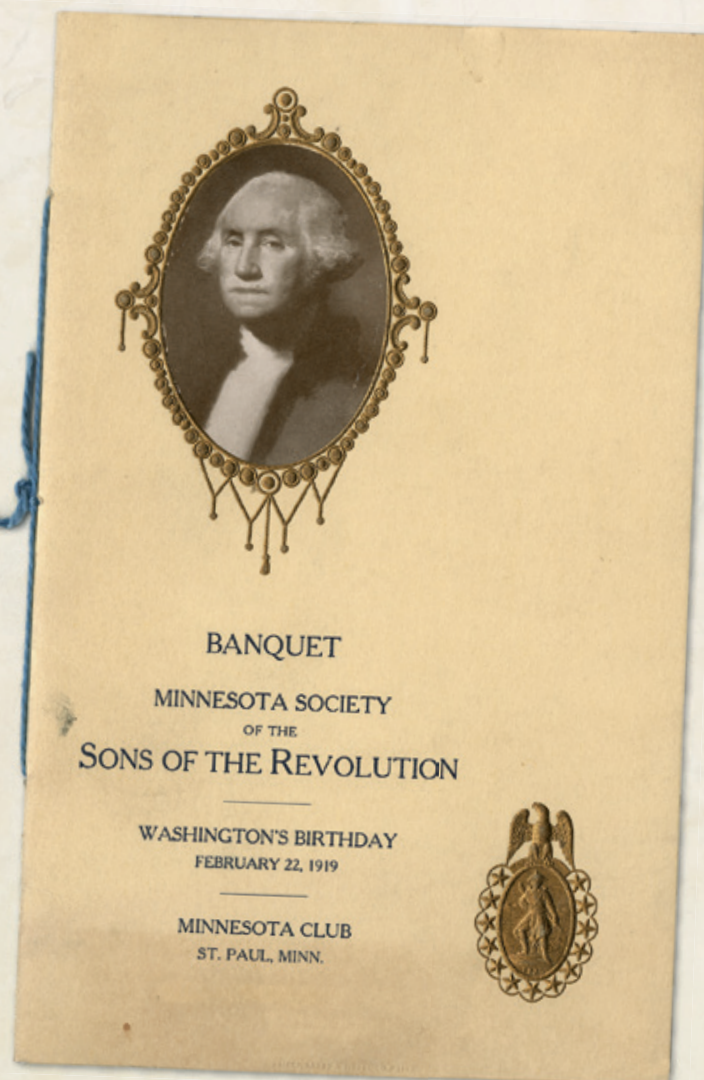
COME, FEAST, BE MERRY

Benefit Central Playground

Printed by Class in printing in high school

◀ A number of menus in the collection shed light on immigration and ethnicity. In 1920, when Americanization of immigrants was in full swing throughout Minnesota, South St. Paul's Central School held an Americanization Dinner to benefit its playground fund. The menu, carefully printed on rough paper by the high-school printing class, offered a fairly standard choice of meats, fish, and salads along with homemade desserts. But there were also Specialties, which must have been a great draw, much like the exotic offerings at the Festival of Nations that began a few years later. Spelling wasn't always perfect, but the point was made: delicacies of foreign countries can be delicious.

Patriotic organizations were important outlets for male community service and socializing in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The Minnesota Society of the Sons of the Revolution celebrated Washington's Birthday on February 22, 1919, at St. Paul's Minnesota Club with a dinner ranging from grapefruit and oysters through relishes, soup, fish or chicken, cucumber sandwiches, potatoes, and salad to ice cream, cake, and coffee. Among the records of this gathering is the card of Minnesota Historical Society director (later, archivist of the United States) Dr. Solon J. Buck, along with a program of music, toasts, an address, and patriotic songs. The menu is full of information, listing each Son and, where applicable, his military and/or civil service, including American Protective League, American Red Cross, Minnesota National Guard, and other groups. ▶



Mr. Alexander Ramsey
 Your seat at the dinner to
Mr. James J. Hill
 will be at table No. 3
The Aberdeen.
 June the ninth, at nine o'clock.
 Please present this card.



