

# “CURIOUS AND ROMANTIC SENSATION”

## Sex, Fraud, and Celebrity in the Leon A. Belmont Case of 1880

Lizzie Ehrenhalt

On a Friday evening in mid-November 1880, a newspaper reporter called at a house at the intersection of Sixth Street and Second Avenue South in Minneapolis. The man who opened the front door carried a candle that illuminated his overcoat and slouch hat—a popular men’s fashion accessory at the time. When the reporter asked about his recent detention by police, the man, known as Leon A. Belmont, demurred, saying he was a private citizen under no obligation to talk to “nasty people who have no right to bother me.” The reporter, however, refused to leave. He demanded to hear the details of Belmont’s release, leading to this exchange:

“I am not going to skip town. I am not under the sentence of the law. I propose to stay here and wear men’s clothing too.” . . .

. . . “I suppose you know,” said the Tribune man, “that it is against the law for a woman to wear men’s clothing.” “I know it” said Belmont, “and yet Judge Cooley said I had a right to wear it. . . . I want you to know that I have a right to be in this town; I have a right to wear what clothing I want to, and I am going to exercise that right.”

The reporter, convinced that Belmont would say no more, retreated into the dark to write up his scoop for the *Minneapolis Tribune*. It appeared in the next day’s paper under the headline “THE BELMONT MYSTERY,” in which “she proposes to stay in this city and wear men’s clothing all she wants to.”<sup>1</sup>



The “pencil man,” as the reporter referred to himself, had achieved no small feat: a face-to-face interview with the most gossiped about, speculated on, and sought-after person in Minneapolis. He had given his statement at the height of the Belmont sensation—a multiweek media frenzy in which the *Minneapolis Tribune* and its local competitors (the *Evening Journal* in Minneapolis and the *Pioneer Press* and *Daily Globe* in St. Paul) raced to outdo each other with dramatic coverage. Between October 30 and November 25, 1880, the papers published more than 60 items on Belmont, some of them thousands of words long. In them, reporters wrestled with how to respond to a person they perceived to be a woman seducing other women and dressing in clothes they associated with men. Their conclusions shifted as the sensation went on, with some writers celebrating Belmont as seductive and others condemning him for his claim to “masculine privilege.”

On October 30, the *Minneapolis Tribune* highlighted “the curious and romantic sensation,” pointing to two strands of public response to the case: curiosity, which sometimes curdled into revulsion; and romantic attraction bordering on desire. Rather than cancel each other out, these feelings reinforced each other and created the kind of modern celebrity icon that had only recently emerged through the rise of wire services, which distributed newspaper stories widely.<sup>2</sup>

ABOVE: Leon A. Belmont, Minnesota Stats Tidning, “En Minneapolis-sensation,” Nov. 4, 1880.

### AUTHOR'S NOTE ON PRONOUNS

I call Belmont a man and refer to him with masculine pronouns (he, him, his) even when they contradict the newspapers' feminine ones (she, her, hers) in order to respect the gender identity he claimed consistently, if not exclusively, for 25 years. Belmont's alleged scams, invented family history, and assumed names do not rule out the possibility that he identified as a man. Nor do they confirm it. I encourage readers to view him for what he was: a person assigned a female sex at birth who chose to live as a man between about 1877 and 1902, and to have romantic relationships with both men and women.

At the center of it all remained Belmont himself—private, opaque, uncategorizable, but committed to exercising his right to wear the clothes he preferred, and to attach himself to the people he chose. Any effort to uncover what Belmont “really” was (transgender man? queer cisgender woman? intersex person?) ultimately fails, not only because these identities did not exist in 1880 as we know them today but also because they occlude an understanding of his lived experience in a specific place and time: urban Minnesota in the early years of the Gilded Age. If we abandon the hunt for labels, we begin to see him on his own terms, as a private person who wished to be left alone and treated like any other citizen. And it is this sightline, paradoxically, that best reveals the pieces of his story that resonate with trans, queer, and intersex people living today, including public scrutiny, fetishization, and denial of legal rights.<sup>3</sup>

**T**he Belmont sensation began with a bang on October 30, 1880, when the *Minneapolis Tribune* broke the story of a “Woman Who Lived in Male Attire for a Year and a Half” and “Exercis[ed] the Masculine Prerogative of Making Love to Two Women at Once.” On the same morning, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* heralded “A Woman in Pantaloon Who Makes Love and Pilfers with Masculine Coolness and Success.” Both papers explained that a day earlier, a Minneapolis resident had alerted Chief of Police Albert Munger to a man in her neighborhood who was “really a woman.” Munger promptly went to the man’s boardinghouse and arrested him. He then called in local doctor Charles W. Putnam, who, in the words of the *Minneapolis Tribune*, “established the sex beyond question as being entirely feminine.”<sup>4</sup>

## THE BELMONT MYSTERY.

Miss Brackett's Charges Against Belmont  
not Pressed and the Defendant Dis-  
charged from Custody.

She Proposes to Stay in this City and  
Wear Men's Clothing all She  
Wants To.

What She Told a Tribune Reporter Last  
Night—All Parties Interested Ret-  
icent and Scarce.

### THE PLOT THICKENS.

About two weeks ago this city was treated to one of the most unique sensations in its history. For some months past a young person, to all appearances a dandified young man, had been living just exactly no one knew how. Several suspicious circumstances came to light and the police, a month before the disclosure was made, suspected that the person was a woman in men's clothing. When the arrest took place their suspicions, according to the doctor who examined—or professed to examine—Belmont, were verified. She pleaded guilty to being a woman, and was, by Judge Cooley, sentenced to imprisonment for sixty days, in lieu of a fine of \$50. The evidence disclosed the fact that she was engaged to two other young women, from one of whom she had obtained various sums of money at different times. It appears that her prison life was spent mostly in Sheriff Thompson's parlors, and for the past week rumors have been rife that her fine was to be paid by some parties who had raised the money for that purpose. Yesterday she was brought up before Judge Cooley, who remitted her fine,

### AND SET HER AT LIBERTY.

Such an action, of course, attracted the attention of a Tribune reporter, and he at once set about finding the cause of the mystery. He first called on City Attorney Benton, who informed him that he knew nothing whatever about the case, as his brother had attended to it. His brother lives near the university, and could not be found. The reporter next called at Judge Cooley's residence, but nobody was at home. Thereupon, the man of the pen started for the Tribune office.

“The Belmont Mystery,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, Nov. 12, 1880.

