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Heart of St. Paul: A History of the Pioneer and Endicott Buildings (Minnesota Museum of American Art)

Larry Millett

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When the Pioneer Press Building opened its doors in 1889, it was news. The twelve-story skyscraper, the tallest at the time in the heart of St. Paul—featuring the first glass elevator in the country—merited a forty-page special edition of the *Pioneer Press*, whose editors modestly proclaimed it “the greatest newspaper building mother earth carries.” A year later, another architectural monument, the Endicott Complex—which wraps around the Pioneer Building—opened its doors. Designed by rising St. Paul architect Cass Gilbert, the Endicott included two office buildings linked by a one-story L-shaped shopping arcade crowned by a stained-glass ceiling.

Journalist and architectural historian Larry Millett tells the story of these two icons of downtown St. Paul from conception through numerous alterations to their present incarnation as vibrant cultural and living spaces in the city’s center. He describes how the Pioneer came to be designed by noted Chicago architect Solon Beman, who in 1910 added four floors to create a sixteen-story light court that remains one of Minnesota’s great architectural spaces. Millett also describes Gilbert’s meticulous work in designing the Endicott complex, which was inspired by the Renaissance palaces of Florence. Gilbert would later go on to produce such masterpieces as the Minnesota State Capitol and the Woolworth Building in New York.

As entertaining as it is edifying, *Heart of St. Paul* combines architectural history with the rich human story behind two buildings that have played a prominent role in the life of the city for over a century. The book includes an introduction by Kristin Makholm, Director of the Minnesota Museum of American Art, which has found a new home in the buildings.

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