Dinner

LITTLE NECK CLAMS.	CHATEAU YVOUX
CLEAR GREEN TURTLE.	AMONTILLADO.
BROOK TROUT. CUCUMBERS	SENIOR JOHANNISBERGER.
BROILED SWEETBREADS. ASPARAGUS TIPS.	MOËT & CHANDON.
TENDERLOIN OF BEEF. CAULIFLOWER.	
BROILED MUSHROOMS.	
ROCKY MOUNTAIN PUNCH.	
ROAST WOODCOCK.	MOUTON ROTHSCHILD.
ARTICHOKES, MAYONNAISE.	
ICES.	STRAWBERRIES.
CAMEMBERT.	ROQUEFORT.
LIQUEURS.	COFFEE. COGNAC.

▲ Menus honoring individuals are also part of the collection. Some celebrate famous people, such as James J. Hill, while others honor lesser-known dignitaries. D. D. Merrill Co., St. Paul, printed this elegant, multi-page souvenir of a dinner given for Hill by the citizens of St. Paul at the Hotel Aberdeen, June 9, 1893. Bound with gold braid between hard covers, its front is festooned with the raised, metallic initials JJH. Inside, the names of program speakers are printed in a formal script often found on wedding invitations of the era and later. The food was sumptuous, too, with seasonal touches. It was June, a month without an R, so no oysters were served. Little neck clams took their place. Clear Green Turtle [soup] was followed by fish and

entrée courses, each with appropriate wine pairing. The familiar tenderloin of beef was offered—with cauliflower this time—but broiled mushrooms were nearby. Along with the dessert ices and cheeses, strawberries marked the month of June. Former Gov. William R. Merriam introduced Hill, and tributes came from men representing the railroads and the World's Columbian Exposition, ongoing in Chicago. Archbishop John Ireland spoke about The Successful Man. The banquet was part of a larger celebration that featured a parade, street decorations, and reception. Included in the MNHS copy of the menu was the seating card for Alexander Ramsey, the first governor of Minnesota Territory.

► Sometimes, menus from dinners given for less prominent people, like the one newspaperman Herschel V. Jones threw for author, critic, and professor of literature James Gray at the Minneapolis Club in late 1913, display real creative flair. Constructed to stand up and sharply illustrated by Frank Wing, the piece's menu offerings were overshadowed by the clever drawings. Wing, who worked for Minneapolis's Art Instruction Inc., was known for his sketches of prominent men, published in local newspapers. The bill of fare was worth a look, though: beginning with caviar canapé, the meal ended with Biscuit Tortoni, a rich, custardy ice-cream confection, Camembert, and coffee. Like some other menus in the collection, this one bears the autographs of several attendees.