The backstory reporters uncovered was irresistible. The arrested man, Leon A. Belmont, claimed to be a nephew of August Belmont, a New York-based financier, politician, and millionaire. Leon claimed to have been born in England, but said he had moved to the United States as a teenager and lived in Kansas and Dakota Territory. Since 1879 he had been living in Minneapolis in the boardinghouse of Clarinda Watts. He was engaged to marry Mrs. Watts's oldest daughter, Grace, and was studying with Dr. Charles D. Goodrich with an eye to becoming a doctor.<sup>5</sup>

While he was courting Grace Watts, Belmont had also seduced a young woman named Sarah Brackett, a friend of Grace's who boarded in the Watts house. When Grace discovered Sarah and Leon's affair, she ended her engagement, but her ex-fiancé did not move out. Soon enough, the romance between Brackett and Belmont soured, too, and Brackett reported him to police chief Munger. Brackett, it turned out, had loaned Belmont \$50 (more than \$1,000 in 2021 dollars), and now she was claiming that her former lover had finagled it from her under false pretenses—that

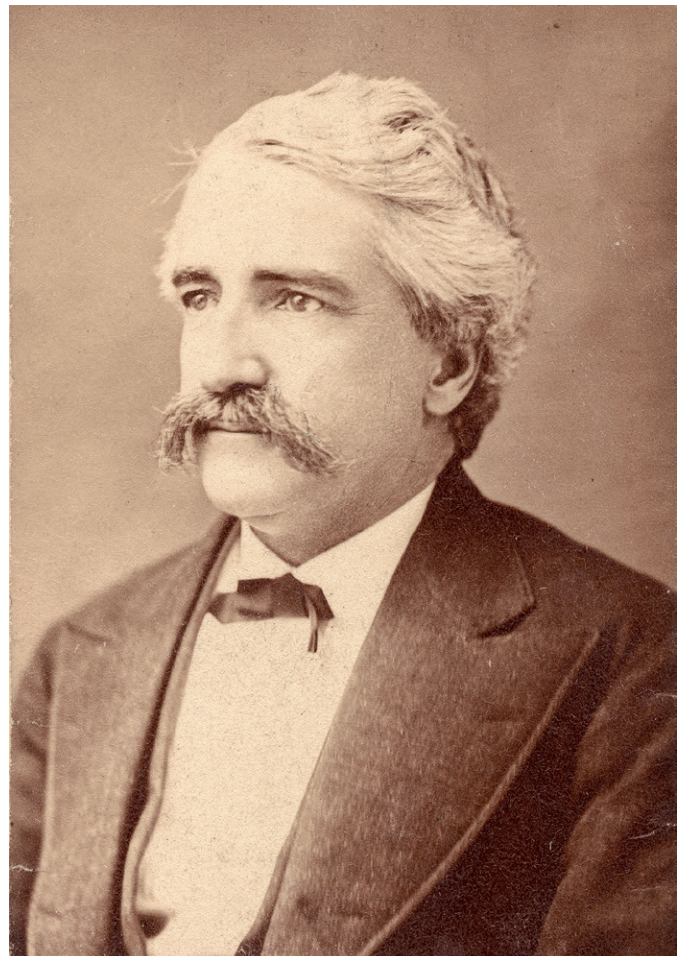
is, presenting himself as a man. An 1877 city ordinance had outlawed cross-dressing in Minneapolis, making it possible for Belmont to be charged with a crime.<sup>6</sup>

The *Minneapolis Tribune*, the *Minneapolis Journal*, and the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* had got the jump on the Belmont saga, and the *St. Paul Daily Globe* scrambled to catch up. All four papers sent reporters to cover Belmont's arraignment in municipal court on October 31, but the *Globe* spared no detail:

At 9 o'clock the news had spread far and wide, and the courthouse was crowded to its utmost capacity to see this distinguished individual. She came in shortly after 10. She removed her felt hat and ran her hands through her curly hair as if she were as high toned as any other society gentleman. She was dressed in a dark business suit, heavy overcoat, and boots, with a slouch hat just removed from her blonde curly head, on which the hair waved very prettily and was nicely parted on one side. . . . The masculine make-up was perfect, even to the gold button and necktie.<sup>7</sup>



Mathew Brady daguerreotype of August Belmont, mid 1850s.



Judge Dewitt Clinton Cooley, ca. 1870.



Beal's Photographic Studio (1880 view) displayed a photo taken at Belmont's arraignment, contributing to his celebrity status.

During the interrogation that followed, Belmont “confessed” to being a woman. Judge Dewitt Clinton Cooley then ordered him to pay a \$50 fine or serve out a 60-day sentence in jail. When Belmont declined to pay, however, police brought him to the house of Sheriff Nathaniel R. Thompson rather than to a cell.

Over the course of the next week, Belmont emerged as a bona fide celebrity. Local photographer Alonzo H. Beal took a picture of him during the arraignment and displayed it to the public at his Minneapolis gallery on Fourth Avenue. The *Minneapolis Tribune* got ahold of an engraving of the same image and published it on November 1. Yet another version, hung in the window of a bookstore, attracted crowds of people. Belmont, for his part, avoided speaking to the press but received fans and supporters in Sheriff Thompson's parlor. One particularly dedicated group raised money to pay his \$50 fine and release him from custody.<sup>8</sup>

Portrayals of Belmont in these early days of the sensation were positive. The *St. Paul Globe's* October 31 debut article took an approving stance, calling him “distinguished,” “high toned,” “a gentleman,” and “perfect,”

worthy of the admiration of men and women alike. The *Minneapolis Tribune's* concurrent article, even while calling Belmont a “monstrosity” and speculating that he was a prostitute or a criminal, admitted that he “speaks with fluency, uses excellent language, and is to all appearances a remarkably shrewd individual.” In a later feature it went further, hyping him as a sensitive aesthete:

Belmont evidently had a winning way that completely captivated the hearts of the women. She was a person of considerable refinement of tastes and of a good deal of artistic appreciation. She would see beauties in a poem or a picture that others would pass by, and had the faculty of pointing them out so that others might enjoy them.

