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*The Gateway Arch: A Biography* by Tracy Campbell (review)

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Morgan and they began purchasing all available NP shares at any price. This caused the normally moribund NP stock price to skyrocket over the next few days. Speculators anticipating a price decline on the overheated stock shorted the NP, only to be caught in a bind as the price continued to rise. This led to chaos as speculators offered to pay practically any price for NP stock to cover their obligations, while panicked investors pulled their funds out of the market, driving down the price of stocks across the board. Fortunes were lost in a matter of hours, and the panic threatened the stability of numerous Wall Street and London brokerage houses.

The fight for dominance over crucial midwestern railroad corridors frames Haeg's narrative, but *Harriman vs. Hill* highlights the limited agency of midwestern actors in shaping the economic development of their region. The critical decisions by Hill, Morgan, Harriman, and Schiff took place in New York City (and to a lesser extent overseas). While telegraph and telephone lines linked East and Midwest by the turn of the twentieth century, important midwestern metropolises such as St. Paul and Chicago played a supporting role at best in the region's financial affairs. Midwestern businessmen such as Hill felt compelled to travel east in order to transact necessary business with bankers, brokers, and fellow railroad directors.

Ultimately, Larry Haeg's study highlights the shocking banality of momentous political-economic transactions, as his protagonists were motivated largely by practical financial and managerial concerns and, in the case of Harriman and Hill, a personal dislike of each other. A financial crisis and resolution that would eventually help to rewrite American constitutional jurisprudence had at its heart bruised egos and personal miscalculations.

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Tracy Campbell, *The Gateway Arch: A Biography*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2013. 232 pp. \$26.00.

The Gateway Arch, located on the west bank of the Mississippi River in downtown St. Louis, is one of the most recognized symbols anywhere in the United States, perhaps in the world. Designed in 1947 by architect Eero Saarinen, the arch was erected between 1963 and 1965. It opened to the public in 1967, a 630-foot monument to President Thomas Jefferson's

foresight in negotiating the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and the role of St. Louis as the Gateway to the West during the century that followed.

There is, however, another, much less glamorous, side to the story of the Arch. In this “biography” of the monument, produced as a volume in Yale University Press’s “Icons of America Series,” University of Kentucky history professor Tracy Campbell finds the Arch’s origins in the Depression era machinations of St. Louis mayor Bernard Dickmann and civic leader Luther Ely Smith.

Dickmann was elected mayor of St. Louis in 1933, the first Democrat chosen for that position since 1905. He took over the helm of government just as the city and the nation were trying to pull themselves out of the Great Depression. As Campbell writes, “Mayor Dickmann saw the city’s problems through the eyes of a real estate broker,” which was his vocation in everyday life (30).

Concerned about the large number of vacant commercial rental properties along the St. Louis riverfront and eager to attract tourists and their money to his city, Dickmann joined a group of likeminded civic and business leaders, including Smith, to create the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial Association. They hoped to “revitalize” the riverfront by “large-scale clearing of ‘blighted’ property.” Such an enterprise would have two effects: “The value of the surrounding parcels would necessarily increase as usable buildings and land diminished, and the razed areas would offer opportunities to potential speculators” (30). That the area was largely inhabited by African Americans bothered Dickmann not at all. Reflecting the racial insensitivity that has characterized far too many St. Louis officials historically, Dickmann concluded, as Campbell writes, that the “mostly African American inhabitants could be moved elsewhere, and in their place something beautiful could be built” (31).

Mayor Dickmann and his supporters began seeking federal funding for the project in 1934. They endorsed a local \$7.5 million bond issue in 1935 as a way of trying to leverage three times that amount of money from the federal government. Leaving nothing to chance, Dickmann and his cohorts engaged in massive voter fraud to ensure passage of the local bond issue: “The goal of raising property values, of course, had to be concealed behind the cause of creating jobs and memorializing westward expansion . . .” (36).

The bond issue passed, and federal support was obtained. Land was acquired through purchase and eminent domain, and ownership transferred

to the National Park Service. In 1939, workmen began demolishing forty square blocks of buildings, among them some of the most historically significant structures in the city. For years after demolition, development stalled and the area was transformed into a vast parking lot, “the St. Louis Municipal Parking Lot.”

In the immediate postwar period, the National Park Service decided to hold an architectural competition for the design of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial as a way of reinvigorating the project. The winner of this competition was Eero Saarinen, a thirty-seven year old architect who worked in a Michigan architectural firm headed by his father. Although Saarinen’s winning design showed vision and promise, not everyone was pleased with it. What’s more, the architect’s peculiar personality complicated the process of moving from design to construction. As Campbell writes, “Saarinen’s public persona . . . concealed an insecure and narcissistic personality that led one sociologist who interviewed him to detect ‘psychopathic’ tendencies” (88).

Saarinen did not live to see his design executed. He died on September 1, 1961, nearly eighteen months before work on the Arch began. The building of the Arch presented multiple challenges to the engineers and craftsmen hired to erect it. The Arch also became a focal point for controversy, as African American laborers were systematically excluded from the trade unions that worked on it. In a scene that reminds the reader of the protests that occurred in St. Louis in the wake of a grand jury’s refusal to indict Officer Darren Wilson for the killing of Michael Brown in November 2014, local civil rights activist Percy Green and his CORE colleague Richard Daily climbed up one leg of the Arch, 125 feet above the ground, to stage a sit-in aimed at drawing attention to the fact that African American laborers were excluded from participation on the project. The protest by Green and Daily, however, had little impact; it did not increase the number of African Americans working on the job. In the end, Campbell observes, “In St. Louis’s long and troubled history of race relations, the Arch represented one more example of unmet promises” (145).

This is a well-crafted and important book that will leave readers troubled by the failure of St. Louis (and the nation) to deal adequately with its troubled racial past and its long history of political corruption. No one who reads this book will ever look at the Arch in the same way again. A beautiful symbol of vision and hope, yes—but also a reminder that, as Campbell

notes, “[Readers] may discover that the actual origins and legacies of great structures are often less beautiful than the structures themselves.”

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Scott Saul, *Becoming Richard Pryor*. New York: Harper, 2014. 587 pp. \$27.99.

Born in Peoria, Illinois, in 1940, Richard Pryor incorporated his experiences as a black youth in that city into his brilliant, comedy-reshaping act for many years. When most people think of the history of African Americans in the Midwest, they focus on the massive movements that brought so many from the South to the region: the First Great Migration of 1916–30 and the even larger Second Great Migration of 1940–70. But as sociologist Charles Tilly pointed out many years ago, such a focus obscures an at least equally powerful shaper of the African American experience:

. . . [T]he situation in the city, rather than the fact of moving, shook Negro family life in the time of the great northward migration. The distinction may seem academic: the impact of any move on the individual always includes the differences in living conditions between the origin and the destination. Yet it matters a great deal. For in the one case we might conclude that as migration slowed down and the immediate shock of moving faded, the troubles of Negro families would disappear. In the other case, we could hardly expect much improvement until the opportunities open to Negro men and women in the big city changed.—Charles Tilly, “Race and Migration to the American City,” in *The Metropolitan Enigma*, ed. James Q. Wilson (New York: Doubleday, 1970), 146.

Tilly’s point underscores an important fact about the families who shaped Richard Pryor. The circumstances under which they lived did not grow out of the First and Second Great Migrations, because both his mother’s family, the Thomases, and his father’s family, the Pryor/Carters, were living in the Midwest before the First Great Migration got underway. Nor was either family directly affected by the rapidly growing network of institutions that was creating a new black cultural world in Chicago, the mid-western metropolis. When Richard was born, only about three thousand