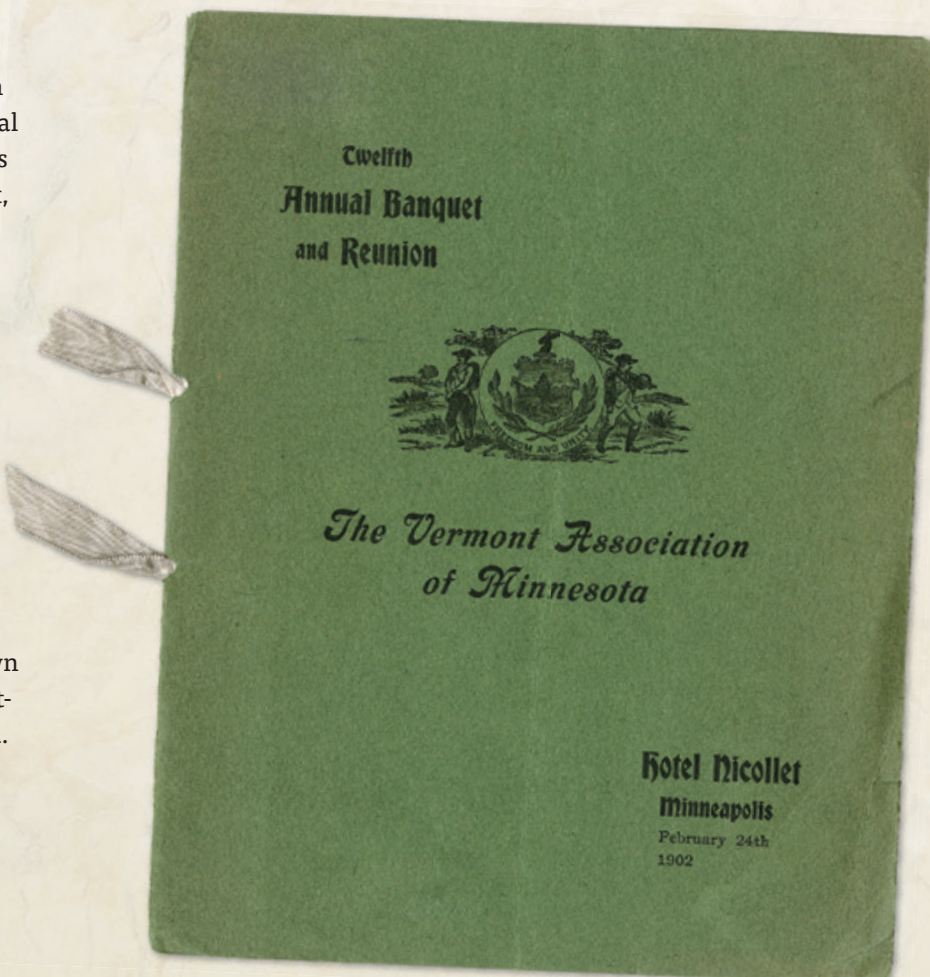
WE have been comrades, comrades, since our first acquaint—
Sharing our joys and sorrows, sharing without complaint;
Comrades, as years have been passing,
Faithful whate'er might betide;
When danger threatened a comrade, OLD VERBECK was there by his side.

<p>מִשְׁתֵּה OTHERWISE MENU NEW YORK COUNTS</p>	
<p><i>Juseulum Succul Plenum</i> OTHERWISE Consommé, en Tasse</p>	
<p><i>Kokt lax med smörsås</i> <i>Tyska potatis</i> OTHERWISE Broiled Salmon, Anchovy Butter BOCHESS POTATOES</p>	
<p><i>Saltchjerner-Gelée</i> Framfte Grønnetter. OTHERWISE Sweetbreads, Glace FRENCH PEAS</p>	
<p>CARDINAL PUNCH—</p>	
<p>CANARD RÔTI, GELÉE DE GROSEILLE FUMÉE DE POMMES DE TERRE RÔTI OTHERWISE Roast Duck, Currant Jelly BROWNED MASHED POTATOES</p>	
<p>IN SALATA DI POLLO OTHERWISE Chicken Salad</p>	
<p>Meapel Gefrorenes Roquefort Käse Neapolitan Ice Cream Roquefort Cheese</p>	<p>Frucht Crackers OTHERWISE Fruit Water Crackers</p>
	<p>VERSCHIEDENER KUCHEN Kaffee Assorted Cakes Coffee</p>
<p>Cigarras y Candelas OTHERWISE Cigars and Candles</p>	

St. Julien

◀ A favorite menu documents the Good-Bye Dinner in Nine Languages given for F. S. Verbeck, manager of the Minnesota Type Foundry, at St. Paul's Windsor Hotel in 1891. Verbeck was moving to Chicago, but not before his publisher and editor friends from all over the state gave him a grand send-off and a menu with fonts and languages galore—Hebrew, Latin, Swedish, Norwegian, French, Italian, German, and Spanish, as well as English. Oysters, consommé, salmon, sweetbreads, roast duck, and chicken salad preceded the ice cream, fruit, cheese, cakes, coffee, and cigars.