What person of either sex, the *Tribune* seemed to ask, could resist? And what discerning reader could fail to buy the next day's paper to keep up with the story?<sup>9</sup>

Unfortunately for the *Minneapolis Tribune*, as Belmont remained in custody throughout the week of November 1, new details were difficult to excavate. “She still lingers in durance vile [lengthy prison sentence],” the newspaper informed readers on Tuesday, using the language of a melodramatic play or poem and casting Belmont as its hero(ine) in peril. On Wednesday, the paper merely stated that it had nothing new to report.<sup>10</sup>

On Thursday, the *St. Paul Globe* stepped in to fill the news vacuum with a dramatic revision of its stance on Belmont in particular, and the sensation in general. Under the subhead “Some people look upon her as a goddess,” an unnamed reporter set out to put an end to the hero worship, lambasting his colleagues for creating “a superior individual, a person of dramatic interest, out of a mass of shame and disgrace.” This writer saw Belmont not as an idol but as an “abominable character,” a “hypocritical and detestable being,” a “traitor to womanhood,” and “a creature to be looked on with contempt.” The impassioned editorial, a kind of anti-Belmont manifesto, spilled over into the next day's paper:

Enough has been made known to establish Belmont as the most despicable creature that ever breathed the air of Minnesota. The lowest woman of the street is respectable by the side of this mass of abomination. . . . The woman who shows to the world her true character, be it ever so bad, is a princess by the side of this Belmont, who has betrayed her womanhood and misled two as respectable young ladies as there are in the community, in the most delicate of all matters, which is nothing more nor less than love.<sup>11</sup>

## Belmont had broken the social contract that requires citizens of a community, both men and women, to represent themselves accurately to one another.

It's tempting to read this passage as a reaction to Belmont's perceived sexual deviance. The word "abomination," used twice, did imply religious condemnation of same-sex activity in the 1880s—as it does today. But the main objection is rooted elsewhere. The *St. Paul Globe* writer criticized Belmont not for being a woman who had seduced other women but for being a liar who had misled the community that welcomed him. In other words, his crime was not same-sex desire but dishonesty. The writer does not seem to have considered that Belmont might have pursued Watts and Brackett out of genuine sexual attraction, or even that such an attraction was possible. Instead, the writer implies, the motive must have been practical and financial. Belmont has "betrayed womanhood," but here again the implied fault is not so much cross-dressing itself as it is the perceived deception that it creates. Belmont, the writer suggests, had broken the social contract that requires citizens of a community, both men and women, to represent themselves accurately to one another. By pursuing Watts and Brackett, he misrepresented himself as a legitimate romantic prospect, causing them to invest in a courtship that could never lead to marriage. In other words, he wasted their time, and it was this abomination of trust—not an abomination of nature—that the *Globe* writer deemed a "tragedy."<sup>12</sup>

Belmont remained in custody at Sheriff Thompson's house until November 11, when Judge Cooley summoned him to appear in municipal court. The *Minneapolis Tribune* had predicted on the previous day that Belmont would pay his \$50 fine for cross-dressing and then face immediate rearrest for obtaining money from Sarah Brackett under false pretenses. The actual outcome surprised everyone, probably including Belmont himself. He did pay his fine, but after consulting privately with Brackett, Minneapolis City Attorney Reuben C. Benton withdrew the new charge. There was nothing more for Judge Cooley to do than release Belmont on the condition that he wear "appropriate" clothing in the future.<sup>13</sup>

With that, the heartthrob was free. The *Minneapolis Tribune* responded with three concurrent items, including a gossip column that mentioned the case four times. "It is again at large," the paper announced, before asking, "Is it a hero or a heroine?" It was at this moment that Bel-

mont's star appeal reached its apex, elevated by *Tribune* comments like "Belmont will now receive innumerable epistles from romantic swains" and "Eligible young men or young ladies desiring to become engaged may apply to Leon A. Belmont." Even the *St. Paul Globe* returned to the Belmont beat with a relatively positive tone, reporting, "Belmont is free at last."<sup>14</sup>

It's unclear where Belmont lived immediately after his release. On the evening of November 11, he was at the Watts boardinghouse, where the *Minneapolis Tribune* reporter found him and conducted the candlelit interview. He insisted not just that he would stay in Minneapolis and continue to wear men's clothes, but that he had the right to do both. At the same time, he pleaded for privacy and vowed to stop talking to the press:

I have friends in this town who will take care of me. I have been trouble enough to them already, and as I am free from the law, it's nobody's business. I just wish the public would let me alone. I have stood about all I am going to stand. There is no use in you or any other reporter asking me any questions, because I won't answer one. I am not going to say a word to anybody again.<sup>15</sup>

Belmont kept his promise. For the remainder of his time in Minnesota—which was far from over—he granted no interviews and issued no public comments.

**I**f Belmont had arrived in Minneapolis ten or even five years earlier, the sensation that flared up around him might never have caught fire. The city ordinance against cross-dressing that enabled Police Chief Munger to arrest him had been on the books for only three years in 1880. The growing density of the Twin Cities, moreover, supported multiple local newspapers. The *Daily Pioneer Press* had formed out of the merger of two older St. Paul titles in 1875; the *St. Paul Daily Globe* and the *Minneapolis Evening Journal* were both founded in 1878. All three of them competed, to varying degrees, with the *Minneapolis Tribune*—a relative veteran with 13 years of experience. The daily pressure to fill column inches led editors to seize on stories they might otherwise have left alone, including minor goings-on at city hall.<sup>16</sup>



Hennepin Avenue in Minneapolis, as it appeared during the Belmont sensation, 1880.

Belmont arrived in Minneapolis at an equally unique moment in the history of gender and sexuality in the United States. American laypeople had not yet, in 1880, come to think of sex(ual) or gender variance as a kind of disease, as they would over the following three decades. Nor did they see it as evidence of a fixed, internal identity. During the first two weeks of their coverage, none of the Twin Cities newspapers labeled and condemned Belmont as a type of person (e.g., a homosexual), whether for his relationships with women or for his presentation of himself as a man. Concepts of sexual orientation and gender identity as we know them today did not exist in the Minneapolis of 1880, or in any other US city of the period. Modern sexology—the scientific study of human sexual behavior—was only beginning to gather steam as a legitimate field, primarily among doctors in Europe. As a result, “homosexual,” “lesbian,” and “transgender” (as well as “heterosexual” and “cisgender”) were not categories that reporters would have used to understand Belmont, or that Belmont would have used to understand himself.<sup>17</sup>

The Twin Cities media attempted to label Belmont as someone outside the norms of sex or gender only once, and not until November 13. On that day, the *Minneapolis Tribune* floated the possibility that he was a hermaphrodite.

## DEFINITIONS OF CONTEMPORARY TERMS

Adapted by the author from the glossary provided by Learning for Justice, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

**Cisgender** (*adj.*): Describes a person whose gender identity (defined below) aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth.

**Gender identity** (*noun*): One’s innermost feeling of maleness, femaleness, a blend of both, or neither. One’s gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

**Dyadic** (*adj.*): An umbrella term describing people born with reproductive or sexual anatomy and/or a chromosome pattern that can be classified as typically male or female.

**Intersex** (*adj.*): An umbrella term describing people born with reproductive or sexual anatomy and/or a chromosome pattern that can’t be classified as typically male or female.

**Transgender** (*adj.*): An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. Not all trans people undergo transition. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or something else.

