



Claiming the City: Politics, Faith, and the Power of Place in St. Paul (Cushwa Center Studies of Catholicism in Twentieth-Century America)

Mary Lethert Wingerd

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Are Minneapolis and St. Paul "Twin Cities" in proximity only? How can two cities, spoken of so often in one breath, differ so greatly in their histories and characteristics? *Claiming the City* traces the contours of St. Paul's "civic identity" to show how personal identities and political structures of power are fundamentally informed by the social geography of place. St. Paul proves a particularly fruitful site for such analysis because it has developed along a divergent path from that of Minneapolis, its sister city just across the Mississippi river. While Minneapolis in the last part of the nineteenth century bore the stamp of Scandinavians, Protestants, and Republican Yankee progressives, St. Paul emerged as an Irish, Catholic, Democratic stronghold. Increasingly overshadowed by the economic might of Minneapolis, out of necessity St. Paul evolved complex alliances among business, labor, and the Catholic Church that cut across class and ethnic lines—a culture of compromise that sharply contrasted with Minneapolis' more strident labor politics. Mary Lethert Wingerd brings together the voices of citizens and workers and the power dynamics of civic leaders including James J. Hill and Archbishop John Ireland. She crafts a portrait of St. Paul remarkable for its specificity as well as its relevance to broader interpretations of place-based culture and politics. Wingerd's rich and lively history of St. Paul is a clear demonstration that place—the lived experience and memory located in a specific spatial context—is a constitutive element of all other aspects of identity.

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