People remembering their early arrival in the state or territory, such as the Territorial Pioneers of Minnesota, or recalling places they had left, such as Norway or Vermont, met regularly for festive dinners now recalled by menus. In 1902, for example, the Vermont Association of Minnesota gathered for its twelfth annual banquet and reunion at Minneapolis's Hotel Nicollet. The menu listed the Vermonters' officers and executive committee members, most of whom lived in Minneapolis. Its dishes harked back to the geography of New England: Green Mountain Oysters on Shell; Cream of Tomato, New England; Filet of Halibut au Lake Champlain; Southdown Lamb Chops, Vermont Style; Sorbet Montpelier; and Plymouth Rock Chicken Salad. The drinks were mocha and Vermont sweet cider. Adding to the nostalgia, the words to Auld Lang Syne were printed opposite the food list. ▶



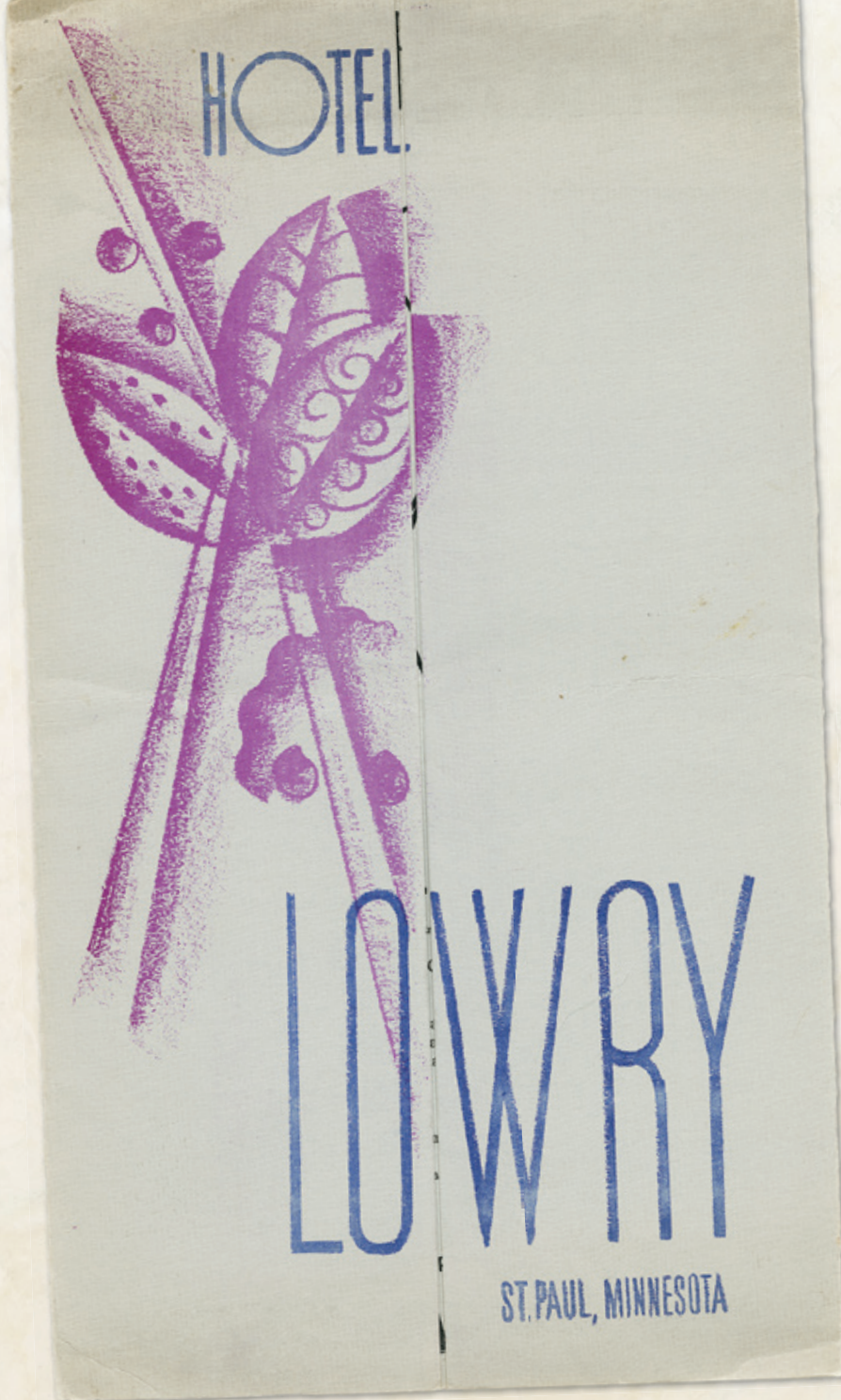


▲ At one time, hotels celebrated their formal opening with a banquet. When the Hotel Radisson opened its doors in Minneapolis in 1909, its souvenir program included the menu of a dinner held on December 15. Befitting Pierre Esprit Radisson, the explorer whose name the hotel chose, the menu was all in French: Canapé, Caviar Russe, followed by Huitres (oysters), Consommé, Homard Farci

(stuffed lobster), Ris de Veau Braise (sweetbreads), Sorbet Radisson, and Poussin de Bruyère roti (roasted spring chicken) and concluding with Salade Moderne, Beignets Singapore, Glaces Fantaisie (fantasy ices), and petit fours. The souvenir's cover proudly depicts the new hotel and the historic explorer with his guides. Inside is a brief account of his adventures.



◀ To conclude this sampling of Minnesota menus, we return to the 1920s and 1930s to see some beautiful examples of graphic art. The inside of this lovely menu welcomes the reader to the twenty-sixth annual convention banquet of the National Association of Retail Grocers in the United States, held June 25–28, 1923, in St. Paul. The next page lists officers of the national association and its St. Paul and other branches. The banquet was modest: fruit cocktail and relishes, chicken, sweet potatoes, rolls, peas, lettuce-and-asparagus-tips salad, and ice cream with strawberry sauce. The program was more varied than many, with assorted musical performances followed by addresses from St. Paul's mayor, Gov. J. A. O. Preus, and officials of the grocers association. These were followed by "Community Singing" and a regular vaudeville show: operatic baritone, several dancers, comedian, singer, magician, and an Irish comedian.