**Queer** (*adj.*): Once a pejorative, a term reclaimed and used by some within academic circles and the LGBTQIA+ community to describe sexual orientations and gender identities that are not exclusively heterosexual or cisgender.

This identity category, unlike those named above, was well established in 1880, and often used disparagingly. It overlapped with the twenty-first-century definition of intersex, which covers multiple atypical genital forms, gonadic traits, and genetic conditions.<sup>18</sup>

People identified as hermaphrodites have been visible in the United States since colonization, and Indigenous American cultures recognized, and in some cases honored, gender variance long before then. In the early nineteenth century, however, white Americans shifted from thinking that hermaphrodites were monsters worthy of disgust to believing that they were impostors in need of unmasking. The Belmont sensation played out in a transitional period, after the impostor concept had taken hold but before sex ambiguity became tied to the new “disease” of homosexuality. The newspapers’ treatment of Belmont



During this period, the press began to drum up public interest in celebrity archetypes that remain recognizable today, including the con man (P. T. Barnum, center), the diva (Sarah Bernhardt), and the dandy (Oscar Wilde).

reflects this in-between state. With the important exception of the November 13 article in the *Minneapolis Tribune*, the press focused on exposing Belmont as a liar, not on diagnosing or classifying him. To the question “What is it?” reporters admitted only two possible answers: a man, or a woman pretending to be a man. The likelihood of fraud, not of sexual deviance, was the axis around which the Belmont drama turned.<sup>19</sup>

In these social, legal, and sexual contexts Minneapolis was not unique among American cities in 1880. Nor, indeed, was the Belmont sensation an isolated case. Newspapers across the United States ran exposés on gender-variant people throughout the late nineteenth century, showing not just that there was a widespread appetite for such stories but also that gender variance itself was relatively common. The *Minneapolis Tribune* and *St. Paul Globe* reported on four such local cases in addition to Belmont’s in the 1880s alone—two of them related to white people and two of them to Black people. But the individuals who attracted the most and longest-lasting coverage were usually, like Belmont, white. More than any other trait, Belmont’s race dictated the packaging of his story, leading reporters to celebrate—to an extent—his performance of white masculinity. His whiteness shielded him from the abuse that might have dogged a person of color in his situation and relegated him to a single paragraph—a one-off curiosity rather than a heroic (read: white) individual. It also softened his treatment by police, giving him the special treatment (custody in a private

home rather than a jail) he was perceived to deserve as someone who was “really” a white woman.<sup>20</sup>

While sexual orientation and gender identity were works in progress in 1880, the infrastructure of modern celebrity, like racial hierarchy, was well developed. A national and even transatlantic star-making system was already humming, powered by technology that included the telegraph, the railroad, and the mass-circulation press. Carrying on the Romantic era’s infatuation with artist-rebels such as the British poet Lord Byron, this celebrity system rewarded sexy outsiders who defied the status quo with hero worship as much as condemnation. To be famous was to be different, and insisting on that difference publicly, with shamelessness and flair, began to pay off as a self-promotional strategy as the nineteenth century went on. During this period, the press began to drum up public interest in celebrity archetypes that remain recognizable today, including the con man (P. T. Barnum), the diva (Sarah Bernhardt), and the dandy (Oscar Wilde). The *Minneapolis Tribune* promoted Belmont as a mixture of all three, highlighting his deceptions, his theatricality, and his aesthetic tastes. In doing so the paper manufactured a celebrity triple-threat, one uniquely positioned to fascinate readers and whip up a sensation with weeks-long staying power—and sales.<sup>21</sup>

Staying power for newspaper sales and staying power for Belmont, of course, were two different things. The shamelessness that made him a star also threatened his safety in Minneapolis. Even after his release from police



Respected society matron Charlotte O. Van Cleve, ca. 1875.



Dr. Albert Alonzo Ames, ca. 1890.

detention, it was unclear to what extent the city would tolerate him if he continued to dress in men's clothes. No one following the story at the time could have predicted the strange turn of events that was to give him, for a moment, the upper hand.

Immediately after the police released Belmont from custody on November 11, rumors flew that some unnamed but authoritative person behind the scenes had decided that Belmont had been a man all along. On November 12, the *St. Paul Globe* announced that a second medical investigation had taken place, this one observed by "a distinguished benevolent lady." Said lady and the examining doctor, the *Globe* reported, had verified Belmont's male sex. Not to be outdone, a *Minneapolis Tribune* reporter rushed out "to discover some one who was ready to declare that Belmont has the right to wear male attire," but the man's efforts failed. He did, however, identify the *Globe's* distinguished lady as 61-year-old society matron Charlotte O. Van Cleve, claiming that her testimony had swayed Judge Cooley to release Belmont. Van Cleve, a Civil War widow famous throughout the Upper Midwest as the first white woman to be born west of the Mississippi,

was by this time one of the most respected women in the Twin Cities. She responded immediately to set the record straight, saying via a letter to the editor that she was far from convinced the young swain was a man. Instead, she "supposed, with others, that [Belmont] is a woman in man's attire, and [had] consulted with her and others with regard to the preparation of clothing suitable to her sex."<sup>22</sup>

Van Cleve had first visited Belmont on October 31, while he was still in jail. Less than two weeks later, the *St. Paul Globe* and the *Minneapolis Tribune* were alternately starting and disproving rumors that she had participated in a medical examination. The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* seized the opportunity for a bombshell on November 14, when it published an interview with Albert Alonzo "Doc" Ames, a physician as well as a former mayor of Minneapolis. Dr. Ames had examined Belmont and, contrary to Van Cleve's declaration, found him to be a man.<sup>23</sup>

This plot twist completely revised the story. The *Minneapolis Tribune* posited that, weeks earlier, Belmont—a man—had told Dr. Putnam he was a woman to escape his engagements to Watts and Brackett. If Belmont fooled his girlfriends into thinking he was actually a woman, this



## Scrutinized and criticized because of the people he romanced, the clothes he wore, and his perceived gender, Leon Belmont is a predecessor of the queer, trans, and intersex people who make their way through Minnesota today.

theory went, they could hardly demand that he honor his promises, thereby enabling him to walk away from the mess he'd made without being denounced as a cad.<sup>24</sup>

This version of the story, however, created a problem. A few days earlier, the *Minneapolis Tribune* had turned up an affectionate letter addressed to Belmont from a man named James Taylor, with whom he had lived in Dakota Territory before coming to Minneapolis. Taylor missed Belmont, he wrote, longed to embrace him again, and looked forward to marrying him. The paper therefore created a scenario in which a man was in love with another man, and this was evidently beyond belief. "Men are not in the habit of desiring to fold one another in each other's arms, and all that," the *Tribune* pointed out. So it hedged its bets, asking, "Can Dr. Ames have been victimized, or what? Belmont is still a perpetual conundrum."<sup>25</sup>

Dr. Putnam, meanwhile, was having none of it. Aware that Dr. Ames's verdict made him look incompetent, he confronted Belmont in person and demanded that he admit he was a woman. When Belmont refused, Putnam got him to agree to a second examination in his office on November 15. The day came and went, however, and Belmont never appeared.<sup>26</sup>

With the *Minneapolis Tribune* at a loss for words, Belmont reversing his story, and the two most prominent doctors in Minneapolis contradicting each other, the sensation reached its frenzied height. Charlotte Van Cleve threw fuel on the fire by writing a second letter to the *Tribune*—this one in the heartthrob's defense. After further conversation, she had evidently changed her mind. "Leon A. Belmont is unequivocally masculine," she proclaimed, "and hence entitled to wear the garments he now wears." She urged sympathy for the "homeless and unfriended boy, who, under circumstances of extreme perplexity, took a false and foolish step for which he has been abundantly punished and of which I believe he has sincerely repented."<sup>27</sup>

As the debate raged, the "homeless and unfriended boy" was actually doing quite well for himself. He had found a new place to live in Minneapolis, and the papers even announced that Dr. Ames had invited him to study medicine at his office. This last development was a step too

far for the *Minneapolis Tribune*, which, for the first time, condemned Belmont's character in *St. Paul Globe*-like terms and called for an end to the same sensation it had helped create. Van Cleve's verdict, however, softened that reaction, and the paper recanted on the following day:

As to just what are the antecedents of Mr. Belmont, this is not the public's business so long as he behaves himself in this community—which *The Tribune* trusts he will carefully do hereafter. This is the end of the Belmont affair.

It was not.<sup>28</sup>

**B**y this time (mid-November), the Minneapolis sensation had become a national story. Via wire services, it ran on the front pages of the *Boston Globe* and the *Washington Evening Star*, as well as in papers in New York, California, Vermont, Kansas, Alabama, and Kentucky. One item showed up in a Connecticut newspaper and caught the attention of a reader who recognized Belmont as someone he had known years earlier in Northampton, Massachusetts. This person, however, had called herself not Leon A. Belmont but Mrs. Leon A. Stanley. Her unmarried name had been Addie Walker, and she had been indicted for "obtaining a large sum of money under false pretenses" in Springfield in 1876, after which she had spent nine months in jail. In 1877 or 1878 she had moved to Kansas, just as Belmont claimed to have done.<sup>29</sup>

The reader wrote a letter to a friend in Minneapolis saying that he believed Belmont and Walker were the same person. The friend informed the *Minneapolis Tribune*, which attempted to connect the dots on November 15. The *Boston Globe* eventually verified Walker's indictment and other details, and the *Tribune* confirmed on February 21 that Belmont had been born not in England in the 1860s but in Warren, Massachusetts, in 1853. He was not the nephew of August Belmont, a horse-breeding Jewish millionaire, but the child of Albert Walker, a Protestant shoemaker with \$200 to his name. And he'd been assigned a female sex at birth.<sup>30</sup>

As dramatic as the *Minneapolis Tribune's* revelations were, they posed no material threat to Belmont, who continued to live in Minneapolis as the winter wore on. He met and became intimate with a woman named Melvina Barry Campbell, who divorced her husband in February 1881 and began living with Belmont. In April the couple traveled more than 40 miles north of the Twin Cities to Spencer Brook—a tiny community relatively insulated from the effects of Belmont mania. The Isanti County clerk issued them a marriage license, and Campbell's brother and sister-in-law agreed to appear as witnesses. At a subsequent ceremony on April 6, presumably without knowing it, Justice of the Peace W. A. Smith legally married two people who had been assigned a female sex at birth. After returning to Minneapolis with his bride, Belmont ran for the office of city physician. He lost the election, however, and by 1884 he and his wife had moved out of Minnesota. They never returned.<sup>31</sup>

The Belmont sensation, from its debut in the fall of 1880 through its decline in the spring of 1881, provoked a public reckoning with sex and gender in Minnesota. It raised questions about the stability of both categories, since Belmont appeared to confound them with ease. Though reporters reacted differently to his transgressions, with some reveling in his gender ambiguity and others condemning it, they constructed a distinctly modern celebrity—an icon recognized for his showmanship and

artistry who was neither a showman nor an artist. A person, that is, who was famous for being famous.

Scrutinized and criticized because of the people he romanced, the clothes he wore, and his perceived gender, Leon Belmont is a predecessor of the queer, trans, and intersex people who make their way through Minnesota today. Living as he did before our categories of sexual orientation and gender identity, however, Belmont didn't see himself as queer, or trans, or intersex. Nor did he see himself as straight, or cis, or dyadic. So, to what extent did he identify with the persona he created? Possibilities glimmer in two of the quotes recorded in interviews: "I have always dressed as I am now dressed," he explains in one, "and do not see why I should not. I have worn male attire for thirteen years." In the other he quips, in a line worthy of Oscar Wilde, "I cannot wear women's clothing, and couldn't go naked." Belmont remained committed, moreover, to maintaining the sense of self he had defended in Minnesota for the next 25 years. He lived in multiple states (Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma) and worked in various professions (doctor, grocer), but always presented himself as Leon Belmont. It wasn't until March 17, 1902, that he chose to end the Belmont era for good. On that morning, he put on a dress, walked out of his house, and introduced himself to his neighbors as a nurse named Miss McClure. Her first name was Nova—Latin for "a new woman."<sup>32</sup> ■

## Notes

1. "The Belmont Mystery," *Minneapolis Tribune*, Nov. 12, 1880, 6. For Belmont's address, see *Minneapolis Tribune*, "In Disguise," Oct. 30, 1880, 6. The *Pioneer Press*, departing slightly from the *Tribune*, reported Belmont's address as "Fourth avenue south, between Sixth and Seventh streets": "A Female Man at Large," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Oct. 30, 1880, 6. According to the October 30 *Tribune* article, the owner of Belmont's boarding house, Clarinda Watts, lived at a separate location: 1234 Chestnut Avenue.

2. "In Disguise: The Curious and Romantic Sensation that was Developed in the City Yesterday Afternoon," *Minneapolis Tribune*, Oct. 30, 1880, 6. The word "romantic" refers here to ideals of courtship and sexual attraction as well as to the literary genre from which they derive. In the late nineteenth century, calling a story a "romance" gestured backward toward early modern epics (e.g., *Orlando Furioso*), Shakespearean drama (*Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest*), and medieval chivalric poetry (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*). A romance in this vein deals with themes of adventure, travel, fidelity, disguise, and unmasking, all of which feature in the Belmont sensation.