◀ This menu from St. Paul's Hotel Lowry coffee shop provides interesting evidence of the foods such Twin Cities eateries offered during the Great Depression. On September 10, 1936, complete dinners cost less than \$1.00 (prime rib was 85 cents—equivalent to \$14.55 in 2014) and Today's Specials were a T-Bone Steak with potatoes, lettuce salad, rolls, and beverage (\$1.00) or a Cold Assorted Dutch Plate with Swiss cheese, potato salad, spiced new beets, rolls, and apple pie with cheese, plus beverage (75 cents). The Paul Bunyan Sandwich (loaf of bread, Swiss cheese, liver sausage) cost 25 cents; fresh shrimp cocktail was 35 cents, and Whole Split Wall Eye Pike Saute Meuniere, with American fried potatoes, bread, and butter was 60 cents. Prices were low, but the menu's cover design looks to the future with its modern, sans serif type and stylish sprig of leaves and berries.

Notes

A big thank you to Lydia Lucas for arranging and cataloging the menus in the pamphlet files and to the helpful research staff at the Blue Earth, Douglas, and Winona county historical societies.

1. Moira F. Harris and Leo J. Harris, *Minnesota on Paper: Collecting our Printed History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006). When menus are saved, the best collections are broad ones, from which the range of possibilities and patterns can emerge.

2. Jane King Hession, "Hot Fish Shop," *Minnesota History* (Winter 2011–12): 287.

3. For more on the increasing popularity of ice cream treats during Prohibition, which began in 1919, see Rae Katherine Eighmey, *Soda Shop Salvation: Recipes and Stories from the Sweeter Side of Prohibition* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2013).

4. For the Minnesota On Leong Association and for Chinese restaurants that served Chinese food, see two books from Minnesota Historical

Society Press: Sherri Gebert Fuller, *Chinese in Minnesota* (2004), and Phyllis Jane Harris with Raghavan Iyer, *Asian Flavors: Changing the Tastes of Minnesota since 1875* (2012).

All photos by Jason Onerheim/MNHS



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