3. Many transgender men are not heterosexual, and many lesbian women are not cisgender. Anachronistic labels that appear to map onto Belmont at various moments in his story include straight trans man, queer trans man, and queer cisgender woman, all of them dyadic or intersex.

4. "In Disguise," *Minneapolis Tribune*, Oct. 30, 1880, 6; and "A Female Man at Large," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Oct. 30, 1880, 6.

5. "Mary Belmont," *Minneapolis Evening Journal*, Oct. 30, 1880, 4. In 1867, August Belmont funded the annual thoroughbred horse race (the Belmont Stakes) that came to carry his name. He appears in fictionalized form as Augustus Melmotte in Anthony Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* and as Julius Beaufort in Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence*: Norman Lebrecht, *Genius and Anxiety: How Jews Changed the World, 1847-1947* (New York: Scribner, 2019), 47–48. For biographical information about August Belmont, see David Black, *The King of Fifth Avenue: The Fortunes of August Belmont* (New York: Dial Press, 1981).

6. William N. Eskridge, *Gaylaw: Challenging the Apartheid of the Closet* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 339. Municipal court clerk L. A. Dunn received a written and

sworn complaint from Brackett on October 30 that was eventually published in the *Minneapolis Tribune*: "The Belmont," Nov. 10, 1880, 6.

7. "A Double Character," *St. Paul Daily Globe*, Oct. 31, 1880, 5.

8. "The Limboed Belmont," *Minneapolis Tribune*, Nov. 2, 1880, 6: "The public interest in the masquerader was evinced very forcibly yesterday. Crowds gathered about the fine imperial photograph of Belmont displayed in the window of Wagner's book-store, and hundreds of people recall the face and form now made familiar." See also "The Last Sensation," *Minneapolis Evening Journal*, Nov. 2, 1882, 4; "Minneapolis Globelets," *St. Paul Daily Globe*, Nov. 1, 1880, 2; and "Who Is She?," *Minneapolis Tribune*, Nov. 1, 1880, 5. For the address of and information about Beal's gallery, see Peter E. Palmquist and Thomas R. Kailbourn, *Pioneer Photographers from the Mississippi to the Continental Divide: A Biographical Dictionary, 1839-1865* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 97–99. At the time, the *Minneapolis Tribune* was publishing few pictures outside of advertisements; Belmont's is the only one of its kind in the November 1 issue. For the role of photography in the development of

American celebrity culture, see Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 491–94. For the effect of modern newspaper journalism on the same, see Braudy, 508–10.

9. “The What Is It,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, Oct. 31, 1880, 2. The phrase “the what is it,” used in multiple Belmont headlines and articles, picks up on the language of Victorian freak shows. P. T. Barnum toured the United States in the 1870s with an African American man named William Henry Johnson, famously billed as “Zip, the What Is It?” See Lindsey B. Churchill, “What Is It? Difference, Darwin, and the Victorian Freak Show,” in *Darwin in Atlantic Cultures: Evolutionary Visions of Race, Gender, and Sexuality*, ed. Jeannette Eileen Jones and Patrick B. Sharp (New York: Routledge, 2010), 128–42. On spectacles of gender transgression in Victorian freak shows, see Clare Sears, *Arresting Dress: Cross-Dressing, Law, and Fascination in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 101–11. Aesthete quote: “Who Is She?,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, Nov. 1, 1880, 5.

10. “The Limboed Belmont,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, Nov. 2, 1880, 6, and “Gossip About Town,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, Nov. 3, 1880, 6. See the phrase “in durance vile” in Roberts Burns’s “Epistle from Esopus to Maria” (1794): “In durance vile here must I wake and weep, / And all my frowzy Couch in sorrow steep.”

11. “Mary Belmont,” *St. Paul Daily Globe*, Nov. 4, 1880, 3; “The Farce Ending,” *St. Paul Daily Globe*, Nov. 5, 1880, 5.

12. Toby Beauchamp’s study of post-9/11 state surveillance of trans people reveals this logic still at work in the 2010s. He explains that “surveillance of gender-nonconforming people centers less on their identification as transgender per se than it does on the perceived deception underlying transgressive gender presentation”: Toby Beauchamp, *Going Stealth: Transgender Politics and US Surveillance Practices* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 9. Officials have similarly accused cis queer people of “dishonesty” during periods of heightened surveillance—particularly the McCarthy hearings of the early 1950s. On the latter, see David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

The association of the word “abomination” with homosexuality is due in main part to English translations of Leviticus 18:22. The same word appears in the context of cross-dressing in translations of Deuteronomy 22:5: “The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment, for all that do so are abominable unto the Lord thy God.” Quoted in Elizabeth Reis, “Impossible Hermaphrodites: Intersex in America, 1620–1960,” *Journal of American History* 92, no. 2 (Sept. 2005): 427n38.

13. “The Belmont,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, Nov. 10, 1880, 6; “The Courts,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, Nov. 12, 1880, 7.

14. “Gossip about Town,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, Nov. 12, 1880, 6; “Belmont at Liberty,” *St. Paul Daily Globe*, Nov. 12, 1880, 2.

15. “The Belmont Mystery,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, Nov. 12, 1880, 6.

16. Minneapolis was the last of 19 US cities to outlaw cross-dressing by ordinance or statute between 1845 and 1880: Eskridge, *Gaylaw*, 338–41. This cascade of restrictions was, in part, a reaction to the rise of the American metropolis; the nation’s emerging megacities crammed together strangers who could not, as they could in small towns, confirm each other’s identities, raising anxieties about dishonesty and fraud. As Elizabeth Reis has observed, “urbanization and new interpersonal commercial networks . . . [created] opportunities to remake one’s self and perhaps to deceive others”: see Reis, *Bodies in Doubt: An American History of Intersex* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 30. Referencing San Francisco in particular, Clare Sears has similarly pointed out that “rapid population growth produced large-scale anonymity that robbed people of their ability to order public life through personal ties”: Sears, *Arresting Dress*, 67.

In addition to these four newspapers, in 1880 the Twin Cities also had two foreign-language newspapers (*Minnesota Stats Tidning* and *Der Wanderer*) and two trade journals (*Minnesota Farmer* and *Mississippi Valley Lumberman and Manufacturer*). *Minnesota Stats Tidning* translated a *Tribune* story on Belmont into Swedish (“En Minneapolis-sensation,” Nov. 4, 1880, 3) and ran two other Belmont items in its “Minneapolis” column (Nov. 18, 1880, 3).

17. By sex(ual) or gender variance I mean a mutually inclusive range of nonconforming desires, bodies, and practices encompassing what we would today call intersex conditions, transgender identities, cross-dressing contexts, and non-straight sexual orientations.

As historian of gender and sexuality Emily Skidmore notes, “[T]here was no single coherent national narrative that explained the phenomenon of gender transgressors in the early 1880s. . . . Americans were slow to accept the homosexual/heterosexual binary, and even as sexological writing appeared with greater frequency in the mass-circulation press, sexological theories had little influence on popular understandings of gender and sexuality in this period”: Emily Skidmore, *True Sex: The Lives of Trans Men at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 15–16. See also Lisa Duggan, “Doctors of Desire,” in *Sapphic Slashers: Sex, Violence, and American Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 156–79; Chris Waters, “Sexology,” in *Palgrave Advances in the Modern History of Sexuality*, ed. M. Houlbrook and H. Cocks (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 41–63; Alison Oram, “Cross-Dressing and Transgender,” in *Palgrave Advances*, 256–85.

18. “Belmont: Who and What Is She?—A Mystery That Is Still Unsolved,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, Nov. 13, 1880, 7. The article reports “that if Belmont persists in appearing in male attire

upon the streets [the police] will take her into custody and cause a satisfactory and conclusive examination to be made, which shall establish whether Belmont is a man, woman, or hermaphrodite, with the majority of opinion in favor of the latter.”

Whereas nineteenth-century doctors called people hermaphrodites when they failed to read as unambiguously male or female during physical examinations (particularly genital ones), in the twenty-first century, “not all intersex conditions involve ambiguous genitalia. Some people with intersex have typical external genitals but the internal anatomy of the other sex”: Reis, *Bodies in Doubt*, x–xi. Others have congenital conditions like Turner syndrome, androgen insensitivity syndrome, and sex chromosome mosaicism, which were unnamed and, in some cases, undetected before the twentieth century: Reis, *Bodies in Doubt*, xi. For contemporary debates in intersex theory and politics, see *Critical Intersex*, edited by Morgan Holmes (New York: Routledge, 2016), and Hilary Malatino’s *Queer Embodiment: Monstrosity, Medical Violence, and Intersex Experience* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019).

19. For a historical survey of gender variance in Indigenous cultures, see *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality*, edited by Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1997). For academic perspectives, see Mark Rifkin’s *When Did Indians Become Straight?: Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), as well as Kai Pyle’s “Naming and Claiming: Recovering Ojibwe and Plains Cree Two-Spirit Language,” in *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (Nov. 2018): 574–88. For the change from monsters to impostors, see Reis, *Bodies in Doubt*, 23–54.

20. National media sensations comparable to Belmont’s flared up around Joseph Israel Lobdell in the 1870s (see Jen Manion, *Female Husbands: A Trans History* [Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020], 219–25), Frank DuBois in the 1880s (Skidmore, *True Sex*, 15–27), Milton Matson in the 1890s (Sears, *Arresting Dress*, 103–5), and Joe Monahan in the 1900s (Peter Boag, *Re-Dressing America’s Frontier Past* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011], 95–104). All were white.

Minnesota cases include “Belmont’s Rival” (*St. Paul Globe*, Nov. 13, 1880, 3); “A Mixed Gender” (*St. Paul Globe*, Dec. 13, 1883, 6); a hotel waiter (*St. Paul Globe*, July 27, 1886, 3); and Cecilia Regina Gonzaga (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, Aug. 21, 1885, 3; *St. Paul Globe*, Aug. 21, 1885, 2; and *St. Paul Globe*, Aug. 22, 1885, 2). The first two were white, the second two African American. On race in narratives of sex and gender variance, see C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017); Duggan, *Sapphic Slashers*, 9–21; Skidmore, *True Sex*, 68–100; Boag, *Re-Dressing America’s Frontier Past*, 130–58; and Sears, *Arresting Dress*, 121–38.

21. Columbia University professor Sharon Marcus observes, "Although we now think of the nineteenth century as an era of extreme conformity, it too had its share of celebrities who attracted popular acclaim by manifesting deliberate indifference to social norms. Even at the time, some commentators voiced their awareness that blatant defiance could garner public admiration on a mass scale": Sharon Marcus, *The Drama of Celebrity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), 26–27.

On the infrastructure of modern celebrity, including railways, the penny press, the telegraph, and paper manufacturing, see Marcus, 10–12. On fame in the Romantic era, see Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown*, 422–45, and Fred Inglis, *A Short History of Celebrity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 58–73. On the development of daily and mass-circulation newspaper networks, see Inglis, 118–23, and Duggan, *Sapphic Slashers*, 32–36. On the international reach of fame in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, during which the celebrity became "an aspirational figure for the marginalized," see Páraic Finnerty and Rod Rosenquist, "Transatlantic Celebrity: European Fame in Nineteenth-Century America," *Comparative American Studies* 14, no. 1 (2016): 1–6. For a related study that touches on cross-dressing, see Holly-Gale Millette's "Mad About the Blonde": Lydia Thompson's Transatlantic Celebrity and Fandom" in the same issue (34–48).

22. "Belmont at Liberty," *St. Paul Globe*, Nov. 12, 2; "Municipal," *Minneapolis Tribune*, Nov. 12, 1880, 7; and "Belmont: Who and What Is She?—A Mystery That Is Still Unsolved," *Minneapolis Tribune*, Nov. 13, 1880, 7.

Charlotte Ouisconsin Clark Van Cleve was an unlikely second-act character in the Belmont drama. Van Cleve's father, Lieutenant Nathan Clark, had served at Fort Snelling; her husband, Lieutenant Horatio P. Van Cleve, had fought in the Civil War with the Second Minnesota Volunteer Infantry. She further enhanced her reputation in 1876 by helping organize Bethany Home for unwed mothers in Minneapolis. See Bobbie Scott, "Charlotte Ouisconsin Clark Van Cleve: Mother, Patriot, Reformer," *Hennepin History* 72, no. 1 (Winter 2013): 14–34. Van Cleve's involvement in the Belmont case probably arose out of her interest in helping women who, in the eyes of the community, had "fallen." As a presumed single woman, Belmont was endangering himself and his virtue by leading a scandalous public life without the protection of a male relative.

23. For the first appearance of Charlotte Van Cleve in the sensation, see "Who Is She?," *Minneapolis Tribune*, Nov. 1, 1880, 5. For the interview with Dr. Ames, see "The Belmont Located," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Nov. 14, 1880, 6.

24. The *Minneapolis Tribune* noted, "The excuse for submitting to arrest and detention upon the charge of wearing apparel which did not belong to [him], is understood to be a desire to avoid future complications in the double love affair in which Belmont had found himself

involved": see "The Belmont: The Mystery Thickens—He, She or It Declared to be a Man," *Nov. 14, 1880, 1*.

25. "The Belmont Mystery," *Minneapolis Tribune*, Nov. 12, 1880, 6; "The Belmont: The Mystery Thickens," *Minneapolis Tribune*, Nov. 14, 1880, 1.

26. According to the *St. Paul Globe*, "[Dr. Putnam] pointed his finger at Belmont's face and told her that she was a woman, and she knew it. Belmont demurred. She said she was a man, and lied to the doctor when he, she or it told him at the Security [B]ank that he, she or it was a woman": see "The Great Unknown," Nov. 16, 1880, 3.

27. "A Mystery Cleared Up," *Minneapolis Tribune*, Nov. 18, 1880, 6.

28. "Immediately after the release of Belmont from the county jail, it found a boarding place in a boarding-house in the lower part of town": see "The What Is It," *Minneapolis Tribune*, Feb. 21, 1881, 6. "The Belmont is about to commence the study of medicine in Dr. Ames's office": see "Gossip About Town," *Minneapolis Tribune*, Nov. 17, 1880, 6.

"The courts, the bar, the medical profession, the police, the philanthropists and some of the newspapers have managed to get themselves into a sufficiently ridiculous attitude over the anomaly, and it is about time to drop the outworn sensation. No matter what may be the facts, it is to be hoped that there is no truth in the rumor that the young person chiefly interested, and whose conduct in any view has been disreputable, is to be admitted to 'study medicine' in any reputable office in Minneapolis": see "Adieu," *Minneapolis Tribune*, Nov. 17, 1880, 8. Quote from "A Mystery Cleared Up," *Minneapolis Tribune*, Nov. 18, 1880, 6.

29. "A Feminine Don Juan in Masculine Attire," *Boston Globe*, Oct. 31, 1880, 1; "Sensation in Minneapolis: A Girl in Boy's Clothes," *Washington Evening Star*, Nov. 1, 1880, 1; "Girl in Boy's Clothes Courts Another Girl," *Democrat and Chronicle* (Rochester, NY), Oct. 31, 1880, 3; "Notes and Excerpts," *Oakland (CA) Tribune*, Nov. 11, 1880, 2; "General Summary," *Swanton (VT) Courier*, Nov. 7, 1880, 3; "Belmont's Blue Blood: The Female Man Arraigned for Appearing in Public in Male Attire," *Russell (KS) Record*, Nov. 11, 1880, 1; "A Girl in Boy's Clothes," *Opelika (AL) Times*, Nov. 12, 1880, 1; [No title], *Louisville (KY) Courier-Journal*, Nov. 3, 1880, 3.

See also "Is It a Key?," *Minneapolis Tribune*, Nov. 15, 1880, 6; "A Female Swindler," *Daily Milwaukee News*, Dec. 10, 1880, 1; "A Girl in Men's Clothes," *Burlington (VT) Weekly Free Press* (via the *Springfield [MA] Republican*), Dec. 24, 1880, 1.

30. "The gentleman who received the above noted letter, and tells the further facts in the case, went in the company of a *Tribune* reporter and inspected the picture of Belmont in Beal's Gallery. He was certain he saw a decided resemblance in the face of the photograph to the features of 'Mrs. Leon A. Stanley,' as he remembers them": see "Is It a Key?" *Minneapolis Tribune*, Nov.

15, 1880, 6. See also Addie Liona Walker's birth record in the birth registry of Warren, MA, June 1, 1853; "He or She?" *Boston Globe*, Dec. 4, 1880, 4; "The What Is It?" *Minneapolis Tribune*, Feb. 21, 1881, 6; US Dept. of Commerce, *1860 Census*, Warren, MA, records of the Albert Walker family, 157–58. If "Liona" is the birth registrar's misspelling of "Leona," the origin of the name change emerges: Addie Leona Walker became Leon A. Belmont.

31. Legal marriages between people assigned a female sex at birth were not uncommon in the late nineteenth century. For a survey of American examples, see Manion, *Female Husbands*. For information about Belmont's marriage to Melvina Campbell, see [No title], *Northern Pacific Farmer*, Mar. 3, 1881, 3; "The Campbells Are Parted," *St. Paul Globe*, Mar. 25, 1881, 2; marriage certificate, State of Minnesota, County of Isanti, issued on Apr. 6, 1881, to Leon A. Belmont and Melvina A. Barry; "Wedded: A Report That Leon A. Belmont's Latest Escapade Is Marriage," *Minneapolis Tribune*, Apr. 8, 1881, 5. On Belmont in the 1881 election for Minneapolis physician, see "Minneapolis News: City Council," *St. Paul Globe*, Apr. 13, 1881, 3. For Leon and Melvina Belmont's residences in the 1880s and 1890s, see Bureau of Pensions, US Department of the Interior, deposition of Melvina Barry Campbell Belmont by special examiner T. Quinn Jones, Feb. 13, 1922.

32. Bureau of Pensions, deposition of Melvina Barry Campbell Belmont, Feb. 13, 1922. The name "McClure" had appeared years earlier in Belmont's self-mythology: "He claimed to possess a fortune in England, coming from the house of Maclure, on his mother's side": "In Disguise," *Minneapolis Tribune*, Oct. 30, 1880.

---

Images on p. 214, 215, 216 (right), 217, 219, 221, MNHS Collections; p. 216 (left) Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Daguerreotypes Collection; p. 220 (left to right) Nadar, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons; Cassius Marcellus Coolidge, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons; Unknown author, COO, via Wikimedia Commons.



Copyright of **Minnesota History** is the property of the Minnesota Historical Society, and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or users or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission: [contact us](#).

Individuals may print or download articles for personal use.

To request permission for educational or commercial use, [contact us](#). Include the author's name and article title in the body of your message. But first--

If you think you may need permission, here are some guidelines:

#### **Students and researchers**

- You **do not** need permission to quote or paraphrase portions of an article, as long as your work falls within the fair use provision of copyright law. Using information from an article to develop an argument is fair use. Quoting brief pieces of text in an unpublished paper or thesis is fair use. Even quoting in a work to be published can be fair use, depending on the amount quoted. Read about fair use here: <http://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html>
- You **should**, however, always credit the article as a source for your work.

#### **Teachers**

- You **do not** need permission to incorporate parts of an article into a lesson.
- You **do** need permission to assign an article, either by downloading multiple copies or by sending students to the online pdf. There is a small per-copy use fee for assigned reading. [Contact us](#) for more information.

#### **About Illustrations**

- **Minnesota History** credits the sources for illustrations at the end of each article. **Minnesota History** itself does not hold copyright on images and therefore cannot grant permission to reproduce them.
- For information on using illustrations owned by the Minnesota Historical Society, see [MHS Library FAQ](#).